

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: October 19, 2018

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

Present: Chairman Doug Wilson; Judy Ford, Sarah Loughran, Helene Marsh, Dale Miller, Ed Mainland, Nona Dennis, Pat Nelson, Dan Segedin, Ken Strong, Ken Jones, Greg Thompson, Bob Miller, David Kuhnhardt, Rick Fraites, Ann Thomas, Kate Powers, Pam Reaves, Linda Novy, Susan Stompe, Bob Archer, Robert Gould.

Speakers: Aleka Seville, Director, Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Agency; Dana Armanino, Principal Planner, Sustainability, County of Marin.

Chairman Doug Wilson called the meeting to order at 9:08.

Brief Introductions

9:10 Discussion 1: Compare and contrast structures and approaches for dealing with climate change in Sonoma and Marin.

Chairman Doug Wilson introduced the speakers and the purpose of the discussion: to promote understanding of how the two counties work and differ on this issue.

Aleka: Re “Who we are and what we do”: The Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Agency is a regional climate protection authority. It shares a board with the transportation authority. It was established in 2009 to coordinate climate efforts among Sonoma County’s nine cities and multiple agencies. This occurred after Ann Hancock got the attention of agencies and cities. The agency is a state-sponsored local authority. It implements a countywide effort focused on mitigation. The agency focus is on implementation rather than planning. Its efforts build on commitments made in a regional framework: a countywide climate action plan (CAP) for all communities in Sonoma County and a 2020 and Beyond plan.

Aleka joined the agency in April and is working on realizing goals for the near and intermediate future. The goal for 2020 is to achieve an emission level 25% below 1990 levels. Levels are currently 9% below 1990 levels. The agency’s efforts are aligned with state goals for 2030 and 2050.

Dana: Dana compared and contrasted the structure and history of climate efforts in Marin. In 2008, under a grant from MCE, the city managers got together to form the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership, to work on Climate Action Plans. The focus is on mitigation; adaptation is addressed in the BayWAVE initiative. In Marin there is a County CAP for unincorporated areas and separate CAPs for each city/town. The underlying idea is that each city will have ownership of its own plan. However, the County provides staff time and templates that cities may use, under the leadership of Christine O’Rourke. The CAPs use the same methodology.

Questions and Comments

Doug: The Marin Carbon Project has some big players, not elected, people who work at the staff level at their institutions. What kind of staff does Sonoma County have; how does it work on adaptation? A. (Aleka) Sonoma focuses on mitigation. It has the ability to coordinate actions. There are other organizations that work on adaptation. There is a resiliency framework developed after the fire, which is coordinated with the community: ORR, the Office of Recovery and Resiliency.

Doug: There is lots of networking. A. (Aleka) We mobilize and empower cities, consider how to motivate them, what they focus on. We have the CAP. Each city has a way to implement it—it's a constant struggle.

Doug: Marin is good at coordinating, but we don't have unification. A. (Dana) Marin is fairly connected; we leverage each other. San Rafael, Novato, MCE are entrepreneurial, seize opportunity, mobilize to get grants.

Doug: How important is structure? A. (Aleka) We haven't touched on goals. The mission of coordination is difficult to define. What is the goal?

Nona: What are the points of authority in Sonoma County? In Marin, it's the Board of Supervisors. In Sonoma, how do you work together with the supervisors? Where does the buck stop? What is the implementing authority? A. (Aleka) We have a 12-member board with representatives from the cities and the county. We share a board with the Transportation Authority. We obtained board input on matters such as e-bikes, BAAQMD funding, etc. We are independent from the Board of Supervisors. Measures are meant to be implemented by the cities. We were sued by River Watch under CEQA. We lost the court decision and did not appeal, taking a financial hit. The court decertified our EIR (our "playbook") on the ground that we did not fully account for emissions generated outside the county borders, such as emissions from the wine industry. Now, the cities go to their councils.

Dana: In Marin, it's a hybrid system. The county takes some initiative on grants to benefit all cities. We provide resources, make presentations. The board can't make a city adopt a green building ordinance, for example. There's not an extra level of authority above.

