

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee September 11, 2014

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Larry Minikes, Greg Zitney, Raphael Durr, Larry Kennings, Arlin Weinberger, Jill Templeton, Susan Stompe, Eva Buxton, Jack Krystal, and Matt Sagues and Carl Somers, Marin County Parks

Meeting was called to order by Nona at 3:05 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and AGENDA CHANGES: 1) Fund-raising event at Madera Park, Sunday, September 14, 2:00 to 4:00; MCL contributed \$5,000 and is sending out a separate mailer to assist in raising funds for this acquisition; 2) Parks & Open Space Commission meeting, September 18, 3:00, County Planning Commission Chambers. A main agenda item will be an exercise for the Commission to demonstrate how the "Evaluation Tool" described in the Draft RTMP will be applied in the selection of future projects. Carl Somers briefly described the exercise; 3) Greg announced that there is a vacancy on the Commission.

MINUTES for July 10, 2014 – Approved

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks

- a. RTMP Final Plan and EIR. The Recirculated Draft Tiered Program EIR (RD TPEIR) was released in August, and comments are due September 22. The RD TPEIR has been expanded to cover issues raised in comments on the earlier 2013 Draft. Nona is reviewing the document. There continue to be gaps in the analysis. Among them are the following: 1) The RD TPEIR does not make clear at the outset why no significant impacts are identified or mitigations required; 2) the "Evaluation Tool" is based on a list of 25 physical and biological criteria supported by a variety of metrics, including some that are qualitative. Social criteria are arbitrary, appear to favor mtn bike preferences for long trips; they do not include safety and perception of safety. And a useful proxy for impact, i.e, actual footprint of roads and trails, including social trails, is no longer included among evaluation criteria. 3) the impacts of increased intensity of use after improvements, such as opening a re-designed trail section to mountain bikes, are not discussed; 4) analysis of impacts on native wildlife is inconclusive given the absence of baseline data; 5) policies and BMPs regarding invasive plants in open space are cited, but the RD TPEIR does not address the specific impact of new trails on the spread of invasive plants, not the need to monitor over time; 6) dangerous recreation (excessive speed, etc.) and illegal use of trails are prohibited by policy, but the RD TPEIR makes no mention of impacts on visitor safety or experience, citing the CEQA Guidelines, which do not require

analysis of social impacts. These are among the issues that will be included in a comment letter.

- b. MCOSD Trail Maintenance Work. In response to a citizen complaint about major maintenance work on the Dawn Falls and Lady Bug Trails, Matt Sagues, Natural Resource Specialist, gave an account of the repair work underway on those trails, where several areas, including a bridge, are badly degraded/eroded. The work is being conducted after all necessary permits were obtained, and has been timed for a seasonal “window” that will avoid disturbing spotted owl during nesting season. The presence of spotted owl in that location has been monitored since 1999.
2. Need for MCL Trail Policy. Before the RTMP is approved, the Committee agreed that MCL needs to develop a position and policy on the appropriate location, design and use of fire roads and trails throughout Marin County parklands and open space, not limited to County Preserves. We will ask the “Foot People” to draft such a policy that could work for MCL, with review first by the Parks & Open Space Committee.
3. San Rafael Canalways Pampas Grass Eradication Project; Invasive Species Subcommittee
 - a. Eva Buxton reported on visiting the Canalways site after removal of goats. Much of the weedy vegetation remains. The City and Fire Dept are no longer involved. The property owner has the tops of pampas grass cut off, including plumes, but the main plant structures remain and will resprout. Eva has photos of the site, and will develop a PwrPt that could be used to show the limitations of grazing to remove invasive plants
 - b. Paul Minault reported that the Invasive Species Subcommittee had met on the 10th and will develop a list of priorities. The next meeting is set for October 15, 3:00 – 5:00. Eva will prepare comments on the RTMP Recirculated Draft EIR to be focused on impacts on invasive species.
4. MMWD:
 - a. Tamalpais Land Collaborative, status of 5-Year Strategic Plan: At the October 9 meeting of this committee, we will have a presentation on the status of the five-year strategic plan for the TLC.
 - b. Water Storage Improvement Project (WSIP): The EIR scoping session scheduled for September 30 at Marin Art and Garden Center at 6:30 will focus on environmental issues to be examined in the EIR on the WSIP. The project, which has a 5-year overall timeframe, will be tracked primarily by MCL Water and Watershed Committee. However, in view of extensive recreational uses of the two areas being considered for the tanks, this Committee will keep informed and help review the EIR as necessary.
5. State Department of Parks and Recreation Update:
 - a. Parks Forward Commission and Draft Report. Susan has been following recent meetings of the Commission and has reviewed their latest Draft

Report, which responds to many concerns expressed in public meetings and workshops. The next scheduled meeting of the Commission is November 20 in Sacramento.

The Draft Report reaches several strong conclusions and makes far-reaching recommendations. 1) In all respects, the Park System is not debilitated and not sustainable – technologically, organizationally, fiscally; 2) The System does not serve the diverse populations of California; 3) Data on the actual costs of operations and staffing needs at individual parks are sorely lacking. Among the solutions, the Draft Report recommends massive upgrading of administrative systems and data collection, as well as partnering with and supporting underserved populations near parks, such as by developing youth programs and infrastructure to transport people to the parks. The Report also recommends establishing a management track in State Parks that does not require peace officer training. The strongest recommendation in the Draft Report is to establish a non-profit “State Parks Conservancy,” based on the GGNRA Parks Conservancy and similar conservancy models. Once established, the Conservancy will set up a Commission representing a broad range of skills but focused on the task of raising funds and identifying a stable source(s) of revenues. The Parks Forward Commission, which will disband by mid-2015, and is enthusiastic about the prospects of the State Parks Department working with the Conservancy. MCL is concerned about how the new conservancy will share responsibilities with State Parks Foundation, which has done such a major job in keeping the State Park System going under difficult budget times, and with the numerous associations at individual parks.

- b. Arlin Weinberger announced that Roberto Walton has been named Supervising ranger at Mt. Tam. State Park, replacing Ryan Goering.

6. National Parks in Marin:

- a. Muir Woods Transit and Reservation System and other GGNRA issues were not discussed due to lack of time.
- b. Pt. Reyes National Seashore Ranch Plan/EA. A sub-committee of the MCL Agricultural Land Use Committee submitted scoping comments for the EA. About 3,000 comments have been received and are being analyzed by NPS. No further report at this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00
Minutes by Nona Dennis

