

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee April 9, 2015

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Linda Novy, Arlin Weinberger, Rick Fraites, Tom Boss, Jill Templeton, Larry Kennings, Susan Stompe, Priscilla Bull, Curt Kruger, Joyce Britt, Judy Teichman, Barbara Salzman, Cass Fimrite, Colleen Lenihan, Mia Monroe (NPS), Bill Lutton (State Parks), Mike Swezy (MMWD), Sharon Farrell (TLC).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and AGENDA CHANGES: 1) Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC) "Whole Mt. event, April 25th (see onetam.org); 2) MCL Annual Dinner, April 24; 3) Trails and Greenways Conference, April 23-25; 4) Bay Area Open space Council Annual Conference, May 14, Richmond; 5) Earth Day events, various; 6) Olompali Heritage Day, May 17; 7) NPS Conference on Science and the Parks, was held March 25-27 at U.C. Berkeley (talks available on YouTube); 8) NPS Centennial (2016) Kick-off events.

MINUTES for March 12, 2015, approved.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks and Open Space District

- a) RTMP Roll-out. The committee briefly discussed reactions to the public meeting held on March 22 in Mill Valley. Among the comments: Attendees were a mixture of people very familiar with RTMP process and a lot of new people unfamiliar with the history. No overview was provided to introduce newcomers to the process; inadequate explanation of overall RTMP, although (too) long presentation on process for submitting proposals. No information on Legacy and other Zones showing habitat sensitivity. Not enough information given on individual trails – all left up to individual tables. Different colors on maps confusing. Comments on maps were noted by facilitator, but not coherent; impossible for attendees to go around and digest comments at other tables. We will not see aggregate comments, or baseline map for Region 1 for six to eight weeks. Any persons who are really interested will have to go to Parks Department to study maps.
- b) Morrison Trail Decommissioning. Nona briefly reviewed the history of acquisition of the 22-acre parcel by MCOSD in 2012. Illegal trail constructed early 2012, when the acquisition was pending. If a prior social trail existed, it was not included in 2011 inventory as it was on private land. First attempt to close (2012) failed. 2nd attempt in 2015 involved large trees, both cut, and on the ground. MCL believes closing without public process was justified due to timing of discovery of illegal trail – in 2012, and again in 2015.

- c) Critical Habitat of Northern Spotted Owl Reminder that three preserves in Region 1 support critical habitat of the listed as threatened Northern spotted owl, which must be protected from disturbance in trail construction and use. Mia Monroe (Muir Woods and GGNRA) reported that there are many threats to Northern spotted owl, and that the NPS has a high density of owls that need protection within the federal parks.
- d) Release of the Draft Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan is imminent – it is due out later this spring along with Draft EIR.

2. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC)

Sharon Farrell (GG Parks conservancy) and Mike Swezy (MMWD Watershed) presented an update of activities and plans of the TLC. Sharon outlined the following types of activities and programs; 1) Outreach. Staff is placing a great emphasis on outreach and engagement of the public. They continue to seek partners to share in events, such as Earth Day activities with Friends of Mt. Tam, June 6 National Trails Day, and a celebration of Mt. Tam on October 3 and 4 (MCL will share a booth), and various kinds of events to connect people with Mt. Tam. They are making connections at trailheads, in schools to increase public awareness of the resources of Mt. Tam and ways to volunteer. A 6-week high school program will have students working on the mountain. 2) Technology. Staff is developing an interactive program “Our Tam” – 3-dimensional stories about the mountain. 3) New staff. A new restoration specialist has been hired, to be stationed at Sky Oaks; she will recruit and work with interns, with the intent of developing the next generation of stewards.

Mike Swezy described three potential projects that have been prioritized by such criteria as “funds available,” “ready” for further development, key projects in the watershed, etc. At the top is the restoration of W. Peak, whose feasibility is currently under study (“Basis for Design”). This will go to the Board for review. Renovation of the Log Cabin will qualify it for the National Register when it is restored. And the Cataract Trail is being studied for renovation -- to rebuild the tread and to protect the yellow-legged frog and forest amenities.

A discussion ensued, with two main concerns expressed: 1) How can the public keep track of the many activities and project decisions? And 2): will TLC activities have the effect of promoting too much access to Mt. Tam to the detriment of the watershed whose primary function is water supply? In other words, will too many people come to recreate on the mountain as the result of promotion? Will the mountain become commercialized? Response to the first question: TLC is maintaining a web site, and GGNR is trying to make web access to information more user friendly. Committee members want to be able to see that the land managers “own” their own authorized projects, even though implementation may be collaborative. Response to second question: Sharon and Mike emphasized that outreach is aimed at education on the protection and restoration of resources, not exploitation. Mia Monroe said that protects are designed to repair, not just to promote. Bill Lutton said that user groups will grow with population; the new public needs to be educated in how to protect resources. Several attendees stressed the importance of placing limits on visitation, not to exceed some optimal carrying capacity – how much impact can be tolerated

before an ecosystem fails. All agreed that publicity needs to carry message of standards and sustainability (of natural resources).

3. Trail Policy Final Draft _Nona commented briefly that the MCL had adopted the Trail Policy with a few minor tweaks. It is posted on the MCL web page.
4. GGNRA and State Parks: Redwood Creek Trail Realignment and Dias Ridge Connection. A joint public meeting was hosted by GGNRA and State Parks to present proposed alternatives for rehabilitating this trail between Muir Woods and Muir Beach, and moving it out of the floodplain. An EA is being prepared that will evaluate alternatives. Nona commented on easel paper that the Redwood Creek Trail should remain hiker and equestrian only.
5. State Parks. Bill Lutton, Marin Sector Superintendent, explained how the proposed change-in-use of Easy Grade Trail in Mt. Tam State Park to allow access by bikes will be evaluated, according to a process laid out in a Programmatic EIR. An opportunity for public comment will be made available later this year.
6. Trail Partners Nona and Curt Kruger gave an update on the status of the campaign "Safe Trails Marin" that has been in process for over a year, with MCL collaborating with Marin Horse Council and Marin County Bicycle Coalition (off-road program). The group has developed a tri-fold brochure, has hired a public relations expert plan the campaign launch on National Trails Day June 6, and is considering other collateral material to hand-out.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00

The next meeting is Wednesday May 13, 3:00-5:00, MCL conference room.
Minutes by Nona Dennis