

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
Parks and Open Space Committee
June 11, 2015

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Kate Powers, Tom Boss, Al Baumann, Larry Minikes, Judy Teichman, Robert Eichstaedt, Ann Thomas, Connie Berto, Eva Buxton, Susan Stompe, Linda Novy, Paul Minault, Kristin Shannon, Larry Kennings, Shelly Scott, Cheryl Douglas, Kevin Haroff, Mia Monroe (NPS), Sharon Farrell (TLC)
Meeting was called to order by Nona at 3:00 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and AGENDA CHANGES: 1) Visit to Giacomini Dairy and cheese-making operation, June 20; 2) MCL Picnic on the Patio, July 25, 12:00 – 3:00; 3) Walk into Conservation History, Roy's Redwoods, with David Herlocker, Aug. 9, 9:30 – 1:00; Public meeting on glyphosate hosted by San Francisco IPM Technical Advisory Team, July 2, 9:30 – 11:30, County Fair building, Golden Gate Park, 8th and Lincoln.
Added to agenda: MMWD relationship to Tamalpais Lands Collaborative.

MINUTES for May 13, 2015, (Need approval at July 9 meeting.)

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks and Open Space District:
 - a. Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan (VBMP) and Draft EIR. The comment period on the Draft EIR is 60 days, until July 8. Not many people attended the CEQA hearing at Parks Commission meeting on May 21. MCL has not yet submitted comments on the adequacy of the Draft "Tiered Program EIR." Review has been complicated by public protest over scheduled herbicide treatment of invasive plants posted recently on Ring Mtn. OSP. An organized protest occupied much of 2 hours of public testimony during open time at the Board of Supervisors on June 3. Opponents of herbicide use, specifically glyphosate, were about 2/3s of the speakers. Others, including MCL, spoke in support of the ongoing invasive species IPM treatment program on Ring Mtn. and on other preserves. The Board delegated a subcommittee of Supervisors Sears and Rice to study the matter and possibly conduct a public information meeting. Further public meetings will be on the Final EIR later this fall, and then on the combined Plan and Final EIR before the Board of Supervisors.
 - b. RTMP Roll-out (continued discussion). The map of designated roads and trails in Region 1 of the Open Space District is due out momentarily. In the meantime, bike interests have developed proposals for expanded access to narrow trails on preserves and have been meeting with staff and lobbying supervisors individually and at regular meetings to gain support. MCL is concerned that the decision process has become political rather than objective and science-based. Committee members repeated concerns that sensitive habitat (Legacy) zones, including spotted owl nesting habitat, are not being emphasized enough as a constraint on location and intensified use and/or conversion of trails. Future public meetings (on other Regions) should focus more on natural resource protection. We need to support staff in implementing the RTMP in a transparent and objective manner.

2. Trail Partners Campaign. Nona described the roll-out of the “Slow and say Hello” campaign on National Trails Day June 6. Tables with banners, information brochures and other campaign materials (tee shirts, shirts, caps, etc.), were set up at five volunteer trail maintenance events held by each of five land managers. It was a useful trial to guide future tabling at events and popular trailheads and other gathering spots. The Trail Partners’ presentation to Board of Supervisors on June 9 was well-received.
3. MMWD and Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC) The committee continued previous discussion on the relationship of MMWD to the TLC and the need for reassurance that unintended consequences of over-use will not result from promotion – that outreach is focused on stewardship and education and will not have the effect of bringing increasing numbers onto Mt. Tam. Others want reassurance that Parks Conservancy is not dominating the collaboration of public agencies. Others commented that too many project decisions appear to be made at staff level without TLC Exec. Committee involvement or public knowledge. Sharon Farrell agreed that outreach must reinforce protection and sustainability (of natural resources). In the interest of transparency, she said that a special public meeting will be held October 4 at M. V. Community Center, 2:30 – 5:00, to present an annual report on work and finances. The MMWD Watershed Committee will also discuss MMWD’s decision process as it relates to TLC activity at a meeting in July and report to the MMWD Board. In the meantime, the Wildfire Protection and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Plan (Vegetation Management) is being revised to eliminate use of chemical herbicides as an alternative for treatment of invasive plants.
4. State Parks update Nona announced that the State Parks Forward Transformation Team report is out, and it lays out a series of tasks to be accomplished largely by staff from around the state. We have been advised that there will be public meetings. No meeting has been scheduled yet in Marin. Tom Boss announced that China Camp State Park is now a 501 C 3 and has an operating agreement with State Parks. There will be hurdles to raising funds, but all revenues will remain in Marin for two years. Two interpretive specialists have been hired with state funds (??) to work at China Camp and other state parks in Marin.
5. National Parks in Marin
 - a. Pt. Reyes National Seashore – Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan. Judy Teichman reported that the Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan has been delayed and will not be available until early 2016. Brannon Ketcham, the Superintendent’s assistant, is going to Washington D.C. on 6-month special assignment. Kevin McKay is heading the process in the interim. She added that there continues to be a need for an overall elk management plan that includes elk in wilderness areas of the Seashore. It would be useful to have an educational forum on the elk population.
 - b. GGNRA and Muir Woods Traffic and Parking. Nona reported on a public meeting convened by Jared Huffman on May 26 in Mill Valley to present the results of stakeholders’ meetings on a draft MOU that lays out the following: a timetable for instituting a reservation system for Muir Woods; a timetable for reducing parking on Franks Valley Road from current peaks of 400+ cars below the Redwood Creek Bridge, to a maximum of 80 after two years, 40 after four and a half years, and zero after seven years (thirty spaces will remain above the bridge); and for implementing interim storm water management

measures to protect water quality and salmonid habitat in the Creek. Kristin Shannon, speaking for Mt. Tam Task Force, stated that the MOU lacks compliance assurance, and should reduce parking in one year rather than two – seven years is too long to get to zero – and that the interim measures to protect habitat from polluted runoff needs more detail and a timetable. Major repair of the roadway and culverts is needed to bring any marked improvement to the Creek habitat. Mia Monroe, NPS liaison, outlined the programs that have already been undertaken by NPS and others to restore habitat in the Creek. NPS is also meeting with the County to begin actions to reduce/rearrange parking, and to identify other sources of pollution to the Creek, such as septic failures at Muir Beach. NPS will continue to work with the county on enforcement of parking restrictions. The MOU will be considered by the Board of Supervisors on June 16, to be continued for action to June 30.

6. MCL Policy on Invasive Species. The working draft of a proposed MCL Invasive species/IPM policy was the subject of discussion. MCL has already adopted a brief policy on the issue, as contained in Community Marin. The “new” policy is intended to expand on the brief statement in Community Marin. Comments on the draft included the following: Policy needs to present more examples of the damage done to ecosystems and native flora and fauna by invasive plants. Chemical herbicides are not necessarily a “last resort” in employing an IPM approach – in some cases it is preferable to other methods, or may be most appropriate at certain seasons. Accidental introduction of invasives from sources such as contaminated fill should be considered. Revegetation with natives should be undertaken after treatment; what often replaces invasives is annual (non-native) grasses. Other herbicides besides glyphosate can be effective (e.g., triclopyr). The working draft will next go to the MCL Board for discussion and a revised draft.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15

The next meeting is Thursday, July 9, 3:00-5:00

Minutes by Nona Dennis