

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: January 13, 2017
Muir Woods Conference Room, 175 N. Redwood Blvd., San Rafael

Draft Minutes

Present: Doug Wilson, Pam Reaves, Rick Fraites, Nona Dennis, Ed Mainland, Eva Buxton, Mary Morgan, Heather Furmidge, Pat Nelson, Tom Flynn, Roger Roberts, Belle Cole, Kiki la Porta, Bob Miller, Bill Carney, David Haskell. Guests: Helene Marsh, Sarah Loughran, students from the Environmental Forum Master Class 43, working on a project to convince Marin County and eight Marin municipalities to use MCE Deep Green for all municipal energy use.

Doug called the meeting to order at 9:03.

Brief Introductions

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

The minutes December minutes were approved with corrections. M/S, Rick/Heather. Approved.

Announcements

- a. There will be a CPUC workshop on CCAs (Community Choice Aggregation) on February 1 at the CPUC office. Doug and Ed will go.

Comments:

Ed: CCAs will carry 60 percent-plus of the load of utilities. The workshop is about protecting utilities. Our role is to make a statement after a presentation by experts. Our theme should be that utilities must change and evolve. The Sierra Club will be there.

Doug: The experts are not impartial.

- b. The Hwy 37 planning group will meet on February 2 on Mare Island. The group behind the plan to build a toll causeway in exchange for ownership is rumored to be pulling out.

Comments:

Nona: They lost a supporter when Gary Giacomini died. The current flooding shows that the causeway would not solve the problem.

Bill: What would be preferable?

Doug: The issue is that the problem is not prioritized. And an expensive one-way causeway is far from a solution. Cal Trans is not good at planning.

Nona: The proposed causeway is one-way, eastbound, including bicycles. There would be a future upgrade for the westbound side of Hwy 37 and other work including restoration of the marsh complex. The proposal does not solve the problem for the lowest portion of Hwy 37.

Ed: How much of the flooding is due to sea level rise and how much to rain?

Nona: Both.

Bill: How high will the roadway be? There should be a nexus of mitigation and adaptation.

Rick: Like Yolo, pretty high up.

- a. Bruce Riordan, of the Climate Readiness Institute, will present at the Environmental Forum lecture series on January 15, 7:00 p.m. at the Corte Madera Community Center. Peter Joseph will speak also.
- b. The California Climate Change Symposium 2017 will be held in Sacramento on January 25-26.
- c. A group popped up at the December 19 Time to Lead on Climate Town Meeting, "Mill Valley Can." Doug invited them to attend our meetings.

Comments:

Roger: Do they have a plan? Doug: Not yet. They have various subcommittees.

Belle: They are good at capturing the spirit of the moment with focus groups—the largest one is on environment/climate. They want organizations like this in several cities.

Discussion 1: Principles. What are the principles by which we make decisions and set our priorities (Pam)

What is the focus? There is an overlap with social justice. Our MCL organizational focus is on the natural world. Our mission is to preserve, protect, and enhance Marin's natural assets. With the environmental disaster approaching at the national and state level, we come back to Marin.

Roger: Look at the state and national events as impacts on Marin. We supported AB 32. We are not removing ourselves from the larger context.

Heather: We should ask Doug for a report on the January 25-26 conference.

Tom: We should recognize the history of Marin acting as an innovator. We stepped out to preserve land. MALT grew into a national land trust movement. Emphasize our ability to lead and innovate.

Nona: Is there a statement of committee mission goals? The MCL mission has focused on Marin, but we have gone beyond that concerning issues such as scenic rivers, the peripheral canal, and

climate. At a minimum, the state level is critical. Much of work has an anthropocentric focus. I have been pushing a focus on the natural world and will continue to do so.

Pam: What is the role of social and environmental equity?

Roger: This depends on how it arises. We support equitable treatment of communities on water, for example. There is a cross-connection.

Pam: Jeff Rhoads has a contract from the City of San Rafael on shoring up the Canal.

Tom: There are natural adaptation strategies to be pursued. Oyster beds, for example.

Doug: More generally, we need to stay the course. There is opposition we haven't had before. Keep our focus. Press forward as a model.

Nona: How do we get beyond group-think? The initial effort is to draft a statement of principles setting out the principles of MCL and the groups represented here. Similar to the efforts 20, 30, 40 years ago.

Kiki: There is a confluence, a need to make the natural environment more resilient. There are impacts to fire, flood, biodiversity. Climate change breaks down ecological connections. Shoring them up is a human effort.