Dale: Does a Regional Climate Protection Agency have influence on building codes, EVs? A. (Aleka) We have influence via the decision plan, "Shift Sonoma County," which outlines steps to take. There is a working group that addresses EV infrastructure siting, identifies priorities and barriers. There is a template for EV resolutions.

Doug: They work with Sonoma Clean Power.

Dale: There is no enforcement authority? A. No.

Bob M.: What is your relationship with Sonoma Clean Power? A. (Aleka) They make local contributions. We meet bi-weekly. There is a common interest in transportation infrastructure and a collective goal. We identify funding, potential partners, opportunities to coordinate.

Bob M.: In Marin, what is the relationship to MCE? A. (Dana) We meet monthly, coordinate in defining energy efficiency, work to ensure that there is not any duplication or gaps. We have a good relationship. (Aleka) Sonoma County looked at Marin as an example on matters such as building an energy marketplace, addressing e-bikes, going all-electric in homes. (Dana) There is a common focus on low-income, multi-family users. We partner on training, have a common language.

Doug: How do you coordinate with citizens? Drawdown, the CAP network. How do you change behavior? A. (Aleka) We have a staff working group. We meet quarterly with a community action advisory committee. North Bay citizens are engaged. There is a wealth of expertise. We met this month regarding a challenge around specific actions. BAAQMD offered a year of staff capacity. Citizens identify actions and ways to engage. They get the word out, promote wider engagement. (Dana) That's similar to the Cool Cities Network. Re the BAAQMD offer, we tried it here and there was not a lot of uptake. And after the year was up, there was the issue of negotiating for licensing for the software program. (Aleka) Legal is reviewing the offer. (Dana) Nail down the licensing fee. (Aleka) The program is only as good as the data and engagement. We develop metrics to measure at six months and one year. (Dana) To promote citizen engagement, we provided grants for Resilient Neighborhoods. Hold people accountable. There are different ways to engage: support directly, identify partners, help them to get grants. There needs to be more of a dialogue. The Drawdown community engagement council is producing a game plan, growing the program.

Bob A.: One avenue is to focus on specific actions, such as measures to meet the 2020 goal. There is also R&D. A. (Aleka) We have over 80 measures in our plan. There are nine cities and the county. Each city has its own measures within the context of regional and state action. What are the levers for impacts? Each city calculates its own. What do we do when cities don't meet their goal? Just hire a consultant and update the plan. Is that right? The cities are swamped and don't have sustainability staff, which makes implementation more difficult. And climate is separate from the General Plan.

Robert G.: The Sausalito General Plan mentions climate, but it is not actionable. The cities need resources.

Pam: San Rafael is halfway through its 2040 General Plan update. The dots are not connected with the severity of the problem. The real issue is sea level rise and the resulting health hazards. There is not enough urgency. Are you able to influence coordination with city staff?

Kate: It feels like climate advocates are just another stakeholder in the room.

Dana: It's feeding into the county-wide plan. Climate is mentioned in every chapter, and the board is supportive. Mill Valley put climate measures in its General Plan. Public comment can underline the urgency.

Aleka: Take the burden off the city.

Pam: Mentioning climate is different from adaptation.

Aleka: SB 379 requires cities and counties to include climate adaptation and resiliency strategies in the safety elements of their general plans. Guidance is available. This will influence outcomes. This is integrated in Sonoma's ORR (Office of Recovery and Resiliency) framework.

Ken: Work with BAAQMD, their Spare the Air plan. They are working on a model ordinance, can help with funding. A. (Aleka) We are developing a resolution, what plans will look like. They are funding two air districts in the county. We have a great relationship. Ken: 350.org is closely tied to this effort. There is an opportunity to talk.

Sarah: How do you effect a focus on actions with the biggest bang for the buck? A. (Dana) That's where our focus goes because of our limited budget. For example, Deep Green, energy efficiency, transportation, EVs. The lowest-hanging fruit. We can't seem to shift people to buses. Higher-hanging fruit includes electrification of homes, a cement-alternative ordinance.

Doug: Is there an equivalent to Drawdown, which brings together many organizations that each do their own thing? This could strengthen the dialogue and interaction, coordinate people to mobilize an effort. A. (Aleka) There are incredible nonprofits that create a two-way dialogue. Where can we get the most impact—support the cities in engaging the community. Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Agency gives presentations that support and empower cities.

