

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee January 8, 2015

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Larry Minikes, Greg Zitney, Linda Novy, Arlin Weinberger, Susan Stompe, Rick Fraitas, Robert Eichstaedt, Delos Putz, Tom Boss, Ranger Tom Frazier – Marin State Parks, Carl Somers and Matt Sagues – Marin County Parks

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and AGENDA CHANGES: 1) Marin County Parks and Open Space Commission mtg., January 15, 2:30 – 4:30; 2) OneTam Day of projects, January 31, various venues; 3) Parks Forward Commission mtg, February 6, 9:30 – 12:00, Old Railroad Museum, Sacramento.

MINUTES for December 18, 2014, approved as revised.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks

RTMP Final Plan and Final TPEIR: Nona reported briefly on the Board of Supervisors hearing on December 16, at which time they adopted the RTMP with several revisions, and certified the Final TPEIR. MCL continues to assert that the RTMP is deficient because it does not contain design parameters specific to safe shared-use trails, especially narrow trails. MCL is also concerned that supervisors were able to remove leash restrictions for dogs on roads in sensitive zones in Giacomini OSP and Cascade OSP. (It was agreed that the restrictions would remain in Cascade OSP until further evaluation.) The supervisors' ability to make revisions that might have environmental impact raises the question: Will politics trump objective "science-based" decisions under the RTMP?

In response to concerns about how future proposed projects will be evaluated, Carl Somers explained two decision processes described in Chapter 5 of the RTMP. The first will be to evaluate existing roads and trails in each region and to designate which should be maintained as part of the existing "system." The second will be evaluation of proposed (e.g., "new") projects as part of the annual budget cycle. The first Region to be evaluated for system designation will be Region 1. A public open house will be scheduled in Mill Valley, probably in mid-March (tbd), at which time Parks staff will present a draft system (working hypothesis). Break-out groups will consider which facilities are "in" or "out". Resulting facilities will be scored according to criteria (run through the model), and this will determine baseline score to which future proposals (for the region) will be compared.

At the open house meeting(s), staff will distribute "Intake forms" to guide submissions of proposals. Carl hopes that submissions will be well-considered and contextual – i.e., will

reflect understanding of terrain, “fit” with existing facilities, needs, and be collaborative. Not all data will be immediately available to participants – e.g., large maps are only available for review in Parks Department offices. Public will “score” their proposals, but staff will run proposals through rigorous evaluation “tool,” and those projects that best meet criteria will become part of a ranked list posted on County web site. Those that meet other feasibility criteria (cost, season of work, etc.) will be considered for a position in annual budget package.

Concerns expressed by the Committee: 1) Need for broad public notice in advance of meetings such as the one planned for Region 1, e.g., at popular trailheads, and not limited to those who can attend a public open house (Carl: Dept plans to undertake broad outreach); 2) Will a “change-in-use” of a road or trail be considered a “project” for purposes of public review and annual budget? (Carl: Change-in-use would likely have a physical component, such as physical improvements, triggering public review.); 3) Designation process will include trails that may be slated for future decommission; 4) Maps may have to be updated to reflect new road/trail designations; 5) Emphasis should be on needs, not wants; 6) Carl anticipates greater demand (for new facilities) than can possibly be met, due in part to limited annual construction window (in part due to spotted owl nesting season) and in part to limited resources. Committee commended Carl and Matt for renewal of contract with Pt. Blue Conservation Science for spotted-owl monitoring program – an ongoing multi-year program.

2. MCL Draft Trail Policy.

Nona explained that, although MCL has commented extensively on the RTMP, it does not have a trail policy beyond recommendations that were included in Community Marin, and adopted by the Board. A draft Trail Policy was distributed for review and discussion at the February meeting of this committee.

