

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee February 11, 2016

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Tom Boss, Linda Novy, Al Baumann, Robert Eichstaedt, Larry Minikes, Judy Teichman, Joyce Britt, Roger Roberts, Doug Wilson, Paul Minault, Vicki Nichols, Mia Monroe (NPS), Sharon Farrell (OneTam), and Mike Swezy (MMWD).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) MCL Walk into (Conservation) History, West Peak, Mt. Tamalpais, March 12, 9:30 – 1:00; 2) Senior Walk, Hamilton Restoration Project, SouthTrail, March 24, 9:00 – 12:30; 3) Tails & Tires Workshop, Feb. 6 – (report), and Feb. 27 at Presidio Riding Club, GGNRA, 9:00 – 12:00; 4) Invasive Plants Workshop, GG Parks Conservancy, at Tennessee Valley Native Plant Nursery, February 18, 2:00 – 4:30.

MINUTES for January 14, 2015 Approved

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin Parks and Open Space

- a. Discussion of RTMP process. Linda Novy reported on meeting of Foot People with Acting County Parks Department Director, Pat O'Brien, Carl Somers, and Max Korten, February 2. Foot People asked staff how to work in a constructive manner with Parks Dept. They also expressed concern that only "build" project proposals are being considered by staff as valid and score-able. Any proposal that recommends status quo (for a trail), backed by environmental rationale – i.e., the "no project alternative" – is being rejected by staff because it does not compute "environmental points" or tie into annual budget process. The RTMP is deficient in this regard – there should be a process for entertaining a proposal to retain an existing trail environment *because* it is environmentally sound and, therefore, should not be changed in use. Staff recommended that Foot People submit beneficial restoration project proposals that show a positive environmental score.

Tom Boss, MCBC, defended the logic of the RTMP process, in that proposals submitted to open bike access to narrow trails include environmental improvements, such as closing social trails, to offset impact of expanding single-track to make it safe for shared use. Nona Dennis suggested that all proposals need to be examined closely to see what use changes are being proposed, how they are scored,

and what trail decommissionings are being proposed to demonstrate environmental benefit.

Robert Eichstaedt suggested that large public workshop format (as done for Regions 1 and 2) does not work – needs improvement. Discussions in small groups would yield more thoughtful designation of trail system. Region 3 public workshop to designate the trail system is still to be scheduled for late spring, with Region 4 following in summer. This committee hopes for improvements – reduced crowding and confusion – to the process.

- b. The **Inclusive Access Plan** was briefly discussed, but without an update on process.
- c. The County's consultant is in the process of responding to comments on the **Veg. Biodiversity Management Plan EIR**. Many comments were received, at least one of them 100 pages in length. Consultant costs have increased as a result.

2. MMWD

- a. Mike Swezy gave updates on two pending projects -- **renovation of the Log Cabin** at Phoenix Lake, and **restoration of West Peak**. MMWD will host a public open house at the Log Cabin on Feb. 27, 10:00 – 12:00 to receive comments. The District will present alternatives: 1) remove the cabin entirely and restore the site to its former natural condition; 2) Mothball structure and leave on site; 3) Partially rehabilitate the cabin, including code and accessibility improvements; and 4) Fully rehabilitate the structure. The Board appears to favor the full rehabilitation. Cost is estimated at \$1.2 million. Existing policy allows only limited uses. The Committee will take a proposal to Watershed Committee on March 17, and then seek Board approval to enter into an agreement with Parks Conservancy. Philanthropic \$\$\$ cannot be used to fund permitting process, but can fund separate programs. If approved, the project will begin planning, permitting and environmental review. It will be a public process.
- b. Mike also reported that MMWD staff is developing a collaborative agreement with Parks Conservancy that would amend the MOU with One Tam to study the feasibility of **restoration of West Peak**. Funding sources have not been identified. This will go to the Board at a future meeting for approval. Mike explained that buildings on West Peak were removed several years ago with federal funds obtained by Sen. Barbara Boxer. Mike also noted that MMWD is looking for someone to replace retiring Head Ranger Bill Hogan.

Two MCL members, Roger Roberts and Priscilla Bull, were appointed to the **Citizens' Advisory Committee** to review the collaboration of MMWD in OneTam with the Parks Conservancy. They met Feb. 10 for the first time. Roger Roberts reported that they reviewed the One Tam work plan for 2016 (copies circulated). Funding for projects on the work plans has not been identified, and won't be until projects have received all necessary approvals from relevant agencies.

