

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee October 8, 2015

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Tom Boss, Linda Novy, Paul Minault, Susan Stompe, Eva Buxton, Doug Wilson, Connie Berto, Al Bauman, Robert Eichstaedt, Gordon Bennett, Sharon Farrell (TLC), Matt Sagues (Marin County Parks), Mike Swezy (MMWD), Bill Lutton (State Parks).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) Fire Safe Marin Community Meetings on Community Wildfire Protection Plans, October 12, 13, 14, and 15, various locations (Mike Swezy commented that environmental considerations are included in meetings of FIRESafeMarin Steering Committee, and conflicts have been resolved as to how sensitive resources are treated in fuel reduction work); 2) "Round-up on RoundUp" meeting, October 20, 4:00- 6:00 pm, Elkus Ranch, 1500 Purissima Creek Road, hosted by Resource Conservation District and UC Cooperative Extension; 3) Parks Forward Commission, meeting on October 21, 9:30 – 12:00, at Railroad Museum, Old Sacramento; 4) Robert announced that the 25th anniversary of the saving of Horse Hill (as Alto Bowl Open Space Preserve) will be commemorated by the Mill Valley City Council on October 25. Several horses from Horse Hill will participate, and a proclamation will be read by Mayor Ken Wachtel.

AGENDA CHANGES: Report from GGNRA/Muir Woods by Mia Monroe moved to top of agenda

MINUTES for September 10, 2015 Approved

ACTION ITEM: The Draft MCL Policy on Invasive Plants and IPM was reviewed and discussed. Several specific requests for word changes-additions-clarifications were made. The requested action is to recommend that the draft policy go to the MCL Board on October 21 for adoption. After some discussion of the recent BOS workshop on IPM, a motion to approve was moved, seconded, and carried.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. National Parks in Marin – Muir Woods and GGNRA
Mia Monroe reported on several events and actions:
 - a. GGNRA is involved as a stakeholder in community meetings being held in connection with County's C-SMART (sea level rise) program underway along the Pacific Coast of Marin. A Vulnerability Assessment has been completed, and a community meeting to discuss the information and consider strategies for adaptation will be held on November 14 at Stinson Beach Community Center.

- b. The MOU between NPS and the county concerning reducing parking on Franks Valley Road (“Muir Woods Road”) and managing runoff into Redwood Creek is close to being signed by both parties. The BOS has signed the MOU; the NPS must first complete an EA for instituting a vehicle reservation system at Muir Woods, planned for operation beginning in 2017. The purpose of the reservation system is to reduce peak visitation levels at Muir Woods by managing motorized vehicle access. Commercial vans and tours, as well as autos, will require advance reservations. Individuals walking and biking in will not need to reserve. The public review period for the EA is from 10.23.2015 to 11.22.2015. In the meantime, both the County and NPS, along with State Parks, have begun actions pursuant to the MOU: putting up barriers, signs, fencing, etc. to restrict parking; hiring a ranger to enforce parking restrictions; reducing parking to 80 spaces along the road this year, in addition to 30 spaces that will remain on the road, close to the Monument entry. MOU partners have begun instituting best management practices to prevent polluted runoff from entering Redwood Creek. More extensive road, bridge, and culvert improvements will be undertaken in the future when funds are available.
- c. Marin Transit is currently transporting about 20% of visitors to Muir Woods; a pilot project to pick up visitors directly from the Sausalito Ferry is proving successful. NPS is continuing site planning within the Monument grounds to improve parking and safety. No additional RV or horse trailer parking is planned. The year 2016 will be difficult, in that the reservation system will not yet be in place, and parking will be restricted on the road; in the interim Conlan Ave. and old nursery site will be used temporarily for parking.
- d. The entry fee for Muir Woods will go up to \$10. in 2016; a portion will be used to support projects. Mia reported on the status of the baby coho rescue project. Maintaining sufficient cool water in Redwood Creek is a problem, due in part to groundwater extraction for use in Muir Beach. NPS is working with Green Gulch Ranch to improve coho habitat in confluence of Green Gulch Creek with Redwood Creek.

2. National Parks – Point Reyes National Seashore

- a. Gordon Bennett gave a brief report on the Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan process. A group of ranchers and environmentalists have been meeting (as reported in an article on elk management in the September-December Bay Nature). The group is in informal conversation, seeking areas of agreement that will ensure continued, long-term viability of ranching on the Seashore, while conserving unique biological resources. The RCMP and EA will not be available for public review until spring 2016.