3. Invasive Plants Subcommittee:

Paul reviewed the key priorities that the subcommittee has set for the coming year (see also December 18, 2014 minutes): 1) Monitor uses of Measure A funds for local cities and districts to advocate for invasive species abatement programs; 2) Develop a coalition of supporters to advocate for invasive plant controls; and 3) Review local ordinances, general plans, etc. for policies and programs concerning invasive plants – begin advocacy for drafting of such policies and ordinances by local governments. Matt Sagues noted that weed maps are being developed by California Native Plant Society and Cal-Flora and are close to roll-out. They will provide detailed location information for infestations of various invasive plant populations.

4. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative.

Nona repeated key points from the December 16 update: TLC has launched their “OneTam” website and published a brochure that lays out a 5-Year Strategic Plan. Two staff positions have been filled, one dealing with natural science, plants and wildlife, and the other with volunteer activities and community outreach. An issue raised by the public is that TLC appears to be a “new” agency and that Golden Gate Parks conservancy has too much power. TLC collaborators are working together to assure the public that this is not a new government entity, and that the collaborative, not Parks Conservancy, will determine any policy that might differ from member agencies’ existing

governing regulations and policies. The TLC collaborators are seeking new ways to communicate with the public. A volunteer day, with a number of projects lined up, will be held on January 31, according to Tom Boss.

5. State Department of Parks and Recreation

Parks Forward Commission's final report is due any time. MCL members will attend the Commission's final meeting scheduled for February 6 in Sacramento.

State Parks in Marin

Ranger Tom Frazier, standing in for Sector Superintendent Bill Lutton, reported on the status of several projects/activities in Marin state parks. Modifications to Bills Trail in Samuel P. Taylor S.P. are proceeding on schedule. Pinch points are being installed. Work will continue through February, and pick up again in August after a break for spotted owl nesting. Some volunteers are working on the project. The trail is closed during construction. The Shoreline Trail at China Camp S.P. is being improved and is currently closed. The Operating Agreement under which CCSP is being operated by volunteers will probably change to a Donor Agreement after July 1, 2015. At Olompali State Historic Park, some roads are being moved away from deteriorating historic structures. ADA improvements are being made to the trailhead at Millerton Pt., in Tomales Bay S.P. (east). Some trail names have been changed in Mt. Tam S.P.: Coastal Trail is now Bolinas Ridge Trail; Ocean View is now Canopy View; and the Old Mine Trail is now divided into Upper and Lower Trail. Some new signs reflecting OneTam collaboration have been installed.

6. National Parks in Marin:

Pt. Reyes National Seashore Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan/EA. As reported previously, NPS staff conducted two public workshops in Pt. Reyes Station, November 20 and 21, the first dealing with Ranch practices, including pasture and soil management, diversification, and ownership succession, and the second workshop focused on managing the elk that roam in the pastoral zone and are interfering with some ranch operations. The EA is in preparation, but will not be available for public review until late spring or summer 2015.

Muir Woods Traffic and Parking and Reservation system. As reported on December 16, Jared Huffman has convened two meetings of stakeholders (November 4 and December 5), in an attempt to reach a better understanding of the NPS plan to institute a reservation system, and how to limit or remove parking altogether from Muir Woods Road, and to put a cap on visitation to Muir Woods. The current condition of roadside parking is both hazardous to visitors and damaging to the stream habitat of Redwood Creek. The County has taken steps to restrict tour buses from driving on residential streets in Tam Valley, and is examining ways to alleviate traffic and parking. It is also necessary to improve physical road conditions, e.g., repair culverts and restrict parking, to prevent polluted runoff from entering the creek. Who will take responsibility and fund improvements has not been resolved. No conclusions have been reached; the discussions will continue.

7. Park Watch Program. Larry gave a brief overview of the Park Watch Program, which Marin State Parks will test in coming months. It involves a GPS-based app that allows individuals to report to a central database their observations of use and/or conditions on trails. We will plan a demonstration for the next meeting of the committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00.

The next meeting is changed to February 19 (NOT Feb. 12). Muir Woods Conference Room, MCL office.

Minutes by Nona Dennis