

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
Parks and Open Space Committee
July 13, 2017, 3:00 – 5:00

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair, Greg Zitney, Linda Novy, Larry Minikes, Kate Powers, Roger Roberts, Connie Berto, Tom Boss, Susan Stompe, Rick Fraitess, Peter Truce, Roger Rose, Michael Ardito, Ann Thomas, Robert Eichstadt, Al Baumann, Mike Swezy (MMWD), Sharon Farrell (One Tam), Claire Mooney, Parks Conservancy, and Jon Campo and Max Korten (MCP).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and CHANGES/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: 1) MCL Picnic on the Patio, July 22, 12:00 – 3:00; 2) Walks to W. Peak: July 15 (Restoration Opportunities) and August 19 (Geology); 3) Public Workshop in re Roy's Redwoods restoration, August 2 – site visit, 4:00 p.m. – 7:00, and Lagunitas School. Added to Agenda: Large group events on open space preserves and other public lands and trails

MINUTES of June 8, 2017, were approved.

ACTION ITEM:

The Committee discussed SB 249 Off-Highway Vehicle reform, whose purpose is to improve conservation standards and oversight on State Vehicle Recreation Areas (SVRAs) and distribute gas tax revenues more equitably to include other recreation activities on State Parks besides off-road vehicle program. The bill was passed in the Senate, and is now before the Assembly.

M/S/C: to recommend that MCL send letter to Marc Levine supporting SB 249.

OPEN TIME: Connie Berto called attention to a June 22 press release concerning a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) bipartisan bill that would advance the goal of engaging 100,000 young adults and veterans in the Corps' work addressing backlogged maintenance and other critical projects on federal lands and enable federal land and water management agencies – like the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service – to form partnerships with 21CSC's 200 member organizations.

INFORMATION UPDATES:

1. Marin Parks and Open Space:

RTMP. Jon Campo and Max Korten were present to review the status of projects on the 2017-2018 RTMP work plan and other matters. The Horse Hill Trail ("Gasline") realignment is complete. It will be closed to equestrians until it has hardened, possibly spring 2018, but open to hikers. The former Gasline Trail will remain open to equestrians until the new trail is opened to them, and then will be decommissioned. Work on the Middagh Trail began on July 11. Irving Fire Road work is completed.

There was considerable discussion about the Hunt Camp Trail Improvements project, scheduled to begin construction in August. Max Korten distributed copies of the CEQA consistency assessment and said that the Notice of Determination would be filed the next day (July 13), with no opportunity for public comment. Nona noted that under CEQA, filing the NOD begins a 30-day statute of limitations for legal challenge to the decision to approve. Objections to the project included the following: 1) The June 7, 2017 Project Update states that the majority of

134 comment letters supported the project. “Popularity” is not a valid criterion for evaluating a project. 2) The update states that the level and types of recreational use will not change with the project but offers no data to support the assertion that designating and improving a trail will *not* lead to increased use, with consequent impacts on sensitive species. 3) The report suggests that “the local community” can provide volunteer workforce to maintain the trail. This is not a sustainable plan for long term maintenance. 4) “Improving the user experience” is cited as a goal of the project. User experience should not be a zero-sum outcome in which one user group’s experience improves (bikers’), while another’s (hikers’) does not. 5) The report cites multi-use design standards that are not evident in the RTMP. Others countered by saying that volunteer maintenance programs can work and that the project is coupled with decommissioning of other trails through sensitive habitat. Jon Campo noted that building of illegal trails has decreased and decommissioning is working because “people are buying into RTMP process”.

Environmental Roundtable. The next meeting will be scheduled in August.

Other updates. Max Korten updated the committee on the status of several ongoing Parks projects: McInnis Marsh Restoration, Stafford Lake Master Plan, Stafford Lake Bike Park, and North Bolinas Lagoon project (which is also a One Tam project). Max also noted that two new superintendents with excellent experience have been hired: Jim Chayka is responsible for CSAs, and Samantha Haimovitch joins other superintendents with regional open space preserve responsibilities.

Large group events. This item was prompted by announcement of two MCBC fund-raising bike events on public lands, including open space preserves – “fondos” on July 15 and August 29 (?) involve between 100 and 200 riders. Ari Golan is in charge of permitting such events on County preserves. The District imposes fees to cover overtime for rangers, sets conditions and rules, requires identification of riders, splits crowd into small groups, uses events as an opportunity to reinforce trail etiquette. Riders use bike-legal routes. This is the 5th year that such bike “fondos” have been held. There was some discussion about cumulative impacts of large events. MMWD also permits many large events, but draws the line at competitive events. Connie Berto noted that a sign suggested going to another preserve if this event is a problem; this amounts to displacement of other visitors. MCL is concerned about the cumulative impacts of such events on public lands and will continue to monitor.

2. MMWD:

Mike updated the committee on several items: The Azalea Hill Trail CEQA document should be out for public comment in August. The District is engaged in a \$1 million 2-year study in Lagunitas Creek that involves improving salmonid habitat by placing large woody debris in the stream and widening the stream in strategic locations to create fish refuge. The District is also engaged in \$3 million road repair work that will require closing some popular roads, including the Southern Marin Line from Crown Road. The Wildfire Protection and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Plan IS/Neg. Dec. is delayed.

3. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative:

Claire Mooney, Deputy Director, Projects and Design with Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, gave a comprehensive review of work to date to assess conditions and feasibility and constructability of restoring West Peak of Mt. Tamalpais. She reviewed the site history

briefly, described the consultant team and their work. Among other studies, the team is evaluating the need for and most cost effective means to clean up hazardous materials, remove/bury structures and debris, enhance water infiltration and restore native plant communities, naturalize topography, and ensure that visitor access and experience are consistent with restoration goals. Several questions were raised by committee members: How long has the site been owned by MMWD? About 35 years. Will alternatives be ranked in terms of feasibility, cost and preference? Yes, but alternatives will also be examined in a CEQA document. Many alternatives (8?) were evaluated under NEPA when the site was turned over by the federal government to MMWD.

As reported earlier, OneTam will hold a Science Symposium with a focus on wildlife, on October 26, 10:00 – 3:30 at the Marin Art and Garden Center, followed by a “Tam Talk” session with the One Tam Executive Committee from 4:30 – 6:00.

4. State Parks

Nona briefly reviewed the Potrero Group Feasibility Study of a State Parks “Support Organization,” a proposed new philanthropic organization similar to GGNP Conservancy that is contemplated by State Parks. One of three alternatives would focus the existing California State Parks Foundation more on advocacy and technical support, and turn over major philanthropic activity to the new support organization. The Foundation seems to favor this alternative.

5. Trail Partners: The “Slow and Say Hello” campaign has a summer tabling schedule at popular trailheads. The four land management agencies plus Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy are supporting the effort. Trail Partners will meet with Supervisor Katie Rice and County Parks Communications staff to consider possible ways to build on “Tails and Tires” workshops to reach a larger audience.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00

Minutes by Nona Dennis