Nona: The Mt. Tam science conference addressed this. It is being discussed.

Bill: The work of the Climate Action Working Group is perfectly consistent with MCL principles. Climate doesn't know about boundaries. Given MCL's record, much of our effective work will be on energy, etc. Get this articulated. Use our voice up the channels.

Belle: We're in a mode of defense. We need a watchdog. We need a filter. OFA has a national group.

Roger: What about preemption?

Nona: It is important to coordinate with OFA, other groups.

Pam: That's action, not a principle. It underscores the need to break down siloes.

Bill: We need to understand what all the groups around the table are doing and promote each other. We need an open table to bring in groups and coordinate.

Tom: The unsaid principle is synergy. I agree with Nona's suggestion re drafting a statement. We need to build alliances with low-income communities. The least energy-efficient housing is rental, particularly low-income. How can we be a catalyst?

Doug: Volunteers?

Nona: I see people with relevant experience. Ed, Bill, Mary, Belle. Distill what other organizations have done.

Mary: I have an alternative suggestion: Clarify that our priority is natural assets, not social equity. Listen to future discussions where these issues are clearer.

Belle: What issues are we not getting now?

Mary: Hear how the natural asset and social equity lenses come up.

Belle: There are other issues we're not adequately addressing. I'm not saying we shouldn't continue our current focus. 350.org has moved away from a climate focus toward social equity—moving away from siloes, narrow paths. How do we get there?

Roger: We need to be politick. Join with others going in the direction we want to go.

Kiki: The new normal must include this.

Ed: Natural assets are not static. They are changed by climate disruption. Invasive species may no longer be so—look at the spartina movement. Round up funding; connect health, environment, climate. The Sierra Club is getting into the health area.

Discussion 2: Tom Flynn's Report on West Marin Dairies

We are working to help organize the effort to have dairies be more energy efficient, use methane digesters. This is occurring on the Strauss, Giacomini ranches. There is recognition that methane has 25 times the impact on climate as CO₂. SB 1383 regulates GHG emissions on dairies and landfills. The bill tackles short-lived climate pollutants. This leads to a bigger effect short-term. The target is to reduce methane emission to 40% below 2013 levels by 2030. Set targets and implement by regulations. A carrot-and-stick approach using cap-and-trade funds.

Report on GHG mitigation strategies for California dairies: The big, Central Valley dairies have most of the digesters. According to the Marin Climate Action Plan, dairies are the largest source of methane emissions in unincorporated Marin. We are speaking with Clover and Strauss re the most cost-effective methods of proceeding. David Lewis offered to help with outreach. There is possible NRCS funding for energy audits. Get the lay of the land. Look at different options, maybe multiple dairies feeding into a single digester. Tillamook is an example.

Belle and Nona: This is not universally embraced. Farmers have their hands full. This market sector is under continual economic pressure. People are moving to non-dairy products.

Nona: There is an interesting report opposing SB 1383 as a massive blow.

Ed: Regarding what MCL can do, follow up on the letter to MCE. Look at funding from MCE revenues.

Tom: We had a meeting with MCE. It would help if there were more response from MCE. We got more of a response from Sonoma Clean Power. There was lots of interest from PG&E. Transmission lines are maxed out. Energy efficiency would ease this. Digesters are not meeting all energy needs on site.

Discussion 3: Report and Update re Meeting with Supervisor Damon Connolly re Marin Climate Action Plan (Pam, Doug, and Bob)

Pam reported that the group met with Supervisor Connolly last Friday and received an update on the technical team and calendar. An important concern is that money, which is given for particular purposes, keeps getting spent. Who decides the priorities and determines the bang-for-the-buck? It would further their understanding to look at the metrics before deciding.

Bob: Look at cost-effective actions vs. feel-good activities. The question is how to decide allocation. How important is a model activity? Look at R&D activity where the amount of money could help accelerate development.

Roger: Is there an issue associated with the nature of the grant Request for Proposals? Do we need a targeted program for R&D?

Doug: Look at grants from the perspective of how they meet our needs.

Pam: We asked about the budget process. It's unclear because it's complex and new. We want to get into the process earlier, before things are already decided.

Roger: Some of the sourcing is dedicated, for example, cigarette and gas taxes. Where there is discretion, make sure it is used effectively.

Bob: A project takes place outside of siloes. Cross-department budget allocation is not typical.

Belle: This is a good topic to include in all CAP implementation meetings.

Kiki: Have a citizens advisory committee to discuss priorities. We should have an opportunity to participate in budget decisions. I have heard no support for directing 50% of funding to subsidize the Green Commute for County employees.

