

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee

April 14, 2016

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair, Greg Zitney, Tom Boss, Linda Novy, Larry Minikes, Connie Berto, Delos Putz, Judy Teichman, Roger Roberts, Paul Minault, Mia Monroe (NPS), Angelo Douvos, Carl Somers (Marin County Parks), Jeff Wong, Rick Fraites, Eva Buxton, Larry Kennings, Susan Stompe, Priscilla Bull, Pam Reaves, Sharon Farrell (One Tam), Mike Swezy (MMWD), and Kate Powers.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) Walk into History -- Mt Tam East Peak, April 16, 9:30 – 1:00; 2) Senior Walk, Roy's Redwoods, May 3, 9:00 – 12:30; 3) Earth Day Events – Novato Clean and Green, April 23; 4) MCL Annual Dinner, April 29; 5) Bay Area Open Space Council, May 19, all day, Crane Pavilion, Richmond; 6) Marin County Parks & Open Space Commission, May 19, 3:00 – 5:00; 7) Time to Lead on Climate -- "Saving the Bay from Climate Change," April 25, 7-9 pm, San Rafael Community Center.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 10, 2016, approved with correction: Agenda Item 3.a – "If race were successful, would it become a yearly tradition? Ans. 'Yes'"

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Brief Reports.
 - a. Trail Partners is cooperating with MMWD in a pilot "Slow Zone" program to calm traffic in areas of high traffic, such as around Lake Lagunitas. It was advertised on TV, radio interviews, and signs. A comment was raised: Yield Triangle signs should also be posted. Outreach efforts on April 9, 16, and May 1 are being staffed by MMWD rangers, staff and volunteers, and MCBC, Marin Horse Council, and MCL volunteers. The sheriff assigned to MMWD brought a "gauge your speed device," and there was a positive response. Others noted that MCOSD will soon have new signage noting speed limits of 5 mph where warranted.
 - b. Paul Minault, Chair of MCL Invasive Plant Subcommittee, reported that MCL was joined by Marin Audubon, Native Plant Society, and Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed in submitting a letter to the BOS. The letter urges the Board to approve the IPM Ordinance, with a full set of tools that would include herbicides such as glyphosate, and to refocus attention on the much larger issue of widespread use of herbicides throughout the County. The Board is planning to launch a campaign to raise public consciousness and reduce sale of herbicides in hardware, nurseries, and similar establishments. In the meantime, County Parks staff will augment an existing landscape maintenance contract to account for the additional cost of treating areas (medians, for

example) with tools other than herbicides. Staff will monitor cost differences in maintaining county maintenance sites with and without use of herbicides in the IPM “toolbox.”

- c. Linda reported for the FootPeople, who found badly degraded conditions on the Knee Cap Trail in the Giacomini Preserve and put in a request to Parks staff that it be closed. The trail runs through sensitive Manzanita chaparral vegetation that is being damaged by overuse and careless use. According to staff, the trail will be decommissioned. Carl Somers reported that closure may be tied into opening the Candalero/Contour Trail. The Manzanita is being invaded by Douglas fir trees; closure may involve removing Doug fir and using it for closure brush; a plan will be drawn up by the Department. It will be important to notify and engage the community in the closure plan if the trail is to remain effectively closed.

2. Marin Parks and Open Space.

- a. Report on new director: According to informal reports, the candidate offered the position has declined. Additional interviews may be held to consider next choice.
- b. The County Parks was commended for putting out a 4-page newsprint flyer, inserted in the April 7 Marin IJ (and other papers?), as an effective way of reaching a broader public.
- c. The Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan EIR is expected to be available to the public in early fall. Staff and consultant are still responding to extensive comments. The anti-herbicide advocates would like to have one herbicide-free alternative included in the revised Plan.
- d. Carl Somers announced that Matt Sagues is leaving County Parks on April 18, and will be working at MMWD. He expects to have the vacated position filled soon. In the meantime, there will be a short delay in preparing for the public workshop on trail designations for Region 3 while a replacement for Matt comes up to speed. Carl anticipates that the Region 3 community meeting will be scheduled in early summer. Region 3 includes Lucas Valley, Indian Valley, and Loma Verde OSPs. Region 4, also scheduled for this year, includes Mt. Burdell, Rush Creek, and Deer Island OSPs.

3. MMWD Watershed

- a. Mike Swezy reported on the meeting of the MMWD Watershed meeting of March 17. A community open house and tour of the Log Cabin attracted 50 or so attendees. The informal majority opinion favors a full restoration alternative that retains historical architectural details, at the same time upgrading to current ADA requirements and other applicable codes. Consultant is going ahead with 30% drawings and design report, which will be available for public review in several months. The committee also reviewed MMWD projects in the One Tam 5-year Vision Plan and membership in the recently formed Citizens’ Advisory Committee. A feasibility study for restoration of West Peak, Mt. Tam, is in progress, and \$1.2 million in funding is being sought for a comprehensive study and public outreach program. Some contaminants have been removed. Mike also said that the Azalea Hill Trail project description is being fleshed out, and alternatives will be discussed in the June Watershed Committee meeting. Field trips and opportunities for public comment are planned in June and July.
- b. Jeff Wong, who presented a plan for a 50K foot race last month that would include MMWD lands, was asked to review key points in the proposal. He stated that they will seek non-profit status and the race would be a fund-raiser. Mike Swezy noted that the

