

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee February 13, 2013

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Larry Minikes, Tom Boss, Susan Stompe, Eva Buxton, Robert Eichstaedt, Judy Teichman, Greg Zitney, Larry Kennings, Pam Reaves, Bob Johnston, Joan Lubamersky from Assemblymember Marc Levine's Office, and Gordon Bennett.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AGENDA ADDITIONS: 1) MCL Walk into Conservation History, Cypress Grove Research Center, Audubon Canyon Ranch, March 1, 9:30 – 1:00; 2)Save the Date – MCL Annual Dinner, April 11; 3) Other?

MINUTES for January 9, 2014 – Approved

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks:

- a. RTMP and Draft TPEIR. County Parks and Open Space Commission held their regular meeting on January 23. A main agenda item was a report from Linda Dahl on proposed revisions to the Draft Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP), based on public comment on the merits of the Plan. Several members of the MCL committee attended the Commission meeting and expressed concern about the procedure being followed by County Parks, in that staff is responding to comments on the merits before completing the Final Draft Tiered Program EIR. As reported last month, the Parks Department received more than 200 letters on the RTMP, the majority on the merits of the Plan, and they have chosen to respond before the Final Tiered Program EIR is available for public review. In so doing they may compromise the CEQA process, requiring recirculation of the Draft TPEIR, as follows:
 - i. As explained by Greg Zitney, Chair of the Commission, because the "baseline" for analyzing impacts is the current condition, including existing trail damage from illegal or unrestricted access and/or other poor trail or road conditions, any action under the RTMP is considered a net improvement. That is, there will be no "significant" impacts to mitigate. Policies, standards, and BMPs are intended to serve in lieu of mitigation measures – i.e., the Plan is "self-mitigating."
 - ii. In revising the RTMP policies or standards (such as removing ratios for off-setting new trail segments by decommissioning non-system trails) that served to "self-mitigate" the Plan, staff is also revising the "Project Description" for CEQA purposes and potentially weakening those policies that enabled the Project to be "self-mitigating."
 - iii. Issues that could trigger recirculation: The Project Description should not change between the Draft and Final EIR. And second, altering or

removing policies may produce new significant impacts that are no longer mitigated.

2. Trail Safety Campaign: Nona reported on further progress of the collaborating “Trail Partners”, who are taking steps to launch a PR campaign to improve culture and behaviors on public lands roads and trails. An MOU signed and approved by the three organizations will serve as a basis for working together. The group met with the consultant to begin framing a presentation on the collaboration – its rationale and purpose – to the annual State Parks Trails and Greenways Conference, April 8 – 10, in Palm Springs. Robert Eichstaedt, a member of the Marin House Council, stated that he objected to contributing MHC, funds to the Trail Partners’ collaboration.
3. MMWD Tamalpais Lands Collaborative. An MOU between MMWD, State Parks, NPS (GGNRA/Muir Woods), County Open Space District, and Golden Gate Parks Conservancy was approved and signed by the MMWD Board on Feb. 11. An official launch will take place at 142 Throckmorton, Mill Valley, tonight (Feb. 13), featuring the documentary “The Invisible Peak” by Gary Yost, hosted by GGNParks Conservancy, with Doug McConnell and Peter Coyote. MCL has been tracking attempts by the District Board to form a “Friends-type” organization for several years, and is pleased with the outcome, which will open the door to funding and more volunteers to take on many projects on Mt. Tam.
4. Marin State Parks Updates:
 - a. Angel Island-Tiburon Ferry (AI-TF) Contract. State Parks held a public meeting in M. V. Community Center on January 16 to discuss terms of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for water transport to Angel Island. The State is required by law to open the service to competitive bids. AI-TF has been ferrying people to Angel Island since it became a state park, but has had only a month-to-month contract since 1992. State Parks determined the need for open bidding in 2008, but did not issue a RFP, in part due to protests from Tiburon. Tiburon residents continue to protest the open bid process, supporting the McDonogh Family who have owned and operated the ferry service for 50 years. State Parks will solicit bids and proposals, including an Interpretive Plan, Facilities and Operational Plans, and Financial Plan with fees to State Parks. The “incumbent” will receive 5 extra points of the total 100 possible points. State Parks will complete the RFP in 4 to 5 months, and expects to award a contract in 2015.
 - b. Marin State Parks Association (MSPA): Susan gave an update of the status of current efforts to change the role and make-up of the MSPA. Formed in the early 1990s, the composition should include two reps from each of four State Parks: China Camp, Olompali, Tomales Bay, and Samuel P. Taylor. No one is representing TBSP at this time except Susan. Sam Taylor sells firewood as a source of revenue. When Friends of China Camp obtains its own 501 (c)(3), it will be independent. The NPS is still operating Sam Taylor SP. Olompali and TBSP are operating under a donor Agreement with State Parks, but Olompali would also like to obtain 501 (c)(3) status. District Superintendent Danita Rodriguez would like the MSPA to become a Conservancy, with the eventual

ability to raise significant funds and gain and organize volunteers, especially for Sam Taylor and TB Parks.