Bob M.: What kind of support is needed from the state, so that you don't have to reinvent the wheel? A. (Aleka) The scoping plan is vague. There is room for the state to come in, identify what to focus on at different scales. The state could work with OPR and their guidelines. This would be a good opportunity as we hit 2020. The US Conference of Mayor could get more involved. This is a member-driven organization throughout the United States. We could focus on housing now, in an equitable and environmentally sound way. This is a rural and urban challenge. (Dana) Sometimes you want them to get out of the way. For example, the messages we send get tied up in the PUC. They should clean their own house.

Q. Big picture: The scale of the problem is getting far worse, as indicated by the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. The response is not commensurate with the scale of the problem. What is the role of government in mobilizing all sectors? A. (Aleka) We should understand the uniqueness of the North Bay. Many of us are privileged people who have the luxury of change-behavior. The social infrastructure often does nothing for working families.

Robert G.: The social infrastructure needs to change. Think outside the box. Marin can help with this, give ideas.

Nona: Ann Hancock has been doing this for 20 years. This influence pervades Marin. A. (Aleka). BCDC does incredible work. MTC, ABAG, BAAQMD. They are in the same building; their planners are on the same floor.

10:15 Discussion 2: Updates on Drawdown Marin, Marin Climate Action Network (Doug)

Doug: We are convening in November to discuss 100% renewable energy, the first of the six Drawdown focus areas.

Dana: The stakeholder collaboration invitations went out this week. The first meeting on transportation, the second focus area, will be held in December or January. The other focus areas will be discussed in early 2019.

David: There was an MCAN workshop on Thinking Big at the Bioneers conference. There were six area-focus tables. This is not a top-down effort. In Corte Madera, the 2016 Climate Action Plan was never adopted by the council. They will refresh it and adopt in December.

Doug: The plan is boiler plate. The plan itself does not help to move action. Most groups work on EVs, energy, look at the bang for the buck.

Dana: The next iteration of the plan is different. The point now is engaging action. The plan should be a living document. The technology is changing. Pull out what is coming from Drawdown.

Doug: The process is a great opportunity to get people engaged.

Q. What is the feel for Drawdown's progress? A. It depends on the responses to invitations. We need to get more people to the table. Alex Porteshawver, Coordinator of Drawdown Marin, has established a roadmap with a challenging 12-month time horizon.

10:25 Discussion 3: Election Digest

Kate: (re Measure AA) TAM engaged a consultant. Although Kate wanted to write a letter responding to Dick Spotswood, TAM was reluctant to possibly trigger a negative response. The strategy was to make clear what a "yes" vote on AA means.

Doug: Even if it's not perfect, Marin needs it. The tax is regressive, but it also benefits low-income citizens who do not have cars. It brings in matching funds and creates flexibility.

Kate: Over 50% of AA funds go to Marin Transit. We are facing change in the next 20-30 years and need to pay attention to the aging and transit-dependent population. Make transit convenient and efficient. What could it look like, and how can we use funds efficiently.

David: Proposition 6? A. No, it didn't pass.

Ed: Sustainable Marin endorsed Measure AA but with a challenge letter stating that TAM is stuck in the 50s. A follow-up letter is planned.

Doug: Drawdown's second element, transportation, is evolving. It's an area of work that needs vision.

Robert G.: There is so much innovation: automated EVs, rideshare—different concepts, not just a few big buses.

Bob M.: Regarding the letter, TAM needs to change. It is a 50s agency. They need to think about a longer-term plan, more focus on GHGs, working with MCE.

Ed: The staff of TAM is more progressive than the electeds on the board, who have no spine to pursue this vision because the community is not with this.

Dale: Regarding legislation, the \$3500 federal tax credit for EVs is being limited for Tesla. The senator from Wyoming wants to repeal it and tax EVs. The senator from Nevada wants to extend it. The senator from Vermont wants to change it to an immediate credit from the dealer. Huffman is not doing enough. Next week is the deadline to comment on the CAFÉ standard. Ford, a proponent for changing the CAFÉ, sold only 4 EVs. We need more pressure on officials. Buildings are still being built that do not have enough access to EV charging.

Doug: The built environment is an aspect of Drawdown.