3. Marin Parks and Open Space

- a. RTMP Roll-out (continued). Several who attended the Parks Department public meeting on October 3 to review draft trail designations for Region 2 reported their generally negative impressions of the meeting. Carl Somers explained the procedure for designation and previewed the system and non-system trails shown on maps. Some 200 people broke out into groups of about 20-each around a dozen tables. The process was confusing to most people. Maps were hard to read, with small, five digit codes identifying each trail and road segment – no names. Too many people crowded around tables; less aggressive people were unable to get their points heard; hard for all to get comments down on paper. People were asked to comment using number codes. “Legacy Zones” and the need to avoid or minimize intrusion were not discussed.

We suggested to Matt Sagues that an interim draft map be made available before the maps are finalized, so that people can study and comment on maps free of the crowding and confusion of the public meeting. We reiterated our concern that apparently Parks staff will not acknowledge proposals that suggest “no change” in a trail from its current condition and use, even if it can be shown that that the current condition is environmentally sound and safer than an alternative “action” proposal. The committee will submit a letter to staff asking for further review of this procedure and for better ground rules for conduct of future public meetings on other regions in the open space district.

Mike Swezy of MMWD (at the October 3 meeting) presented the possibility of an alternate route for bike use (shared use) between Azalea Hill and Bon Tempe, to bypass the current hazardous bike connection via Bolinas-Fairfax Rd. This may be a viable alternative, but bears further investigation. MMWD also discussed the possibility of opening Split Rock Trail to bikes to connect MMWD lands with Cascade Canyon OSP. No decisions have been made, but response was negative due to the fragile condition of the trail.

- b. IPM and managing invasive plants on open space preserves. The committee heard a brief review of October 6 BOS workshop on the County’s current programs for managing invasive weeds on open space preserves and the risks posed by use of glyphosate. A large crowd attended; some 50 people spoke for and against current programs. MCL continues to support the need for limited use of herbicides as an essential tool among other IPM methods for controlling invasive plants. The BOS made no decisions, but the trend of their comments indicated a better understanding of the IPM procedures on the county’s preserves.
- d. Problem of “Air-soft” on open space preserves. Connie reported on evidence of kids playing with “Air-soft” -- plastic pellets shot by guns, which poses a hazard, in part because the guns are realistic replicas of real guns.
4. OneTam (Tamalpais Land Collaborative). Sharon Farrell reported on activities and events on the weekend of October 3 and 4. On Saturday, numerous events such as interpretive and history walks were held throughout the OneTam area, and on Sunday (Oct. 4), 32 booths were set up for a participatory Family Day at the MV Community Center, co-sponsored by Mill Valley Recreation Department. The afternoon meeting was convened by the OneTam executive committee, who outlined accomplishments to date and the work plan for 2016, and heard public comments and suggestions, most of which focused on conservation and education.

Mike Swezy reported briefly on MMWD’s working relationship with OneTam, based on six principles that are consistent with the District’s Watershed Policy #7. A “Project Statement” concerning working relationship with OneTam will be reviewed by the District Operations Committee. Specific projects under consideration are the renovation of the Log Cabin and West Peak restoration. The Board has approved formation of a Citizens’ Advisory Committee focused on the participation of MMWD in OneTam, to meet possibly twice a year. Five members will be selected by directors, and two at large selected by the general manager.

5. State Parks in Marin. Bill Lutton, outgoing Superintendent of the Marin Sector gave several brief reports. He will be leaving for another assignment end of October.
 - a. Easy Grade Change in Use. This proposed project is still open for comments, following a field walk and public meeting on September 28. He stated that the purpose of the change in use to accommodate mt. bikes is for connectivity between Pantoll and Mt. Theater/Rock Spring, and not for “fun experience”; i.e., it will be designed for safety and comfort for both hikers and bikes. Members of the P&OS Committee plan to walk the trail to suggest where speed deterrents will be needed.
 - b. “Sound Summit”. Bill reported that Parks staff met with the producer of Sound Summit, who is determining how much he can contribute from event proceeds to Mt. Tam State Park. The producer (Roots and Branches Conservancy, a non-profit) has been granted a 5-year reviewable permit for the event, billed as “a benefit for the mountain.” The event was successful and well-controlled: a minor medical emergency, two smoking violations. MCL will follow-up to ensure that the state park does indeed benefit from the event. (Late information: the producer is contributing \$40,000 to the park for various projects and improvements.)
 - c. Miscellaneous. State Parks ecologist Bree Hardcastle will replace Bill as liaison to organizations such as MCL. The Marin State Parks Association is reviewing donor agreements with Olompali and Tomales Bay State Park and matching funds and will report in coming weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15

Minutes by Nona Dennis, Chair