Mt. Tam Hill Climb was a long-standing unregulated race on Labor Day, from Mill Valley Depot up the mountain, and runners in groups cut new trails. MMWD now issues a permit; the race is not advertised and is contingent on good behavior of 125-plus participants. MMWD policy for the watershed discourages competitive events and prohibits commercial uses. Approvals are subject to Board approval. Ranger staff try to monitor “meet up” events, and scan the internet for similar unregulated events. Several people at the meeting voiced opposition to the planned event, which would include use of north-side trails, like Cataract, Simmons, Barth’s Retreat, and other trails near creeks where erosion and sedimentation can occur. Water quality in the watershed needs to be protected. Jeff Wong, one of the race planners, stated that Loop 1 (on MMWD land) would start in early morning to reduce conflict with other users and would be finished by 8:30 a.m. The race would be held in non-rainy months. Another person present added that resource protection should trump everything. MCL has not taken a position for or against the race.

4. One Tam status update:

Sharon Farrell reported on progress toward the 2-day “State of Mt. Tam” public symposium scheduled for October 27-28. As noted earlier, it is the first such symposium since 2008. One Tam held two all-day workshops for resource managers and about 70 scientists from throughout the Bay Area in March and gleaned a large amount of information on conditions and trends of some 30 different habitats/communities in the Tam environment. A white paper will bring together that information for preliminary review. An interactive “web dashboard” will be another product. As planned, the symposium will focus on science on the first day and public use of Mt. Tam on the second.

The Marin Wildlife Picture Index Project, funded by One Tam, was also discussed. The WPI is amassing information on wildlife frequency by species, from cameras placed in the Lagunitas Watershed on MMWD, State Park, and County Open Space lands. Volunteers gather twice monthly to enter data into spreadsheets. The WPI is working with Conservation Foundation International on data analysis and a web-based system. Will the project analyze impacts of visitors on wildlife? (No response to this question was recorded.)

5. State Parks Marin

- a. Easy Grade Trail change-in-use (CIU) process is still under discussion. It is our understanding that a plant survey is (was) being done. New opposition has surfaced from individuals in Friends of Mt. Tam. The alignment crosses (or tries to avoid) sensitive serpentine habitat with rare plants. MCL does not favor the CIU, but has not joined in the new opposition, having ruled out the possibility of an effective CEQA challenge. MCL has requested that the alignment include design features to impede speed of bikes (“pinch points”), and that hikers as well as bikers be part of this design process.
- b. Marin State Parks Maintenance Supervisor, Ranger Victor Bjelejac has been promoted to a superintendent position within State Parks in Southern California. The promotion sets a precedent for advancing personnel other than peace officers in the State Park management track.

- c. Susan Stompe reported that Olompali and Tomales Bay State Park units in Marin are still without ranger presence. This is a serious gap, in that rangers are a reference point for both enforcement and education. Further, she reported that the two-year State Park Transformation Team has not held the public meetings that were promised initially. She also reported that an office has been set up in State Parks in Sacramento to work specifically with State Park partners throughout the state.
 - d. In regard to the Redwood Creek Trail Realignment and Dias Ridge Trail Extension (within Mt. Tam State Park, with limited sections in GGNRA), Steve Kinsey convened a stakeholders meeting in Tam Valley to discuss some outstanding concerns (additional traffic and parking attracted by the location of the “trailhead” near intersection of Shoreline Hwy and Muir Woods Road (aka Franks Valley Road); bike speed and hazards where Dias Extension enters Golden Gate Dairy stables land). Both State Parks and NPS representatives stated that they would work to minimize hazards involved at that intersection for walkers, equestrians, bikers, and others.
6. National Parks in Marin
- a. Mia Monroe reported on the many forms of recreation and other organized and informal events that occur on GGNRA lands – bike and foot races, filming, military re-ups, ash distributing, weddings, exercise groups, field trips, summer camp groups, etc. Each event is charged a fee to cover costs, such as ranger presence, and applicants are issued guidelines for route selection, aid stations, clean-up, and other requirements. There are many events on GGNRA lands, and the NPS sets a “high bar” of standards that must be met. For example, Muir Woods, to protect wildlife, does not allow any night events. New kinds of proposals come up constantly, however, and can become precedent setting, such as a night race from Rodeo Beach to Muir Beach. People come from all over the world to participate in or view special events. Rangers have years of experience dealing with events. She noted the cumulative impacts of races, practice runs or rides (which precede events and can continue for some time), spectators, traffic, etc. Different rules apply in different public lands. Larry Minikes stated that recreation should be viewed as passive activity, and that foot racing (in large groups) falls into an “active” category and therefore is not compatible.
 - b. Dog Management Plan proposed rule: Comments are due by May 25. MCL continues to support the NPS Preferred Alternative. Mia stated that the proposed rule would help to protect GGNRA resources and is a balanced plan.
 - c. Judy Teichman reported on testing of elk on Point Reyes National Seashore for Johnes Disease. Tissue samples from two bulls have proved positive. The elk populations have not changed significantly in numbers. To demonstrate their support of ranching on the Seashore, the Marin County Board of Supervisors has authorized County Counsel to pursue possible intervention in the law suit against the Seashore.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15

Minutes by Linda Novy and Nona Dennis