

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee
Minutes
September 8, 2016

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair, Greg Zitney, Tom Boss, Roger Roberts, Eva Buxton, Kate Powers, Robert Eichstaedt, Larry Minikes, Linda Novy, Jill Templeton, Gordon Bennett, Judy Teichman, Arlin Weinberger, Susan Stompe, Doug Wilson, Pat Nelson, Mike Ardito, Al Baumann, Ralph Mihan and Don Dickenson (MOST), Sharon Farrell (OneTam), and Mischon Martin and Jon Campo (Marin County Parks).

Meeting was called to order by Nona at 3:00 p.m. Added to Agenda: Gerstle Park (Oakwood) open space acquisition, San Rafael

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) Coastal Clean-up, Sept. 17, 9: - Noon, Novato Scottsdale Pond Gazebo, and Bay Model, Sausalito; 2) MCL Workshops on Ranching in the Park, Sept. 13, Bay Model, Sept. 27, Nicasio School, Oct. 11, Bay Model, Oct. 25, Nicasio School, 7:00 – 9:00; 3) Lead on Climate, September 19, Angelico Hall, Dominican University, 7:00 – 9:00; 4) NPS Marin public meeting, Sept. 20, Mill Valley Library, Creekside Room, 6:00 – 8:00; 5) State of Tomales Bay Conference, September 23, Inverness Yacht Club; 6) Public Lands Day, Sept 24, various events; 7) Mt. Tam Science Summit, October 28-29, Portuguese Cultural Center, Sausalito; 8) OneTam benefit with Baywood Artists, Oct. 1 and 2, Mill Valley Community Center; 9) First Senior Walk of current season, Indian Valley trails, September 29; ADDED: 10) MMWD Watershed Committee Meeting, Sept. 15, 1:30; 11) Marin P&OS Commission meeting, Sept. 15, 3:00; MCL Bus-Env Breakfast, October 14, 7:30 – 9:00, McInnis Park; 12) Memorial for Frank Quan, October 15, 11 – 2:00, China Camp Village.

Nona announced that AB2444 \$3.1 billion parks bond measure failed to get a vote in the Senate before close of the session. Congratulations are due to MIA MONROE for receiving the Edward Bennett Lifetime Achievement Award from Bay Chapter Sierra Club, at September 8 dinner!

MINUTES of Aug. 11, 2016 approved

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks and Open Space
 - a. Report on Aug. 21 Region 3 Workshop, RTMP Trail designations: Jon Campo, new Senior Natural Resources Manager with MCP was introduced. The Region 3 meeting was an improvement to the RTMP designation process. The meeting was well attended, and the base maps included vegetation zones. MCL agrees with staff recommendations, in particular leaving Indian Valley Trails, which are highly used by equestrians. (Nona cited SW16 and 17, which affords protection from mountain bike use in areas of concentrated equestrian activity.) MCL also agrees with improving mountain bike connections off Chicken Shack Fire Road. Some mountain bikers have objected to closing steep, non-sustainable trails (grades up to 50%) that do not meet District standards. Jon Campo noted that Ponti

and Pebble Beach Fire Roads will be converted from roads to trails; fire departments agree that these fire roads are redundant. There was discussion around the trails to be decommissioned that are enjoyed by neighbors on foot. Jon responded that it is a challenge to meet neighborhoods' desires to save all local social trails. The Region 3 plan protects Lucas Valley Preserve from further trails. October 16 is the end of the 80 day window for comments on Region 3.

- c. Status of Trail Projects, Region 1 and Region 2: In Region 1, the by-pass trail connecting Camino Alto Fire Road with the Octopus intersection should open by the end of October. Half of the Fairway Trail project will be completed to avoid core nesting habitat for Northern spotted owl . At the Aug. 25 Alto Bowl public workshop, staff and consultants presented alternative realignments of Gasline Trail and a proposal from MCBC to open the dual use (hiker-horse) Middagh Trail to multi-use, adding bikes. A consultant outlined alternative realignments to make the trail safe for multi-use. Nona stated that policies SW16 and SW17 in the RTMP should favor safe access and not displace horses pastured on Horse Hill. The Alto Bowl Horseowners Association will resubmit a letter opposing the change-in-use. MCL will submit a letter underscoring the applicability of these two policies and claiming that opening Middagh Trail would increase bike activity in a cul-de-sac neighborhood. Tom Boss noted that several neighbors who ride bikes helped craft the proposal. MCBC will advocate for redesign/realignment to slow down bikes. Jon is meeting with local property owners.

In Region 2, Jon is working with the Marin Audubon Society to ensure that Northern spotted owls are monitored in the Giacomini Preserve. The Roys Redwoods Loop Trail repair above the golf course should be complete by mid-October. The Old Railroad Grade (Fairfax) project is almost done, and will be revegetated in winter.

