

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee

March 13, 2014

FINAL

DRAFT-MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Larry Minikes, Eva Buxton, Robert Eichstaedt, Judy Teichman, Greg Zitney, Larry Kennings, Pam Reaves, Ernie Stanton, Rafael Durr, Scott Alonso from Assemblymember Marc Levine's Office, Gordon Bennett, and Lisa Newman.

Meeting called to order by Nona at 3:30 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AGENDA ADDITIONS: 1) MCL Walk into Conservation History, Cypress Grove Research Center, Audubon Canyon Ranch, April 5, 9:30 – 1:00; 2) Marin County Parks Workshop on RTMP Revisions, March 15, 9:30 – 12:30; 3) Bay Nature Awards Dinner, March 23, 6:00 to 9:00; 4) MCL Annual Dinner, April 11; 5) State Department of Parks and recreation, Trails and Greenways Conference, April 8 – 10, Palm Springs; 6) Bay Area Open Space Council, Annual Conference, May 8, Presidio.

MINUTES for February 13, 2014 – Approved

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks:
 - a. RTMP and Draft Tiered Program EIR. As reported previously, County Parks received more than 200 comment letters on the Draft RTMP, and almost no comments on the Draft EIR. Staff elected to respond to comments, and has revised Chapters 4 and 5 substantially (available on-line as of today). As a consequence, they will have to re-write and re-circulate the EIR to reflect the changed project, and allow 45 days for public review. The date of release is not known at this time. The purpose of the workshop on Saturday is to review the changes, especially in Chapter 5; to review the types of road and trail projects that are contemplated in the Draft RTMP; review upcoming projects during 2014 and 2015 that qualify as maintenance; review in detail how criteria-based project evaluation will be applied to screen and assess proposed projects; and explain how the department will measure progress in meeting performance objectives related to the road and trail system.
2. Trail Safety Campaign: Nona reported on further progress of the collaborating "Trail Partners" (MCBC, MHS, and MCL), who are taking steps to launch a PR campaign to improve culture and behaviors, compliance, and resource protection on public lands roads and trails. The group raised enough money to work with a consultant to frame a PwrPt presentation on the collaboration – its rationale and purpose – at the annual State Parks Trails and Greenways Conference, April 8 – 10, in Palm Springs. Robert Eichstaedt raised several questions that will be passed on to the Partners group: What is the time frame for the campaign and for measuring progress? How will group's efforts

be brought to the attention of trail users? How will progress be measured – what indicators of behavior change? In time, he said, behaviors may change simply through force of conditions (crowded, accident, etc.) – How will Partners be able to distinguish the results of their efforts from “naturally occurring” changes?

3. Environmental Forum of Marin, Forum on Fire and Fuel in Marin – Nona reported on a March 8 Panel on Forest Fire Ecology (Mike Swezy, Watershed Manager, MMWD), Vegetation (Fuel) Management (Linda Dahl, General Manager, Marin County Parks); Response to Fire (Jason Weber, Marin County Fire Chief); and Neighborhood Cooperation in creating emergency access and defensible space (Christina and Ken Waldeck). It was an informative panel, and pointed out how impassible most Marin County roads are by emergency fire vehicles. It would be useful to give this more exposure in view of upcoming fire season.
4. Marin State Parks Updates:
 - a. Marin State Parks Association (MSPA): Following up on the fire issue, Ernie Stanton (FOCC) spoke about fire threat between China Camp State Park and the Loch Lomond and Glenwood neighborhoods and the need for fuel reduction. He gave an update on current efforts to change the role of the MSPA away from maintenance and equipment management, to funding and interpretation. A full-time interpretive staff is sharing time between Tomales Bay State Park and Olompali. China Camp is forming its own 501 (c)(3), and Olompali People hopes to do the same. No one is representing TBSP in the Association. 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 Superintendant Danita Rodriguez would like the MSPA to become a kind of Alliance of Parks (in Marin) with capacity to raise significant funds and gain and organize volunteers, especially for Sam Taylor and TB Parks.
 - b. The State Parks Forward Commission. As reported by Ernie, a consultant-prepared draft report on management of State Parks reveals that individual state parks have no clear idea of what it costs to run a park due to bad accounting. The Commission continues to explore ways to finance Parks and secure stable funding. In the absence of a 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. The next public meeting is April 30, 9:30 – 12:30, at Holiday Inn at S.F. Airport. Ernie said that MSPA will, support the traditional Parks’ mission. Scott Alonso, from Assemblymember Marc Levine’s office, reported that their office is following the Commission, but will not consider introducing legislation until the Commission’s work is complete. A Draft Outline of the Commission’s Report is available on line.
5. National Parks in Marin:
 - a. Muir Woods Traffic, Congestion, and Parking. The scoping meeting for the EA has not been announced.
 - b. Draft Supplemental EIS on Dog Management Plan. Comments on the Draft SEIS on the Dog Management Plan closed on February 18. MCL submitted a letter,

generally favoring the NPS Preferred Alternative, with the exception of Muir Beach (dogs permitted on leash only), for which MCL recommended reserving a portion of the beach south of the entry for dogs off lease (ROLA)

- c. Pt. Reyes National Seashore: Ranch Plan and Tule Elk in Pastoral Zone. Judy reported on a brainstorming meeting of the MCL Ranch Plan and Elk Management Working Group. The group is putting together comments for scoping the upcoming EA for the Ranch Plan. Several points came up for discussion: A letter from Cal. F&W to Marc Levine affirms that the 1998 MOU between NPS and the State concerning tule elk management has expired. The State is willing to cooperate with the Park Service but has no jurisdiction on federal lands. The earlier 1969 MOU related entirely to hunting and is not relevant to the current situation. The State considers the elk on the Seashore to be all one herd, and not three separate herds. The letter confirms that the Park Service cannot translocate elk with likely Johnes disease to tule elk habitats outside the Seashore. Several questions have been raised about the recent sharp decline of the Tomales Pt. herd and whether the Seashore should step in in case of emergency conditions to provide resources to prevent tule elk death due to lack of food or water. Gordon countered that the condition of the herd in the wilderness at Tomales Pt. is not an issue – the area is managed as a wilderness, and interference with natural cycles is not consistent with wilderness law or policy. The Committee agreed that any questions (for scoping the EA) are “fair game” – that all issues of possible relevance can be raised. Robert noted that grazing is a means of keeping down brush, and should be encouraged, e.g., in areas of Limantour Wilderness where brush and forest have replaced former areas of grassland.

6. Easton Pt. (Martha Property): Nona reported on the recent BOS hearing on the Amended Final EIR for this property and proposed development. The BOS declined to certify the document. Many issues are still unresolved, and with the agreement of County Council, the Board will retain jurisdiction over the EIR and agreed to move the project toward merits hearings before the Planning Commission so that more details can be fleshed out before certifying the Final EIR.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next meeting is April 17, 2014, usual time (Note change in regular meeting schedule, due to conflict with Trails and Greenways conference)

Minutes by Nona Dennis