

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: November 17, 2017

Muir Woods Conference Room, 175 N. Redwood Blvd., San Rafael

Present: Doug Wilson, Pam Reaves, Bob Miller, Helene Marsh, Sarah Loughran, Bill Carney, Tamra Peters, Nancy Bell, Susan Stompe, Nona Dennis, Belle Cole, Dale Miller, Kate Powers, Pat Nelson, Judy Teichman, Kiki La Porta, Tom Flynn, Judy Ford, Tom Flynn, Carleen Cullen, Kurt Johnson, Susan Stompe.

Guest Speakers: J.R. Killigrew.

Co-Chair Doug Wilson called the meeting to order at 9:05.

Brief Introductions

Agenda and Minutes

The agenda was adopted by consensus with a change in order and substitution of speakers.

The October minutes were approved by consensus with corrections.

Announcements

The MCL holiday party will be held at the MCL office on Dec. 1, from 4:00 to 7:00. It is free and open. Donations of food for the Marin Food Bank or donations to the Redwood Credit Union fund for North Bay fire victims are requested.

The holiday party for Resilient Neighborhoods and Sustainable San Rafael is upcoming.

The Environmental Forum of Marin will hold its holiday party on Dec. 3 from 3:00 to 5:00 at the Corte Madera Community Center.

Golden Gate EV Association will hold a webinar in December or January, followed by a presentation of grants to congregations installing charging stations.

Sarah: The Sunday New York Times had a section devoted to EVs. The Rocky Mountain Institute issued a report on carbon-free cities. [<https://www.rmi.org/carbonfreecities/>]

Bill: The San Rafael City Council will receive a report on the new transit center on November 20, starting at 7:00. The session is open to the public and will be videotaped.

Bob: Chris Nelder conducts an energy transition show, featuring interviews with leading thinkers. [<https://xenetwork.org/ets/>] See also Dave Roberts at VOX, where there are articles with URLs.

Kiki: There is a Yale program on climate change, including a paper on the increased level of concern re climate change in America. More than 60% of the public reported that they have the highest level of concern. The tide is turning. There are allies in the effort to combat climate change.

Belle: There will be an event at the San Rafael Community Center addressing the connection between fire and climate change, and the collaboration of counties. A UC Berkeley professor will be participating, as well as Congressman Jared Huffman.

Dale: Novato gave preliminary approval to a new gas station located near wetlands. We don't need another gas station.

Doug: Novato is disseminating information on both MCE's Deep Green and PG&E's renewable energy option. A comparison shows that Deep Green is better. Novato had the highest opt-out rate in the County.

Kiki: They are not promoting Deep Green only, because there is strong feeling in Novato about MCE. The most virulent opposition to the formation of MCE occurred in Novato. It's time for leadership to counter PG&E propaganda.

Tamra: If they opted out, the block to achieving more use of renewables is MCE, not the 100% renewable option.

Kate: The gas station proposed for Novato is a Costco station. After design review, the proposal goes to the Planning Commission, and then to the City Council.

Discussion 1: Unmet Needs for Environmental Work, Tasks that Need Doing

Pam: There is something missing in the Climate Action Working Group, people working on specific issues/projects. Focus promotes efficient function. Tasks to be undertaken by committee members might include attending meetings, following EV developments or technical issues at MCE. Transportation and energy are key topics.

Nancy: We are also struggling with this at the League of Women Voters. We are identifying gaps in coverage and areas where LWV can make a unique contribution. LWV is a policy organization; that is a possible area of focus for us.

Doug: Things are not being covered. Look for gaps. MCE is a great resource. Consider transportation, EVs, bond measures.

Belle: There is a pertinent Yale study on public support. Organizing for Action (OFA) has discovered a lack of grassroots knowledge about the issues of climate change. Where to begin: form a subgroup; conduct basic education, "Climate 101"?

Kiki: The Sustainable organizations have struggled with this. They target advocacy and policy to decisionmakers and public education to the people. There is an alternative to trying to cover everything: Target one or two key areas so that the organization's energy does not get dissipated.

Bob: Climate is a huge area, and there are many positions. It's easy to latch on to what is close at hand. Among the most important areas are MCE/CCAs. Identify what we can do concerning the challenges they identify. The most important challenges likely go beyond MCE and include issues such as regionalization of the grid. These are state-wide or region-wide issues.

Nona: Adaptation is important, as well as mitigation. Adaptation is the next phase of the Vulnerability Assessment.

Doug: We plan to have Chris Choo as our guest speaker in January or February.