- c. Several committee people indicated an interest in a field recon of possible alternative multi-use routes from the top of **Azalea Hill** to Bon Tempe reservoir. Mike said it is still premature for a field trip to review possible route(s). Mike also reported that plans for two long-planned storage tanks (8 million gallons) are proceeding slowly, because one tank site may conflict with spotted owl habitat. The EIR is underway.

3. Tamalpais Land Collaborative (OneTam)

Sharon Farrell reported that plans for a 2-day public symposium on October 27-28 are moving forward. "State of Mt. Tam," the first such symposium since 2008, will be a "report card" on the status of various resources on Mt. Tam based on existing data. A workshop for scientists will be held at College of Marin in March. The symposium will spend one day focusing on science, and one day focusing on public use of Mt. Tam. Public communication will be an important topic: How is the "message" on state of ecosystems on Mt. Tam best transmitted, and to what audiences?

Several questions and comments were raised by committee members: Will the symposium include information on invasive plants. Sharon: This will be addressed under several resource topics, not as a stand-alone. Will elements of biological diversity be mapped? Sharon: Reports will be based on existing maps. No new mapping will be done at this time, although 31 focal species have already been identified as "indicator species." Will ecosystem services be included in discussions? Yes, the concept will be included. A "white paper" summarizing state of resources will be prepared prior to the symposium.

Several persons expressed an interest in the outcomes of the **wildlife Camera Index project**. Sharon passed out several examples of summary sheets showing how thousands of data points from the project are being analyzed, much of data entry by volunteers. Cameras have been deployed by all four agencies, and they are sharing data.

4. State Parks in Marin:

- a. Nona reported that information on progress of **State Parks' two-year Transformation Team** can be found on the State Parks website at http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=28074
- b. State Parks staff completed a Trail Change-in-Use Proposal Evaluation for **Easy Grade Trail** in Mt. Tam SP I 2015. It was recently released for public review. It will be followed by an environmental evaluation to comply with CEQA and the State-wide Program EIR. A plant survey will be undertaken this spring (or other appropriate season) for plant ID. Members of Friends of Mt. Tam learned about the project only recently and cited the presence of rare plants. They are alerting others about the CIU process and plan to oppose Easy Grade and other CIUs.

5. National Parks in Marin.
 - a. Mia Monroe reported that measures in the **MOU to reduce/eliminate parking on Muir Woods Road** are being implemented. Posts have been installed, and parking restrictions are being enforced. BMP's have also been installed to prevent polluted runoff from entering Redwood Creek. Federal funds will be available to the County for major rehabilitation of Muir Woods Road, including culvert replacement and repair, in 2017-2018. In the meantime, the NPS and others are encouraging tourists to visit other redwood groves in the North Bay Area. The shuttle continues to grow customers. Comments on EA/IS for **Redwood Creek Trail Realignment and Extension of Dias Ridge Trail** were received, including some complaints about late public notice as well as constructive suggestions. The complaint that this constitutes "piece-mealing" can be refuted, in so far as numerous separate projects in the Redwood Creek Watershed have been taken over a number of years to enhance environmental quality. The report will be finalized as a Neg. Dec. and FONSI.
 - b. Mia reported that a number of projects have been undertaken by GGNRA to commemorate this year's Centennial of the NPS. The general theme of the Centennial is "Connecting People to Parks."
 - c. The **Point Reyes Seashore Comprehensive Ranch Management Plan process** is six months behind and may be further delayed due to legal challenge filed by Huey Johnson of Resource Renewal and others. Judy Teichman reported that the NPS has ceased testing elk for Johnes disease.
6. Other topics.
 - a. There was some discussion of the recent firing of Charles Lester, Ex. Director of the CA Coastal Commission. Also discussed was the effectiveness of Tails and Tires workshops for getting out the word to mtn. bikers on trail etiquette and safety. After a showing of only 12 students on Feb. 6, it appears there will be some 30 or more kids at the next workshop on Feb. 27. One committee member would like to see more emphasis on bike encounters with hikers, since these far exceed encounters with equestrians.

Meeting adjourned at 5:10

Minutes by Nona Dennis, Chair