Discussion 4: Report by Environmental Forum students Helene Marsh and Sarah Loughran on their project to promote Deep Green use among municipalities

Helene and Sarah passed out materials describing their project upcoming presentations by public officials, and a request to Marin governments to go Deep Green.

Helene: The rationale for the project is that municipal use of Deep Green is the most cost-effective way to reduce GHG emissions. It is a cheaper and more sensible alternative. Other cities should follow the lead of Fairfax, San Anselmo, and Belvedere, which have fully adopted Deep Green. We have met with Nancy Vernon (aide to District 2 Supervisor Katie Rice), city staff, and MCE. We will meet with Leslie Alden (aide to District 3 Supervisor Kate Sears).

Sarah: GHG inventories updated in 2015 will be released. This will provide an opportunity speak. Christine O'Rourke will present to Tiburon, Larkspur, Novato, San Rafael, Sausalito, Corte Madera, and Ross. Danielle Stoud will present to Mill Valley. The cost for Mill Valley to go Deep Green is only \$15,000. The cost for San Rafael to go Deep Green is \$50,000. They have solar and LED projects that will enable them to meet GHG reduction targets and obtain electricity for 1 cent per KWH. It is cost-effective and an opportunity to lead by example.

Comments:

Kiki: In talking to the cities, it is more than a matter of meeting GHG reduction targets. It is a way to invest in the community. They can mitigate costs by implementing simple energy-efficiency measures.

Rick: Have you considered contacting sewer and water districts?

Helene: We are aware, but are prioritizing for now.

Ed: Josh Fryday is behind your effort. He looks forward to making common cause. Deep Green revenues go into local solar projects.

Doug: Mayors and council members meet once a month.

Belle: Is this for a course, or are you working with an organization? A: We have a statement of support from organizations, and will continue working on this after the course.

Roger: Can I go to the Larkspur presentation and speak up for this? A: Yes.

Discussion 5: Report on Novato Climate Action Plan (Ed)

This is etched in granite. In an effort to focus the plan, Sustainable Novato sent a letter. There is a difference between the County and what they heard from Chris Jones. They talked to Bob Brown. The big push is to a fully funded employee to coordinate. Without such an employee, Bob Brown says the plan can't be implemented. Only San Rafael has a coordinator. Novato is breaking new ground. When they disclose the budget, that will show the priorities.

Kiki: It is useful for others to participate.

Meeting with Sabrina Sihakom, Marin's new point person on climate

Sabrina described her background as sustainability coordinator in the wine industry and her role in helping to put together a subcommittee to coordinate the Climate Action Plan.

Comments:

Doug: What about the Green Commute?

Sabrina: This was launched in November to incentivize County employees to take green commuting options. One quarter of employees come from Sonoma County. This will serve as a possible model for other programs.

Doug: Do you document GHG impacts? A: Yes.

Bill: I encourage you to go beyond the San Rafael model. Structure it so that you have community input at the core re priorities and implementation. Better not to have a dog-and-pony show that predominates. You need a forum to address the entire county. Have representatives from all.

Pam: If citizens are not brought in, it's tougher to sell. You need to create understanding of implementation and priorities.

Sabrina: We will start by implementing what is within our jurisdiction, then go beyond that via collaboration with all jurisdictions.

Kiki: There is enormous knowledge and dedication in the community. The County would do well to harness this. There are also the challenges of the siloed approach, the gap in awareness. Get information and implement a programmatic approach. We need clear energy and message support. A: We're going in that direction. Good feedback.

Sabrina (summary/conclusion): We will get feedback on what priorities matter to the community. There is a lack of a clear supply curve (specific to Marin), cost for carbon reduction. This is the priority.

Bob: The Green Commute is \$250/metric ton, based on back-of-the-envelope calculations. Leading by example must include cost-effective behavior.

Kiki: What has the biggest bang for the buck? Dedicate effort to helping citizens reduce emissions. Not only modeling, but organizing and mobilizing.

Doug: Try for candid conversations, a collaborative project. We're hoping the County will listen.

Nona: Exert pressure if you don't see this happening. MCL is a friend and critic, is persistent in tracking what happens.

Sabrina: We need to empower and mobilize all with an interest.

Doug: Our next meeting is February 17. We will have Chris Choo as a speaker.

Nona: The newsletter will have a story on the BayWAVE report. The first draft had numbers, but they were stripped out. They want to frame the message.

Meeting adjourned 11:05.

Minutes: PN.