Nancy: We need to educate ourselves before action. Getting a speaker for a few people may present a problem. In developing a "Climate 101," the most useful perspective might be the economic benefits rather than the environmental issue. This is broader, and you're not preaching to the choir.

Carleen: Present the leading, exciting, new option. For example, EVs. This is the approach of the organization, Marin CAN. As in cooking, to introduce something new, control the percentage of "kale v. cheese."

Sarah: What is the goal of the Climate Action Working Group? Is it a convener of experts and organizations? Learning and sharing: A forum to facilitate action, rather than taking positions of its own?

Nona: Providing a forum is a unique strength of the group. MCL takes positions that come out of what we've learned in committees.

Kate: MCL needs to develop climate-based positions and do its own advocacy. It values a high level of expertise in identifying issues. For example, if everything were electric, and we were dependent on PG&E for distribution, what are our vulnerabilities?

Dale: The vulnerability is addressed by batteries, in conjunction with solar. This changes the distribution model and is a threat to MCE. We don't need gas.

Kate: At the Bay Area Open Space Council meeting, it was clear that there will be a lot of rebuilding that provides an opportunity to move the dial.

Pam: In conclusion, CAWG is a forum. We don't want to duplicate efforts; Cool the Air focuses on EVs. We want to provide a way to share the results of meetings, etc. Please talk with Pam about this effort after the meeting.

Doug: Re requests for speakers, we're dealing with redundancy.

Bill: There are critical areas to look at collectively and divide up. MCL has an advocacy role and also a deep diving role. We need to identify the most significant areas. MCE and its meetings are critical. Also the 2025 goal of 100% renewable energy. Drawdown Marin, a set of coherent ideas. Nobody is tracking meetings week to week. Natural gas: there is a gap in attention being paid to building. TAM is a pressure point.

Kiki: MCE, its impediments; PG&E distribution; the move to localized storage and distribution; community solar systems, supporting local buildings; communication with MCE.

Tamra: Power walls are happening because of Tesla.

Kiki: The state rebate program.

Bill: Climate preparedness.

Nona: Sequestration is a related issue.

Doug: There is a New Yorker article on sequestration by mechanical means.

Judy F.: Maintain contact with youth.

Nona: The article hits sequestration by stuffing carbon down a hole. It's important to understand ongoing research. It would be useful to hear from [soil scientist] Michael Ulmer about research.

Bill: The Marin contribution is nature-based.

Discussion 2: MCE Update, J.R. Killigrew, MCE Community Development Manager

In April 2018, MCE will add nine new communities in Contra Costa County: Concord, Danville, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburgh, San Ramon, and unincorporated Contra Costa County. MCE already provides service to El Cerrito, Lafayette, San Pablo, Richmond, and Walnut Creek. The impact is that MCE's 2800 gwh load will double in 2018. They will expand from 255,000 accounts to 500,000 accounts. MCE will open an office Concord, in addition to the San Rafael office.

Each community will have a vote on the MCE board, except for Napa. There are now 27 members on the board.

Doug: MCE's expansion in scale will lead to cost savings. The tradeoff is a lack of focus.

J.R.: That's a fair assessment. Re scale, each addition is available to the communities we serve. There is a concerted effort. The people served still have access to board members. The MCE boundary is set at Solano County. That's a line in the sand.

Belle: What keeps MCE from expanding beyond that boundary—for example, to Sonoma County? A. Interest. We don't seek out those who are not interested.

Belle: Deep Green gets to the 5 percent goal in one year. A. MCE was founded in 2010. It took 7 years to get to 5 percent. Now we hit the reset button. With the new communities on board, it's back down to 2 percent Deep Green. The 2017 success was due to collaboration. In terms of financing, we have not analyzed the barriers to low-income customers. Our focus is on providing cost-effective choice.

Kiki: The low percentage of Deep Green enrollment is not due to market factors; it's due to the lack of MCE promotion. The simplest solution would be for the entire product mix to be 100% renewable.

J.R.: The Deep Green 100% renewable goal is still on track. This is not the same as carbon-free. The goal is carbon-free by 2015 (minimal carbon, not "carbon free." There are carbon accounting issues.)

Dale: It seems backwards to charge more for carbon-free when renewables are cheaper [than fossil fuels]. Why is it taking so long to get to 100 percent? A. The original goal was to provide a cleaner fuel mix than the existing utility. Geography is an issue; using renewables from California vs. a neighboring state. We pay a premium for California renewables. MCE's expanded service area gives it more purchasing power. Bigger projects are more cost-effective. It's not cheaper than PG&E currently.

