

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee May 13, 2015

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Kate Powers, Pat Nelson, Doug Wilson, Arlin Weinberger, Rick Fraites, Pam Reaves, Tom Boss, Al Bauman, Jill Templeton, Priscilla Bull, Ann Thomas, Joyce Britt, Brian Stompe, Mia Monroe (NPS), Mike Swezy (MMWD), Sharon Farrell (TLC), Mischon Martin and James Raives (Marin County Parks), Jack Gibson (MMWD).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and AGENDA CHANGES: 1) Bay Area Open space Council Annual Conference, May 14; 2) Olompali Heritage Day, May 17, 10:00 – 4:00; 3) County Parks and Open Space Commission, Thursday May 21, 3:00; 4) National Trails Day, Saturday June 6 – various events; 4) MCL Water and Watershed program, May 28, 5:00 – 6:30.

MINUTES for April 9, 2015, approved.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks and Open Space District
 - a. Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan (VBMP) and Draft EIR. Mischon Martin and James Raives from County Parks Department were on hand to give a brief overview of the VBMP and EIR. The comment period is 60 days, until July 8. The CEQA hearing will be before the Parks Commission on May 21. Committee members complained that two weeks into the comment period is not enough time to read the documents and make meaningful comments at the public hearing. James and Mischon explained that the meeting is an opportunity to re-introduce the Plan, which has been on hold for several years. Informed comments can be made in writing. It is likely that the majority of comments will be on the Plan and not on the adequacy of the Draft “Tiered Program EIR.” It would be nice if the Final EIR could avoid endless repetition of the standard response to those comments that address the Plan rather than the EIR. Further public meetings will be on the Final EIR later this fall, and then on the combined Plan and EIR before the Board of Supervisors.
 - b. RTMP Roll-out. A public meeting was held on March 22 in Mill Valley to review a draft designation of roads and trails in Region 1 of the Open Space District, and to review the process for submitting proposals for future projects. The results of the workshop will be a map of designated facilities to serve as the environmental

baseline, against which to evaluate future project proposals. The map is not expected to become public for several weeks. It appears that bike interests have been developing proposals for expanded access to preserves and lobbying supervisors. There is some concern that the decision process will become politicized rather than science-based. Those who are really interested will have to go to Parks Department to study maps. Concerns were raised about the need to avoid sensitive species, such as spotted owl nests – several in Region 1. It was noted that sensitive habitat (Legacy) zones were not emphasized enough in the public workshop, and proposals may be submitted that do not avoid these zones, especially in Region 2.

- c. Measure A Community Grant – MCL Senior Walks. MCL has received approval of a \$5,100 grant application under the Measure A Community Program to conduct six special walks for seniors into County Open Space Preserves and Parks, one of them wheel-chair accessible. This is a program for Year 2015-2016. It is pending BOS approval at the end of June.
2. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC) Some concerns have been expressed that the TLC is evolving too rapidly, and that promotional materials could lead to the unintended consequence of over-use of both watershed lands and other public lands embraced by the collaborative. Sharon Farrell (GG Parks Conservancy) and Mike Swezy (MMWD Watershed) were on hand to outline the criteria that are used to select projects, and to reassure committee members that the purpose of outreach is to promote stewardship and education about the natural resource values of Mt. Tam and to engage volunteers in restoration and other beneficial projects. Mike stated that visitation is increasing, and it is important to educate new visitors. He explained that decisions on projects are made by the participating land managers, and not driven by Parks Conservancy marketing. Jack Gibson pointed out that the cultures differ among the four member agencies and the Conservancy and that sensitive areas or “hot spots” of difference need to be identified. Comments from the committee concerned the need to control the “message” so that it does not become commercial or create the expectation of more “events” that could impact the mountain, especially on the watershed. They stressed the importance of not exceeding an optimal carrying capacity. Sharon and Mike agreed that publicity needs to reinforce the message of protection and sustainability (of natural resources).
3. Trail Partners Campaign. Nona described the upcoming roll-out of the “Slow and say Hello” campaign slated for National Trails Day on June 6. A number of volunteer events are planned by the collaborating agencies of One Tam, and tables with Trail Partner campaign materials will be on hand at each of them. The Trail Partners will make a presentation to Board of Supervisors on June 9. The development of the campaign and materials for hand-out (draft brochure) has been underway for more than a year. It has financial and program support from all the land management agencies.

4. State Parks update Nona announced that the Parks Forward Transformation Team report is out, and it lays out a series of tasks to be accomplished largely by state parks staff over two years. There has been some mention of holding regional public meetings. No meeting has been scheduled yet in Marin.
5. National Parks in Marin
 - a. Pt. Reyes National Seashore – Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan. No report on the status of the RCMP and Environmental Assessment. Brian Stompe was present to comment on the recent press release by Center for Biological Diversity concerning the reduction of 250 in the elk herd in the Tomales Pt. wilderness-designated area, which apparently died due to drought. He believes that there should be discussion of the inhumane conditions that allowed the elk to perish, and that the park service should take corrective action by replenishing water supplies, to prevent this from happening again in time of drought.
 - b. GGNRA and Muir Woods Nona outlined the issues that have been in discussion among stakeholders in a series of meetings convened by Jared Huffman since early November 2014. The main issues are heavy traffic through the local communities, uncontrolled parking along Muir Woods Road (Franks Valley Rd.) with resultant hazards and polluting of Redwood Creek, and the need to control peak visitor numbers by instituting a reservation system for parking at Muir Woods. Mia Monroe elaborated on long-standing issues outside Muir Woods. The ad hoc committee is fine-tuning an MOU between Park Service and the County. The group will meet one more time and then will participate in a public meeting. On a related issue, Joyce Britt commented that the community of Muir Beach draws its water supply out of Redwood Creek and is using some of it to fill swimming pools. Given the array of problems with Redwood Creek fish habitat, it seems ironic that water should be allowed for this purpose .

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15

The next meeting is Thursday, June 11, 3:00-5:00

Minutes by Nona Dennis