- d. Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan and Final EIR: Mischon Martin, Chief of Natural Resources and Science, announced upcoming meetings on the VBMP and Final EIR: Sept. 15, Parks & Open Space Commission will hear about current practices; October 4, Board of Directors (aka Supervisors) will conduct informational meeting on VBMP; October 5, the Final EIR will be released to the public, with 10 days for comment; October 11, 2:00, the P&OS Commission will hold a special meeting to consider recommending adoption of VBMP and certification of Final EIR; October 18, Board of Directors will consider final approval of Plan and certification of Final EIR.
- e. Gerstle Park, Oakwood offer of dedication of open space: Don Dickenson, representing Marin Open Space Trust (MOST), reported on the proposed acquisition and dedication of two small lots in the Oakwood neighborhood of Gerstle Park as San Rafael open space, with help from MOST. The City is concerned about liability and geological instability. San Rafael has a long-standing policy to refuse dedications of open space, in part because the City has no formal plan or budget for maintaining its existing public land holdings. However, the two lots are contiguous with Greenwood Open Space, which connects to other open space tracts. They include a portion of the historic Makin (Stagecoach) Grade. The acquisition cost

will be fully met by several generous donors. There is public support for acquisition, and it has been recommended to the San Rafael Parks and Recreation Department (meeting on September 15). It will go to the City Council on October 3. MOST must acquire the parcels by October 5 or terminate the negotiation. Don reported that the city abandoned the right of way in the 80's, and that the soils report was "clean." **Roger Roberts moved that MCL write a letter of support for acquisition of the two lots and submit this to the Parks and Recreation Commission, with copy to City Council. The motion was approved unanimously.**

- f. Other: Stafford Lake Initial Study and Negative Declaration are out for review; comments are due by September 19. MCL has concerns about the development intensity of the new Master Plan but does not plan to comment. Two Senior Walks are scheduled for fall – Indian Valley OSP Trails, on September 29, and Deer Island OSP, October 27.

2. MMWD

- a. Azalea Hill Trails Project. Two field trips to the Azalea Hill Project site have been conducted. Concerns have been expressed over the presence of serpentine communities, including rare plants, along the proposed alignment of the Liberty Gulch route. Eva Buxton raised the question of rare plant surveys – have they been done, or will they be scheduled for appropriate times in the spring 2017? What is the schedule for CEQA review? These questions need to be addressed.
- b. Other status reports. The Vegetation Management Plan (titled "Biodiversity, Fire, and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP) is scheduled to go to Watershed Committee on September 15. MMWD will host another "Slow Zone Day" around Lake Lagunitas, Saturday, September 10, with the participation of Trail Partners, which includes MCL, MCBC and Marin Horse Council.

3. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (One Tam)

- a. Sharon Farrell reported on the 250-page "White Paper" on conditions and trends of Mt. Tam's "Health" that has been undergoing review by the scientists who participated in March workshops. Sharon presented a summary of the key components of the Paper and its objectives. She and other staff are now trying to condense a lot of information into a two-page brochure and construct an interactive web site. She distributed a first draft of the brochure and showed the elements of the web site under construction, and then asked the committee to serve as a "focus group." Among the reactions/comments from the committee on the brochure were the following: Where is information on wetlands, seeps, and springs? (Apparently data on springs on the mountain are sparse.) What about fire information – e.g., fuel buildup? Hydrology indicators are not well defined. Too great an emphasis is placed on birds, and not enough on other animal groups. Where are sensitive plant species? In general, the brochure tries to say too much – too much information makes it difficult to read. Needs to be simple; needs verbal trimming. Also needs some "good news." Threatened coho need greater emphasis, in that all sides of the mountain

drain into tributaries to streams with salmonid habitat. The committee suggested ideas for layering information on the web site, from general categories linking to sequentially more detailed information, in a way that the printed brochure cannot. The general response was to congratulate Sharon and her colleagues on their work – but go back to the drawing board to on the brochure.

4. State Parks

- a. “Park Watch” A report on how Park Watch is being utilized by State Parks will be presented at the October meeting.

5. National Parks

- a. Redwood Creek (Muir Woods) Projects. Mia announced that the public meeting to be held on Sept. 20, 6:30 – 8:00, in the Mill Valley Library Creekside Room, will focus on projects to enhance salmonid habitat inside Muir Woods. These involve removing some rip-rap, placing logs and other woody debris in the creek to create habitat structure and refuge for juvenile fish, and replacing four aging bridges over Redwood Creek. The meeting will serve as scoping session for these projects. Gordon Bennett added that the California Conservation Corps installed boulders along the creek 80 years ago to stabilize banks, long before we recognized that this constricted the natural flood plain of the creek. This project will correct that “mistake.” Parks staff will also present a Draft EA for various projects to improve parking, drainage, etc. around the entrance. These were discussed at a previous public meeting. The Sept. 20 meeting will also discuss a prospectus for bids from contractors/concessionaires to develop the Muir Woods reservation system. Also on the agenda: the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI – the equivalent of a Negative Declaration under CEQA) for Redwood Creek Trail Realignment and Dias Ridge Trail Extension. Finally, it will discuss the upcoming FLAP project, in which the County, with federal funds, will begin the process making major improvements to Franks Valley (Muir Woods) Road, including rehabilitating and stabilizing the road surface and repairing 36 culverts to improve storm runoff. (Note that the FLAP, or Federal Lands Access Program, was established by Congress to provide funds to improve transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within Federal lands.) The County will schedule a public meeting on this project this fall.
- c. Point Reyes Nat’l Seashore. The four previously announced public workshops “Ranching in the Park – Not by Accident” begin on September 13, at the Bay Model, 6:00 – 8:00, and continue September 27 (Nicasio School), October 11 (Bay Model), and October 25 (Nicasio School).

Meeting adjourned at 5:00

Minutes by Nona Dennis