Reports

Drawdown (Doug). Drawdown is backing MCE. MCE had a board retreat, to complete the picture for new board members. The board is now huge. Regulatory issues for MCE include the PCIA, under which MCE customers are charged for energy purchased for customers who subsequently left PG&E to become MCE customers. This surplus energy is dumped on the energy market at very low prices. It's a "black box" fee, without public access to the calculation method. The CPUC recently adopted an unfavorable alternative decision regarding the PCIA. Gov. Brown has staffed the CPUC with utility-friendly commissioners. MCE needs support from citizens.

Bob M.: There's a YouTube video of the MCE retreat. It's informative on the legislative/regulatory front.

David: The session on regionalization is interesting.

Ed: At the retreat, Ed presented a 6-page analysis regarding improved oversight, which he is willing to share. An ISO spokesman presented for a full hour, without counterargument. Dawn Weisz's approach is inadequate. The PCIA decision is the greatest defeat in the history of CCAs. It hampers the financial viability of CCAs; it's like a race handicap. They could rectify the problem by closing down Diablo Canyon. That would solve the stranded asset problem. Cal CCA is in the position of coming to a gunfight with a butter knife. Direct access is another major defeat. Go on social media to dispel the cloud of misinformation.

Doug: We should lobby Newsom to change the composition of the CPUC. He does not have the same debt to utilities that Brown has.

Ed: There's a vacancy on the CPUC. Peterman's term is ending, and she will not run again.

Q. How do we address curtailment policies, the other side of the equation?

Doug: We asked about the Dutch curve in the decision regarding which energy sources to curtail first. The answer from regionalization proponents just assumed the existing situation.

Robert G.: The existing system for purchasing energy across state lines is more expensive. There are much better answers than regionalization.

Bob M.: What is happening at the state level is affecting everyone. Gas electricity is coming in by contract. We don't have to do it that way.

EV Update (Dale). We continue to push for legislation. People continue to buy new gas-powered cars.

Doug: We need dealership allies.

David: Novato Chevrolet is selling EVs.

Comment: It's the fox guarding the henhouse.

Dale: The issue is convincing consumers to ask for EVs and infrastructure.

Rick: There are ten charging stations at Safeway.

Ed: The matter of the 36-pump gas station may be heard at the Novato Planning Commission meeting on November 5.

Environmental Forum (Helene). The current Master Class is more than halfway through the class. There will be an event on November 19: The Great Divide: Can We Work Together for a Healthy Environment, featuring Jared Huffman, Arlie Hochschild, and Mark Hertzgaard. The film series in Novato will show Rebels with a Cause on December 6. The spring Lecture Series topics will include climate protection, biomimicry, and a look at the big picture re carbon sequestration. Check the website at marinefm.org.

Sarah: The Wastewater District has moved from PG&E to MCE's Light Green. Light Green is 90% GHG-free. Think separately re GHG-free and renewable. The difference is large hydro.

Doug: Deep Green and Light Green are converging.

Comment: Large hydro is not GHG-free. Unpack the meaning.

350.org (Ken). Discussion is proceeding re a climate emergency declaration. All Bay Area cities can sign on. There will be a meeting in February. The youth lawsuit invoking the public trust doctrine to challenge government inaction on climate change is starting on October 29. 350.org is a party to PCIA proceedings at the CPUC. Few groups are parties in the case. Party actions have more effect than petitions and comments of legislators. The portfolio management aspect of the case is still continuing. There is still time to become a party.

Bob M.: We will follow up.

David: Citizens Climate Lobby will present a 3-hour deep dive on climate solutions at Corte Madera Book Passage on November 18. Peter Joseph will speak.

Comment: Follow-up on the North Bay Climate Summit: They are mustering participants and discussing how to implement recommendations. There will be a nuts-and-bolts workshop. Josh Fryday is engaged.

Doug: What is the relationship with Drawdown Marin. A. That is unfolding.

Ed: Fryday's vision is to break down siloes and Balkanization. The September summit was successful. We need to harness the enthusiasm.

Doug: The Sustainable Enterprise Conference will take place on October 25.

Next month's meeting will take place on November 16. BAAQMD has been invited to speak.

Meeting adjourned 11:15.

Minutes: PN.