

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee

January 12, 2017, 3:00 – 5:00

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair, Greg Zitney, Linda Novy, Robert Eichstaedt, Susan Stompe, Arlin Weinberger, Tom Boss, Larry Minikes, Kate Powers, Jill Templeton, Larry Kennings, Pat Nelson, Rick Fraites, Eva Buxton, Roger Roberts, Monte Kruger, and Jon Campo (MCP).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and CHANGES/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: 1) County Parks & Open Space Commission meeting, Jan. 19; 2) MMWD Veg. Plan EIR Scoping Meeting, Jan. 25, Marin Art and Garden Center, 7:00 – 9:00; 3) MCL Ag Land Use Com. (Elk population on Pt. Reyes National Seashore), Jan. 27, 10:00 – 12:00, Farm Bureau; 4) Senior Walk, Bothin Marsh OSP, Feb. 16, 9:00 – 1:00; 5) Greenwood Open Space Event, Jan. 17, 1:30, End of Greenwood, San Rafael; 5) Road and Trail Management Plan Region 4 public meeting, May 13, Margaret Todd Senior Center, Novato, time tbd; 6) Web posting of County Vegetation and Biodiversity Plan Work Plan, Jan 25 and P&OS Commission meeting, March tbd; 7) Robert called attention to the work of the Conservation Lands Network, a project of the Bay Area Open Space Council and others that is mapping conservation lands around the Bay Area to show linkages and gaps.

MINUTES of December 8, were approved.

INFORMATION UPDATES:

1. Marin Parks and Open Space
 - a. RTMP. Discussion continued concerning trail projects and the public process as the RTMP designation moves forward. Region 4 public meeting on trail designations is scheduled for May 13 at Margaret Todd Senior Center in Novato. Jon Campo explained why approval of proposed decommissioning of the Happersberger Trail in Cascade Canyon OSP has been delayed. Both hikers and bikers sent e-mails complaining about the possible closure, and staff is studying several options that could provide comparable experience, such as possible improvements to “redundant” trails, or narrowing of nonessential ranch roads.

In the interest of a more efficient open RTMP process, Jon Campo would like to meet periodically on trail issues with a small group with an environmental perspective. The P&OS committee meetings are not a productive venue for detailed discussion of specific projects. We agreed that Greg Zitney would coordinate such meetings, working with Jon on availability of time and space. Other environmental organizations, such as Marin Audubon and CNPS (Native Plants) will be invited to participate.

Other comments: Fall-line trails are not sustainable and should be prohibited. When social trails are decommissioned, MTB'ers would like the county to try to provide similar "visitor experience." The widespread network of fire and emergency roads throughout the County is underappreciated by those MTB'ers who want more single-track trails open to bikes. The committee again discussed the MCP draft process diagram that depicts how proposed trail projects move through preliminary evaluation, budget approval, and permitting and CEQA processes. The diagram shows where opportunities for public input are included. Those with comments on the brochure should contact Jon Campo at marinparks.org.

Nona outlined the plans of a new MTB advocacy group – New Paradigm Trail Group – that is planning an aggressive lobbying of Open Space Board of Directors, demanding faster implementation of the RTMP and trails on the preserves for intermediate and technically advanced MTB'ers. They are planning a "flash-mob" appearance before the Board on Jan. 31. This raises the question: what kinds of MTB activities and trails are appropriate on public lands, and which are not. This continues to be a matter of debate. MCL is trying to define what is compatible with other visitors' experience and safety.

- b. Senior Walks. The new schedule for five Senior walks in 2017 was passed around: February 16, Bothin Marsh; March 30 Deer Island Preserve; April 27, Ring Mtn. Preserve, via Taylor Road; May 25, Cemetary Marsh, Rush Creek Preserve; and June 29, tbd.
2. MMWD
 - a. Azalea Hill Trail. The Initial Study and Negative Declaration for the proposed Azalea Hill multi-use trail project will be ready for public review in February or March. Nick Salcedo is the MMWD contact and project manager.
 - b. Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP) Draft EIR. A scoping meeting for the EIR will be held on January 25, at the Marin Art and Garden Center.
3. State Parks in Marin
 - a. Mark Gainer asked to speak to the committee about the hazards of hiking on China Camp State Park. He said that he walks there frequently and as many as 10 – 20% of MTB'ers are riding too fast where there is insufficient visibility, line of sight. He has come close to being hit more than once, and believes some controls should be instituted: bike-only trails, tags on bikes, patrols. The Park should be aware that there is inherent danger for people on foot. Tom Boss explained that there are limited funds for rangers.
 - b. There was discussion of prohibiting e-bikes on trails, since they are beginning to appear illegally on Marin public lands. State Parks has given local districts the discretion to permit e-bikes on local state parks or not. Nona will draft a letter to State Parks and other public land agencies in Marin upholding current restrictions on motorized vehicles.

4. National Parks in Marin.

- a. The MCL Ag Land use Committee will meet on Jan. 27 at the Farm Bureau and hear a talk on tule elk in California and specifically on Pt. Reyes National Seashore. The speaker Joe Hobbs is California Department of Fish and Wildlife Coordinator of Elk and Antelope programs in California. Because a law suit against the Seashore is still active, NPS staff may attend but will not be able to discuss the issue.
- b. Nona spoke briefly again about Dunn Ranch, a 52-acre property on the East shore of Tomales Bay that surrounds Cypress Grove Research branch of Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR). The property was purchased by NPS in 1992 with a 25-year Right of Use and Occupancy. The ROU expires in 2017, and two proposals for future use are being discussed. The MCL Land Use Committee heard a proposal from Albert Straus for use of the land for a demonstration sustainable ranching educational facility. A proposal by ACR to expand their research facilities onto the Dunn Ranch is forthcoming.

5. MCL Trail Policy.

The MCL Trail Policy was adopted in 2014. Nona would like the Committee to update the policy and revise as necessary. A draft revision was passed out and will be appended to the agenda for February 9 meeting for discussion.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:15.

Minutes by Nona Dennis