- c. The State Parks Forward Commission has held three recent meetings in January and February. Feb. 12 meeting was at the S.F. Airport. No further meetings until May. They continue to explore ways to finance Parks and secure stable funding. Susan noted that there is no defined public process; it is difficult to determine timing for a letter from MCL. Minutes from Commission meetings are not posted for a number of weeks after meetings. Susan will call Ernest Chung, who chairs the State Parks and Recreation Commission, for further guidance. Bob Johnston suggested that MCL should have its own “plan” for the Parks (in Marin); he wondered if the MHC would be interested in helping at Sam Taylor, since there is a horse camp there.

5. National Parks in Marin:

- a. Muir Woods Traffic, Congestion, and Parking. MCL submitted scoping comments for an EA that will be prepared by NPS on various alternatives intended to manage traffic, parking, and congestion at Muir Woods. In discussing the issue of optimum carrying capacity for the Monument, Bob Johnston pointed out that there is no single number, but rather a series of triggers. The NPS did such an analysis for visitor use inside the Monument, but has not done a similar study of capacity relating to traffic or parking for visitors’ cars or other modes of transportation. The plan to institute an automobile reservation system is being treated as a separate project. Someone noted that some tour vans are arriving very early so as to avoid entry fee. The scoping meeting for the EA has not been announced.
- b. Draft Supplemental EIS on Dog Management Plan. NPS will continue to take comments on the Draft SEIS on the Dog Management Plan until February 18. The Preferred Alternative has changed at some of the seven sites in Marin. Muir Beach would allow only dogs on leash; the Oakwood Valley Fire road would allow dogs on leash and remove the previous idea of fencing and gating to allow dogs off-leash (ROLA); the lower Oakwood Valley Trail would be off-limits to dogs entirely; Rodeo Beach would be open to dogs off-leash. Consistent with our previous comments in 2011, MCL favors the Preferred Alternative F, as a balance in protecting resources and appropriate access for dogs. Gordon Bennett said it will be difficult for residents of Muir Beach to go from traditional access (for dogs off-leash) to leash only, and suggested we include in MCL’s letter an option for a ROLA south of the beach entry, as in Alternative E. Nona will write a comment letter.
- c. GGNRA Equestrian Stables Plan; Golden Gate Dairy Stables. Robert gave a brief report on the status of the Stables’ response to requirements to reconfigure the facility to feature the historic farmhouse. At considerable cost, Maureen Pinto, Stables manager, has submitted a proposal to NPS for a xx-year contract, contingent on making required changes. (Robert, correct as necessary)
- d. Pt. Reyes National Seashore: Ranch Plan and Tule elk in Pastoral Zone. The Committee continued the discussion begun on January 9, and will begin preparing scoping comments for the Ranch Planning process and Environmental Assessment that is expected to begin in March. Among discussion points on the

issue of short-term elk damage to ranches: Can NPS prevent more elk from crossing over into pastoral zone from Limantour wilderness? – Difficult because elk can swim. Problem with insufficient forage in the wilderness area; – after the Mt. Vision Fire, formerly open areas filled in with Bishop Pine and brush. Small trees and brush could be removed to clear better areas of forage, pasture. It is assumed that most elk in the pastoral zone have Johnes disease, which would make it unlikely to move them to other wilderness areas in the state.

The committee determined that while it is useful to research issues for the Ranch Plan process in order to submit informed scoping comments, it would be confusing to start meeting with various officials, whose points of view may differ. We can assume that this topic is under active study by Jared Huffman, Marc Levine (who has not had a response yet to his query to State Fish and Game Commission regarding the status of MOUs with NPS), and Steve Kinsey.

6. Miscellaneous: There was brief discussion regarding illegal mountain bike trails: how well known are such trails to rangers, to MCBC and others, etc.? The Mill Valley (Alto Bowl) jumps have been in place for a long time. Undoubtedly the area was already known to County Parks Department rangers and other officials and nothing was done to eliminate it.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m. The next meeting is March 13, 2014. Please note the next meeting will be in the POINT REYES Conference Room – further down the hall than the usual meeting room.

Minutes by Nona Dennis