

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee

March 10, 2016

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair, Greg Zitney, Tom Boss, Linda Novy, Al Baumann, Robert Eichstaedt, Judy Teichman, Roger Roberts, Paul Minault, Mia Monroe (NPS), Victor Bjelajac (SP), Angelo Douvos, Pat O'Brien, Matt Sagues, Carl Somers (Marin County Parks), Jeff Wong, Chris Blagg, Larry Scheibel, Rick Fraites, Eva Buxton, Larry Kennings, Susan Stompe, and Kate Powers.

Meeting was called to order by Nona at 3:00 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) Walk into History Mt Tam East Peak, date change to April 16; 2) Senior Walk, Hamilton Restoration Project, March 24; 3) MMWD Watershed Committee, March 18; 4) Marin County Parks and Open Space Commission at 3:00 – 5pm, Civic Center; 5) California Trails & Greenways Conference (State Parks), April 6-8; 6) "Saving the Bay from Climate Change," April 25, 7-9 pm, College of Marin (changed to San Rafael Community Center, B St.); 7) Trail Day with MCOSD on Porcupine; 8) Holistic Range Management, Jefferson Center for Holistic Management, Pepperwood Preserve, March 11 – 13; 9) State of Mt. Tam Symposium, October 27-28, followed by Tam Talk on November 12.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 11, 2016 approved

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Brief Reports.
 - a. Nona Dennis and Tom Boss (MCBC) reported for Safe Trails (safetrailsmarin.org) on recent Trails and Tires Workshops; Tom reported on pilot "Slow Zone" program, partnering with MMWD at Lake Lagunitas, a congested recreational area. Special events are planned for mornings of April 9 and April 16. Signage will instill the message of mutual awareness among runners, hikers, bikers, and equestrians. Roger Roberts asked if the yield triangle will be used. Yield signs may need some changing to be more relevant. Tom will make sure these signs are in the Slow Zone area. Pat O'Brien said that MCOSD is redoing signs to ensure visitors are moving through roads and trails at appropriate speeds.
 - b. Linda Novy reported that Foot People met with MCOSD staff and contacted Supervisor Kinsey to request closure of badly eroded Knee Cap Trail in Giacomini OSP; they will also develop two projects for Region 2.
 - c. Paul Minault, MCL Invasive Plant Subcommittee, gave updates on "the herbicide wars." He has requested information from Parks staff on field and financial consequences of banning glyphosate in management of invasive plants. He reported that additional funds are needed to respond to extensive comments on herbicide use in Biodiversity and Vegetation Management Plan Draft EIR. Nona pointed out a vegetation Management Plan for Wildlands from the California Invasive Plant Council and the

Pesticide Research Institute that describes Best Management Practices for protecting wildlife when using herbicides.

2. Marin Parks and Open Space.

- a. Pat O'Brien, Acting Director of Marin County Parks, introduced himself and reported on current activities of the department. McGinnis Marsh restoration project is designed to improve tidal flow and accommodate sea level rise. Paradise Park Master Plan is in environmental review. A plan for the northern end of Bolinas Lagoon OSP, in partnership with CalTrans, will address tidal flooding issues at the "y" connecting the unsigned roads to Bolinas with Shoreline Highway. A community meeting is scheduled for March 18, 9:00 a.m., at the Bolinas Fire house. A goal is to connect sediments in stream drainage with the sediments brought in on tides from the lagoon to build elevation and thereby counter flooding from sea level rise.

The Parks and Open Space Commission meeting on March 19 will include a presentation on Ballot Measure AA by Sam Shuchart, Executive Director of State Coastal Conservancy. A potential future speaker will be Doug McConnell. Pat is trying to improve Parks Department communication and outreach through improved web site, a new signage program, and a quarterly newsletter insert in the Marin IJ, beginning April 7. The insert will highlight Department programs and provide a calendar for naturalist and other activities. He also is examining other initiatives to complement Measure A funding, such as a sales tax to stabilize Parks' finances and provide funds for capital projects that are beyond the scope of Measure A: e.g., McGinnis Master Plan, Stafford Lake infrastructure, McNears, and Paradise Park.

- b. Carl Somers reported that for this fiscal year the Department is following up on trail projects on the designation list: in Camino Alto Preserve and in Gary Giacomini Preserve. Replacement of the Gasline Trail in Alto Bowl OSP was budgeted last year. Staff is working on alignment, which will need to place "switchbacks" outside the existing alignment due to steep, eroded topography. When asked about a change in use, Carl responded, "...not necessarily." Roger Roberts inquired if new trails include decommissioning other trails. Carl responded: generally speaking, yes. All road and trails work needs to reduce environmental impacts and the density of network. RTMP goals are to improve visitor experience and reduce environmental impacts. Regarding new trail signage: this spring there will be opportunity for public input. Regarding staffing: the Department is short handed and very busy. Pat reported that visitor demand for information on the environment, and this raises budget issues. Signs on the pathway from Stafford Lake to Novato will be installed "soon."
- c. Coastal Visitor Survey. Mia and Carl described the survey, which covers the area from Stinson Beach to Marshall. County Parks is managing the consultant. The survey is designed to assess present and future visitor use and project future needs for infrastructure, such as restrooms and other facilities, to meet demand. National Parks Service is also involved.
- d. Marin County's Inclusive Access Plan recommends improving Vistazo fire road on Old St. Hillary's OSP and also realigning a trail uphill from stream, to address steep, eroded condition. There are concerns about impacts on rare plant (Tiburon jewel flower) in

serpentine habitat. Inclusive Access Plan is still under environmental review, with uncertain release date.

