

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee February 19, 2015

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Larry Minikes, Greg Zitney, Linda Novy, Arlin Weinberger, Rick Fraites, Robert Eichstaedt, Tom Boss, Jill Templeton, Al Baumann, David Ross, Connie Berto, Joyce Britt, Monte Kruger, Larry Kennings, Jack Krystal, Kevin Wright and Carl Somers (County Parks and Open Space District), Mike Swezy (MMWD), Guest Janet Peterson, Park Watch.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and AGENDA CHANGES: 1) Public Workshop on RTMP – Region 1, Sunday, March 22 1:30 – 4:30. Mill Valley Community Center; 2) Preview of workshop for Region 1, March 1, 9:00, meet at Horse Hill OSP; 3) County Parks Public Meeting on Inclusive Access Plan, February 26; 4) Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC) “Whole Mt. event, April 25th (see onetam.org); 5) Rick Fraites distributed N.Y. Times article on impacts of recreation on wildlife.

MINUTES for January 8, 2014, approved.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Park Watch Demonstration

Janet Peterson demonstrated a computer program and app for smart phones (Park Watch) that she and others have developed that enables GPS-based observations from remote locations (e.g., trails, roads, etc. in a public open space) to be transmitted to a central location to be recorded and organized by land managers according to a variety of categories. Observations can include trail conditions, wildlife sightings, user incidents, events, and other useful information. The template, which is already in use in several parks, can be adapted to individual park needs and conditions. She related a brief history of the program, which started in the Auburn area and has demonstrated its utility to several park managers. Ms. Peterson does initial set-up; installation is free, as costs are born by selected sponsors who receive advertising exposure. The next iteration will have a reverse function to help locate people who are lost.

Several questions were raised by the group – Has program been rejected, and why? – Ans: Similar program may already be in place; takes time to train; park doesn't have resource, etc. Representatives from Marin County Parks and MMWD stated that they already have incident reporting systems, but admitted that current systems are not GPS-based. Several people agreed that this would be a very valuable system to link public lands data bases, reports would be more easily retrieved, and make data more readily available to the public. MCL will continue to track the availability and effectiveness of existing incident reporting systems in public open space, watershed, and parklands.

2. Marin County Parks and Open Space District

- a) RTMP Roll-out: Public Meeting on March 22, 1:30 – 4:30 will focus on OSPs in Region 1 and consist of a staff presentation of a draft proposal for designation of roads and trails on open space preserves in Region 1, followed by small group workshop. The Project Intake forms for future project proposals will be explained.
- b) Consultant contract for Initial Study on the “PlungeTrail” rehabilitation. In response to a question raised at the meeting, Carl Somers explained that a \$45,000 contract will be let to a consultant to conduct an Initial Study for repairs to a trail known as “The Plunge.” (This item is on the Feb. 24 BOS agenda) The consultant also will develop a template for future Initial Studies, such as preparing sections on Air Quality, regional Geology and other topics that are not site-specific. Carl explained that this year’s projects were authorized in the previous budget process for implementation in the 2015 construction season. Other projects for the current construction season included Repack and Dawn Falls Trail rehabilitations (completed?), and Roy’s Redwoods trail project as well as The Plunge. Further questions concerned whether the public will have opportunity to comment on future Initial Studies based on the template. Carl assured the group that public notice would be as is currently done, but actual preparation of the documents would be more efficient. The goal is to reduce reliance on outside consultants, not reduce public transparency.
- c) Inclusive Access Plan. To respond to ADA and other state and federal requirements for providing inclusive access to parks and open space, County Parks is embarking on a comprehensive Inclusive Access Plan designed to accommodate a full range of mobility needs for access to selected parks, vista points, picnic areas, and trails. Design protocols to enable such access are required for any project that receives federal funding. This includes not only design of physical facilities, such as trail tread, width, grade, etc., but also communications, including signage. The Department is reviewing existing policies and identifying facilities that are adaptable to such design and could accommodate Other Powered Mobility Devices (OPMDs). Federal law is clear that persons with impaired mobility, regardless of cause, must be accommodated where possible. The Plan process will be introduced at a public meeting on February 26 in Corte Madera Town Center, and will be underway for much of 2015. There will be future opportunities to comment as the Draft Plan goes forward.
- d) Community Grant Program, Measure A. Kevin Wright, Outreach Coordinator for County Parks, explained that a Community Grant Program fund of \$100,000 is allocated annually from Measure A revenues for the purpose of enhancing visitation to parks and open spaces by underserved or otherwise disadvantaged populations. After studying present limitations that may prevent seniors from visiting County facilities, such as lack of transportation or concerns about safety, the County encouraged MCL to consider sponsoring a program aimed at taking seniors into the outdoors. After brief discussion, it was agreed that this would be a good idea for MCL and that Nona would outline a program for FY 2015-16 and submit a Letter of Interest by the February 27 deadline. The program will adapt

MCL's current Walks into Conservation History for access by seniors who find it difficult to get into the OSPs or county parks. Six excursions will be planned for the year, using rented van transportation.

3. Trail Policy Draft

- a) Nona explained that MCL does not have a general trail policy beyond recommendations that included in Community Marin. A draft 2 Trail Policy was distributed for review. A revised Draft 3 will be distributed again for discussion and action at the March 12 P&OS Committee meeting, with the intent of recommending it to the MCL Board for approval on March 17.

4. Invasive Plants Subcommittee:

- a) The Subcommittee is monitoring the budgeting of Measure A funds by cities, towns, and districts with the intent of encouraging them to dedicate a portion of those funds to combat invasive plants (weeds) locally. The first target city is San Rafael.

5. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative.

- a) TLC has launched the onetam.org web page, and will give the P&OS committee a progress report at the April 9 meeting.

6. State Department of Parks and Recreation

- a) Nona, Susan, and Arlin Weinberger attended the concluding meeting of the Parks Forward Commission in Sacramento on February 6. Nona and Susan gave a brief report of the meeting. The Commission's recommendations have been well-received by the administration and legislature, as well as the public. A transition team has been appointed to initiate some of the recommendations in the next two years. Major funding for the work of the Commission came from the Resources Legacy Fund; they will continue to help support the work of the transformation team.

7. National Parks in Marin:

- a) Pt. Reyes National Seashore Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan/EA is in preparation, but will not be available for public review until late spring or summer 2015.

- b) Muir Woods Traffic and Parking and Reservation system. Nona reported on the third in a series of three meetings convened by Jared Huffman since early December, in an attempt to reach a better understanding between NPS and local community groups on NPS plan to institute a reservation system and gradually reduce, and eventually eliminate, parking on Muir Woods Road. Jared proposed a seven-year plan as a draft proposal for getting a reservation system up and running, and gradually reducing and finally restricting parking entirely on the Road. The draft proposal will be considered by all interested parties.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10.

The next meeting is March 12 MCL conference room.

Minutes by Nona Dennis