Sarah: RE the issue of carbon-free v. renewable: If, for example, Light Green reaches a result of 90% carbon free, the cost of achieving additional reductions per metric ton increases. At that point, it might become more effective to spend the money somewhere else. Large hydro is carbon-free but not renewable.

J.R.: Light Green ratchets up by a couple of percentage points per year. The proposed CAISO integration raises the problem of adding coal to the fuel mix. Deep Green/Light Green is one of many solutions. MCE will reevaluate the product mix but expects to offer consumers at least two choices.

Tamra: There has been positive feedback on the simplified opt-up procedure.

Bob: Re the CAISO expansion proposal, where do things stand? A. It's a double-edged sword. There are less expensive renewables in other states and an increased ability to avoid curtailment. On the other hand, fossil fuel is potentially added to the mix. It would be helpful to simplify, to have one concrete emissions factor to track.

Doug: NRDC and the Sierra Club are split on this issue.

J.R.: There is a pervasive ignorance about the environmental impact of natural gas. Leakage is not accounted for. Natural gas is 85 times more potent than carbon dioxide. The solution is a push toward electrification. This is a business opportunity to decarbonize.

Carleen: I have a few questions. 1. Is there a voting position on the board for a public advocate? A. No. 2. Is the 2025 100% carbon free goal approved by the board? A. Yes. 3. What are the

most important focus areas for MCE? A. The underlying issue is electrification. The carbon free and 100% renewables goals. MCE's business plan and integrated resource plan are publicly available. As opportunities arise, MCE may formulate a vision plan.

Bill: Doug has links to distribute to the list. We need roadmaps and pressure points. Will there be a Deep Green phaseout? A. Deep Green will still be around. Bill: The electrification idea is great. Is it part of the plan? What is the flow of money? Are there robust incentives for installing heat pumps, etc.? A. MCE is moving toward an incentive position. It's important for the community, as well as MCE staff, to apply pressure.

Bob: With the proliferation of CCAs, a pooling of purchasing power is a missed opportunity. Has MCE given thought to coordinating purchases? A. Yes. Small collaboratives will scale up. Bob: Re increased EV use, are there MCE projections/concerns about the grid and infrastructure? A. The projections are conservative re the future load of EVs; 28% increases per year to reach 15% of the vehicles on the road. This is a great opportunity for electricity sales. PG&E is in the forefront of infrastructure. The demand charges kill fast-chargers. The utility will charge a premium for high demand on the infrastructure.

Tom: You need storage capacity to handle it.

Doug: There's a need for ground rules to handle EV demand surges.

Dale: The methane issue is important. Be bolder in your education about the public benefit of electrification.

Kiki: We're there for support.

Tamra: What about microgrids, power walls, etc.? How do these fit together? A. There is no formal MCE position. Paul [Liotsakis] is a future speaker and can give a resilience perspective. The East Bay community is first for active, independent microgrids. It's a new customer class.

Kurt: One word, "transportation." Data is the foundation. In 2005, transportation accounted for a smaller percentage of emissions because electricity emissions were higher 10 years ago. Transportation is now in the position that electricity occupied in 2005; future reductions will occur there. We don't need to create an MCE for that purpose; TAM already exists. Measure A funding is expiring but will likely be reauthorized. However, most of the funding is already allocated, not for electrification of transportation. There's a TAM meeting on December 11. The support of the environmental community is essential.

Kate: It's not only energy; there's a land use dimension. There's a need for support in general plans, etc.

Nona: The percentage of transportation emissions has increased, not the absolute numbers.

Sarah: Measure A expires in 2020, not this year. We should go back not with the same plan, but a visionary plan.

Doug: Are MCE and TAM working together? A. Yes. Trips are analyzed by origin and destination. There's a baseline inventory—a moving target because of questions as to whether to include pass-through miles. There's a lack of jurisdiction over freeways. Electrification of transportation is one factor, but EVs are not a reasonable solution for everyone. We need good analysis of possible solutions and the expenses for each solution.

Bill: The recommendation going to the TAM board is conservative. The tax atmosphere is toxic in Marin. Maybe in 2-3 years, go back with a request for a ¼ cent increase. Measure B has an increment for EVs.

Tom: MCE is a public agency. Use all resources, a community-integrated approach. If possible, rely on energy efficiency first. Land use is also a factor.

Next month: Paul Liotsakis will be our speaker. J.R. will send out a listing of MCE customer programs. There will be an opportunity to connect programs with participants.

Nona: It's important to know the larger context.

Meeting adjourned 11:08.

The next CAWG meeting will be on Dec. 15.

Minutes: PN.