3. MMWD

- a. Request for permit to hold 50K Fundraiser Endurance Run on Mt. Tam. Chris Blagg and Jeff Wong presented an event proposed for summer or early fall, 2017, to solicit feedback as they develop their proposal. They envision approximately 200 runners and support staff of 20-30. Visitor areas would be designated. The race route would be in GGNRA, State Parks, and MMWD lands. Details include start and finish, aid stations, race course, timing, etc. Questions raised include the following: What kind of crowd would this race create? Ans: Most races in W. Marin have not attracted crowds. If the race were successful would it become a yearly tradition? Yes. What is the non-profit component? Who will benefit? Ans: They are discussing with One Tam. Comments: Matt Sagues, Parks, said proposal seems thoughtful; good to hold during daytime to minimize disturbance to wildlife; the race should take place before August when spotted owls are nesting. What about parking? Ans: Parking would be dispersed; runners would be staggered, with faster runners starting first. Mia noted other issues: aid stations would be precedent setting; what about practice racing, visitors? (This race would be, she said, "... a big deal.") Ans: MMWD doesn't allow commercial racing; the sponsors plan to form a non-profit. Other comments: The race should not pass through sensitive habitat. State Parks clarified that all permitting is done by public agencies, not by One Tam. In summary, the MCL thanked the race organizers for their planning so far, offered some key pointers, and recommended that they contact other interested environmental organizations. Both NPS and State Parks recommended considering the "unintended consequences" of indirect and cumulative impacts on park resources of events such as this, no matter how well intended and planned. We will discuss at next meeting of this committee. Key takeaways include:

- Plan for how to handle potential spectators.
- Estimate number of volunteers and locations for these volunteers.
- Can Cataract Trail handle the runners near the end of the race?
- More details on parking needed.
- Minimize impacts on nocturnal animals and other wildlife.
- Check on trail maintenance and/or construction schedules to avoid conflicts.
- Sponsors need to meet with National Park Service to get their input.
- One Tam supports the various park organizations financially, but does not set policy.

4. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative State of Mt. Tam Symposium (deferred)

5. State Parks in Marin.

- a. Easy Grade Trail, Mt. Tamalpais State Park. Victor Bjelajac reported on the status of Easy Grade Trail change-in-use (CUI) process. Bicyclists requested access to this trail ten years ago, to close a gap between Pantoll and Mt. Theater. State Parks prepared a state-wide Programmatic EIR several years ago that lays out a process for evaluating any change in use and covering most CEQA issues. SP conducted a survey for the Easy Grade Trail CIU in 2015 to determine whether it was feasible, and adjusted the proposed

alignment to avoid sensitive areas of serpentine habitat. A public meeting held in September included a walk-over and presentation of the project. Nona, Robert Eichstaedt, and Tom Boss, attended, among others. MCL submitted a comment letter opposing the project on the grounds of safety; walkers generally oppose this change. This is now a formal "project." A plant survey will be conducted to assess any potential impacts on rare plants from the project. Permits for two stream crossings are pending. Individuals in Friends of Mt Tam claim they did not know about the proposal/project and are opposing it. Recent comments note presence of rare plants, serpentine soils, asbestos, and visitor safety. Victor will attend a meeting with this group on March 12. The next step is to pin down the alignment and include design features to impede speed of bikes ("pinch points"). Hikers as well as bicyclists should be part of this design process. Asked if MCBC would self patrol, Tom responded that they have sent out a memo reminding bicyclists to slow when passing others. This is a short trail, under a mile, and gets bikes off dangerous Pantoll Road. State Parks promises to enforce the rules on this trail. No funds are currently available to construct the trail.

- b. Parks Transformation Team – (deferred)
 - c. East Peak: Victor suggested people visit State Parks' web site describing the E. Peak Facilities Management Plan, and take the opportunity to offer input. There will be public meetings.
6. National Parks in Marin.
- a. Centennial activities, events (deferred)
 - b. GGNRA - Dog Management Plan. Mia reported on the "Proposed Rule" that is out for 90 day public comment. The Park web site contains information and how to comment. Trails and beaches available for dogs on leash are mapped. Only Rodeo Beach will be open to dogs off lease, under voice control. Muir Beach will be open to dogs on leash. Many comments have been received from both dog owners, who want fewer restrictions, and by those who favor restricting dogs to protect sensitive natural resources. GGNRA lands host numerous endangered species. Public meetings will be held on March 23 and 30 at the Bay Model, 6:00 to 8:00. Public comment ends on May 28. MCL, in 2011, addressed the issue of managing dogs on GGNRA lands and has continued to support the Preferred Alternative, as evaluated in the Plan and SEIS.
 - c. Redwood Creek Trail Realignment/Dias Trail Extension (on State Parks and GGNRA land). The Mt. Tam Task Force has taken an exception to the project. Supervisor Steve Kinsey will convene a meeting of all parties on March 28 to seek resolution.

Meeting adjourned at 5:10

Minutes by Linda Novy and Nona Dennis