

## MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

### Parks and Open Space Committee July 9, 2015

#### FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Kate Powers, Tom Boss, Larry Minikes, Robert Eichstaedt, Ann Thomas, Linda Novy, Paul Minault, Larry Kennings, Joyce Britt, Arlin Weinberger, Pat Nelson, Priscilla Bull, Bill Lutton (State Parks), Mia Monroe (NPS), Sharon Farrell (TLC), Sarah Minnick (Marin County), Mike Swezy (MMWD), Janet Klein (MMWD).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and AGENDA CHANGES: 1) MCL Picnic on the Patio, July 25, 12:00 – 3:00; 2) Walk into Conservation History, Roy's Redwoods, with David Herlocker, Aug. 9, 9:30 – 1:00; 3) County Park and Open space Commission meeting, July 16, 3:00 – 5:00; 4) Opening of "Rocky" Graham Park in Marin City, July 11, 11:00 a.m.; 5) Marin Headlands events, Aug. 1 and 2??

Added to agenda: Report on Enforcement on Open Space Preserves, by Foot People;

MINUTES for May 13 and June 11, Approved

#### INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin County Parks and Open Space District:
  - a. Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan (VBMP) and Draft EIR. MCL submitted a letter of comment on both Plan and Draft Tiered Program EIR ("Draft EIR"). Nona explained that MCL's comments were based on MCL's adopted policy that supports the use of IPM method, including mechanical, biological and judicious chemical treatment as necessary, in controlling invasive plants on the open space preserves. She briefly reviewed the key points in MCL's comments: 1) MCL supports the purpose and direction of the VBMP and Draft EIR; 2) The Plan and Draft EIR should make a stronger case for the functions of biodiversity and why it is important to protect biodiversity in managing invasive plants; 3) The Final EIR should make a stronger connection between the VBMP and the RTMP – the two plans should not be implemented under separate BMPs and EIRs; 4) The Final EIR should present a clearer picture of the current extent of non-native plant invasions in the preserves, including the projected rate of expansion; 5) The Final EIR should expand on the importance of chaparral as habitat and a vegetation cover type that is particularly vulnerable to fuel break clearing due to its flammability, and the need to limit the clearing of native chaparral; 6) The Final EIR should examine the impacts of a sub-alternative that does not include the herbicide glyphosate among its tools for control of invasives; it should include latest information on the World Health Organization (WHO) listing of glyphosate as a "probable human carcinogen"; 7) The Final EIR should include addition mitigation measures to notify public of potential exposure where herbicide treatments have taken place, for period of six months or more; 8) The Final EIR should more clearly if or how preserve users would be

exposed to herbicide in an aquatic medium; which BMPs or mitigation measures would be applicable to minimize such exposure? 8) Shouldn't the Final EIR add to the list of Major EIR Conclusions the finding that exposure of public visitors in the preserves to herbicide treatment (as outlined in the VBMP) poses no significant impact? 9) Reference should be made in the Final EIR to management programs and policies of other leading land management agencies, regarding their use of IPM methods to control invasive plants.

- b. RTMP Roll-out (brief update). The County Open space District has released its map of designated roads and trails in Region 1. A public meeting for similar designations in Region 2 will be scheduled soon. In the meantime, staff is receiving proposals for various trail projects. MCL continues to be concerned that the RTMP process has become politicized.
  - c. Letter to Board of Directors of Open space District on Use of Herbicides under IPM. MCL drafted a letter to the subcommittee (Katie Rice and Kate Sears) of the Board of Directors of the Open Space District (aka supervisors), supporting the use of glyphosate as a component of the IPM method for controlling in invasives on the preserves. There has been internal discussion in MCL on the approach of the letter, given the recent listing of glyphosate by WHO and uncertainty, in the absence of a full explanation (monograph) behind the listing. The letter is being redrafted to move away from specific focus on glyphosate, with greater emphasis placed on IPM as a decision process and set of tools for managing weeds.
  - d. Foot People Report on Enforcement on Open space Preserves An informal coalition known as the Foot People researched and compiled a report on the status of enforcement of regulations on the open space preserves and presented it to the Parks and Open Space Commission. It was also sent to Supervisors and to the IJ. The Report noted gaps in the enforcement of speed limits and yield rules. Ranger staff for the Parks Department has responded to the report, and this will be on the agenda of the July 16 meeting of the Commission.
2. MMWD Watershed
- a. Wildfire Protection and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Plan Mike Swezy and Janet Klein followed up on the recent press release from MMWD by reviewing briefly the Board's decision to drop the use of herbicide as an alternative, from their Draft WPHIPlan, which has been in process for several years. The unanimous decision was based on ongoing public objections to use of chemical herbicides on the watershed and concerns of some of the Directors. The Draft EIR will examine the impacts of the revised draft Plan, under a new contract. A scoping session for the EIR will be held in September, and a new Draft EIR is expected early in 2016. The District has not used herbicides to manage invasive plants for nine years. During that time the budget for weed management has gone from \$50,000/year, to the current budget of \$540,000, which has been augmented this year by an additional \$300,000, for a total of \$840,000. Broom increased by 200 acres in a four-year period. Funds are intended to support mechanical and other non-chemical methods of controlling invasives such as broom.
  - b. Resilient Forestry Study. MMWD is embarking on a research project in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service and U.C. Davis to identify actions that can restore and/or maximize forest ecosystem functions, such as water yield, carbon storage, habitat, and resiliency to wildfire. MMWD manages about 16,000 acres (?) of forested land. Forest systems on the watershed

