

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee

October 13, 2016, 3:00 – 5:00

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair, Greg Zitney, Linda Novy, Robert Eichstaedt, Roger Roberts, Paul Minault, Eva Buxton, Larry Kennings, Sharon Farrell (One Tam), Mischon Martin (MCP), Mike Swezy (MMWD), Jim Templeton, Larry Minikes, Connie Berto

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

MINUTES of September 8, 2016, were approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and CHANGES/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: 1) MCL Workshops #3 and #4 on Ranching in the Park, Oct. 11, Bay Model; Oct. 25 Nicasio School; 2) Parks & Open Space Commission, Special mtg on VBMP and Final EIR, Oct. 11; 3) Bd. Of Directors Open Space District, on VBMP and Final EIR, Oct. 18; 4) MCL Bus-Env. Breakfast on ABCs of IPM, October 14, McInnis Park Clubhouse; 5) Mt. Tam Science Summit, October 28-29, Portuguese Cultural Center, Sausalito; 6) County DPW meeting on Rehab of Muir Woods (Franks Valley) Rd. (aka “FLAP” project), Nov. 9, MV Community Center, 6:30 – 8:00; 7) Senior Walk, Deer Island, October 27; 8) Roger Roberts is heading a project to remove the Ludwigia sp. from Smith Ranch Pond, and will seek MCL support when he approaches the San Rafael City Council and Planning Commission for approval; 9) San Rafael City Council approved donation of 3 acres of land for open space in Gerstle Park area.

INFORMATION UPDATES:

1. Marin Parks and Open Space
 - a. RTMP. Nona reported that Region 3 designation plan seems to be well-balanced. MCL will submit a comment letter by the October 16 deadline. Narrowing certain fire roads (approved by fire departments) to trail width seems workable if 5’ width and line-of-sight are maintained. MCL agrees that social trails with extreme gradients should be decommissioned, despite resistance from some of the bike community and neighbors who hike the trails. The issue is how to decommission to protect environment yet maintain some neighborhood use. Mischon Martin noted that Lucas Valley Preserve, in Region 3, has rich habitat (intact grasslands) and wildlife (mt. lions, burrowing owls, badgers), and will not change existing trails.

MCP conducted a public meeting in Fairfax concerning Cascade Canyon OSP and presented a proposal to construct a multi-use bridge over San Anselmo Creek and decommission High Water Trail. There appears to be no opposition. The upcoming “Appetite Ride,” when 800-900 bike riders converge on a pre-designated route (MMWD and MCO SD) on Thanksgiving day, was discussed. It continues to be “informal” and unpermitted; no one takes responsibility. Will wet conditions block the ride? Unlikely.

Mike Swezy noted that some problematic areas become soggy, but he doesn't believe it causes lasting trail damage.

In Region 1 the MCBC proposal for Middaugh Trail change in use to allow bikes is opposed by neighborhood groups. Two policies in the RTMP should apply to this trail: SW 16 and SW 17 strive to limit multi-use in areas of high equestrian activity (such as Horse Hill) and avoid displacing traditional uses where there is high equestrian activity, such as near stables. Nona and Robert described the newly completed connector trail between Camino Alto F.R. and the Octopus; a recent Tires and Tails event was held there (Nona and Tom were photographed as reluctant "equestrians" during this event).

- b. Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan and final EIR. Nona characterized the plan as "high level" and well thought through. MCL has written a letter urging the BOD to approve the plan and certify the EIR. The annual work plans will propose specific projects, and the public will have the opportunity to comment, adding to the transparency and accountability of the MCP's professional staff. Mischon commented that the MCP will be strategic in selecting, where possible, fuel break locations where invasive weeds already are present. It is known that invasive weeds often colonize fuel breaks. The VBMP is a decision making document and differs from the MMWD vegetation management plan, which is a 5-year implementation plan. Eva brought weed wrenches for demonstration in broom removal. They are available for modest rent.
- c. The last Senior walk of 2016 is scheduled for October 27th at Deer Island OSP.

2. MMWD

- a. Mike Swezy distributed information about the proposed Azalea Hill trail. A Negative Declaration will be prepared in early 2017. This project is in the 2005 Mt. Tam Watershed Road and Trail Management Plan, which was covered by a CEQA document. This Plan focused on sediment risk and how to reduce sediment. Over the last ten years, MMWD has decommissioned and up-graded their road and trail system. Azalea Hill has been identified as a priority due to presence of serpentine outcroppings which support rare and endangered plants. The proposed plan would decommission x ? miles of social trails through serpentine habitat, and upgrade Liberty Gulch trail for multi-use. The District is seeking funding through grants. Mike offered to lead another tour of the area for anyone who is interested. In response to the question how to enforce closures: MMWD has decommissioned seven miles of trails under "Project Restore." The strategy is to do a good job of decommissioning, then outreach to user groups, install fencing if needed, monitor and enforce as necessary. In response to a question about how to avoiding a Liberty Gulch option and make Azalea Hill multi-use: converting Azalea Hill Trail to multi-use would require significant new trail construction to achieve a safe gradient for bike use. Re: Liberty Gulch: since large equipment is not feasible, small equipment will minimize disturbance.

- b. Vegetation Management Plan (Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan -- BFFIP). The MMWD Board hired Panorama Environmental to prepare the EIR. The Scoping meeting is planned for early December, 2016, with comment period in mid-2017 and plan adoptions late 2017 / early 2018. It is an herbicide-free plan with emphasis on the forest management. It differs from MCP's plan in setting specific 5 year targets and laying out a work plan. In contrast, MCP's VBMP is a decision making tool with projects to be developed and reviewed annually. Mike added that the MMWD BOD will increase the budget for vegetation management; it was boosted this year, with planned annual upward adjustments.

3. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (One Tam):
 - a. Sharon Farrell reported that the October 28-29 Tam Science Summit is almost full. KQED Science reporter contacted them for information. The goal of the summit is to acknowledge conditions and trends and data gaps for future work. A video will show the importance and value of Mt. Tam. and provide a vegetation map for the mountain. An interactive web site is being developed. One Tam anticipates creating projects that respond to science-based priorities that are generated by the White Paper. The TLC work plan for 2017 will be up for discussion at a "Tam Talk" session with TLC Executive Committee, November 12, 3:00 – 5:00, Corte Madera Community Center.

4. State Parks in Marin
 - a. Robert Walton was unable to attend. A ParkWatch update will be rescheduled. The program is getting much use. The public needs to be informed how to download and use it. MCL can help with Park Watch roll out.

5. National Parks in Marin.
 - a. Three projects are proposed in Redwood Creek inside the Muir Woods Monument. These include removing boulders (rip-rap) installed by the California Conservation Corps (80 years ago), installing logs and other woody debris to create more structure for juvenile fish habitat, and replacing bridges. MCL submitted comments for scoping an EA. A \$5.2 million project in Franks Valley (largely funded by Federal Land Access Program, or FLAP – under Federal Hwy Administration) is planned to rehabilitate Muir Woods Road, repair 36 culverts, improve drainage, and thereby protect the creek from pollutants. The County DPW will hold a public meeting on November 9, Mill Valley Community Center, 6:00 – 8:00 to introduce the project and schedule.

 - b. GGNRA Dog Management Plan. Jared Huffman requested some modifications for Marin lands to add additional areas for on-leash dogs. MCL is monitoring this.

 - c. The MCL's Ranching in the Park (Point Reyes National Seashore) workshop series will continue with one remaining workshop on October 25.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Minutes by Linda Novy and Nona Dennis