are currently in “poor health,” due in part to the absence of episodic wildfire and in part to damage from pathogens like sudden oak death, which has killed thousands of Tanoak as well as other species. Regeneration is poor. The “new normal” is fewer mature trees, and gaps in forest cover are filling in with brushy species and small Douglas firs, with loss of carbon storage typically associated with mature trees, reduced water yield, reduced biodiversity, and greater susceptibility to wildfire due to fuel buildup. The study, which will be carried out by MMWD in conjunction with U.C. Davis and USDA Forest Service, will cover 30 acres in three different plots, representing several forest systems on the watershed, in the vicinity of Laurel Dell, Bolinas Ridge, and San Geronimo Valley. The study will establish both treatment plots and control plots. The ultimate goal is to test treatment effectiveness and determine whether any actions can be scaled up – and what cost – to take on larger areas on the watershed. The study is being funded by several grants.

3. Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC) Sharon Farrell, Parks Conservancy liaison to the TLC, gave a progress report, with input from agency collaborators Mike Swezy (MMWD), Mia Monroe (GGNRA), and Bill Lutton (State Parks). The TLC is working with the collaborating agencies’ own plans, programs, and “wish lists” to build overall capacity to implement them on a mountain-wide basis. The initial focus of TLC has been on increasing the volunteer base, building capacity for education and conservation programs, and raising funds to support activities across the mountain. Three teams are developing programs under the general headings of “Conservation, Stewardship, and Community/Youth Programs.” Two subgroups of agency partners are working to identify needs, how work plans can more effectively cover the whole mountain – i.e., be “mountain-wide” – and what staff support is required. One example of the Community and Youth Team activities is a 6-week High School program for 17 students (eight from Marin), who are working on habitat restoration, trail stewardship, and water resources education. Other education programs include MMWD’s trout in the classroom, elementary and middle school service-learning programs, and programs for underserved youth.

Mike added that the MMWD Watershed Committee is considering establishing a Citizens Advisory Committee. The committee is reviewing governance – e.g., how the TLC Executive Committee reviews work plans; developing a list of guiding principles; and how to report finances of the TLC. The MMWD Watershed Committee will receive a one-year review of MMWD participation in TLC at its meeting on July 16.

4. State Parks: The State Parks Transformation Team (including Danita Rodriguez) is convening a Citizens Advisory Committee, which will meet in Sacramento in early August and September. MCL will be a participant.

Bill Lutton, Marin Sector Superintendent, reported that the proposed change in use of Easy Grade Trail to accommodate mtn. bikes has completed the proposal evaluation stage, and is under review by various environmental, cultural, and other internal Parks staff. A public meeting will be held at some point. A public tour of Mt. Theater will be conducted to show various accessibility improvements that have been made to satisfy ADA requirements.

5. National Parks in Marin
  - a. Pt. Reyes National Seashore – Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan. No update. The Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan has been delayed and will not be available until early 2016.
  
  - b. GGNRA and Muir Woods Traffic and Parking. Nona reported that the Board of Supervisors approved an MOU between the County and the National Park Service that lays out a time-table and conditions for instituting a reservation system for Muir Woods; reducing parking on Franks Valley Road, in phases from current peaks of 400+ cars below the Redwood Creek Bridge to an eventual zero; enforcing parking restrictions with both structural measures and personnel; and implementing interim storm water management measures to protect water quality and salmonid habitat in the Creek. Although major repair of the roadway and culverts will be needed to markedly improve the Creek habitat, the approved MOU has added an Attachment C that outlines interim Best Management Practices intended to filter out pollutants in storm water runoff. Mt. Tam Task Force has filed a 60-day notice to sue the County under the Endangered Species Act, charging “take” of listed threatened coho and steelhead salmon and requesting more detailed measures to protect the water quality for salmonids in Redwood Creek. Whether or not MTTF brings suit will depend on negotiating the contents of Attachment C of the MOU.
  
6. MCL Policy on Invasive Species and IPM. Nona reported briefly on an open meeting of the San Francisco IPM Technical Advisory Committee on July 2. Dr. Susan Kegley, Pesticide Research Institute, gave a presentation on the research and analyses that lie behind the listing of glyphosate by the World Health Organization as a probable human carcinogen. The listing has drawn mixed criticisms, in part because it is based on new analysis of old data. No new research has been conducted. A monograph supporting the listing will be issued later this year, and the regulatory implications of the listing are yet to be defined.

The working draft of a proposed MCL Invasive species/IPM policy, discussed by this committee in June, is under discussion by other MCL committees. MCL already has brief policy on the use of IPM to abate non-native invasive species, as contained in Community Marin. The “new” policy is intended to expand on the brief statement in Community Marin, and will be redrafted for review.
  
7. Trail Partners Campaign. Nona reported that the “Slow and say Hello” campaign is working on next actions for the campaign, following roll-out on national Trails Day. A table with campaign materials was staffed in the Open space Tent at the County Fair.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00

The next meeting is Thursday, August 13, 3:00-5:00

Minutes by Nona Dennis