

## MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

### Parks and Open Space Committee January 14, 2016

#### MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Tom Boss, Linda Novy, Susan Stompe, Eva Buxton, Al Baumann, Robert Eichstaedt, Rick Fraites, Arlin Weinberger, Larry Minikes, Larry Scheibel, Kate Powers, Judy Teichman, Connie Berto, Joyce Britt, Priscilla Bull, Paul Minault, Mia Monroe (NPS), Sharon Farrell (OneTam), and Mike Swezy (MMWD).

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) County Parks and Open Space Commission meeting, Thursday Jan. 21, 3:00 – 5:00; 2) Marin IJ Forum Broadcast with Dick Spotswood – debate on bike access to trails, with Linda Novy and Vern Huffman, was taped on Jan. 5 and will be aired at various times; 3) MCL Ag-Land Use Committee Quarterly meeting, with speaker Greg Andrews, fish biologist, MMWD, January 22, 10:00 – 12:00, Farm Bureau, Pt. Reyes Station; 4) MCL Bus.-Environment Breakfast with Armando Quintero, January 29, 7:30 – 9:00; 5) MCL Walk into History, West Peak, Mt. Tamalpais, March 12, 9:30 – 1:00; 6) Roll-out of Park Watch (see State Parks, below)

MINUTES for November 12, 2015 Approved

#### INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Marin Parks and Open Space
  - a. Current activities in Marin Parks Dept: **Staffing** – Pat O’Brien will continue as interim Director, and Max Korten has taken Ron Miska’s position of Ass’t Director.
  - b. There is no recent news of schedule for **Region 3 RTMP trail designation** workshop; presumably all remaining regions will go through public trail designation process in 2016.
  - c. The **Inclusive Access Plan** was discussed briefly. MCL submitted a comment letter on December 3, generally commending the Parks Department for the Draft Report and for public meetings to gather input. MCL’s commented that no Legacy zones in preserves or other sensitive habitats should be considered for accessibility improvements; Vistazo Road in Old St. Hilary’s Preserve, which goes through a population of the endangered Tiburon jewel flower, should be omitted from the list, and Roy’s Redwoods should have only minimal improvements to the Meadow Trail. MCL’s letter also cautioned against the possible misuse of electric bikes, an Other Power-Driven Mobility Device (OPDMD), on trails and roads that are not expressly

designated as Accessible. MCL is concerned that regulations limiting OPDMD's, including e-bikes, to equivalent "walking speed" may be ignored. Al Baumann pointed out that it is impossible to ride an e-bike "safely" (i.e., stay upright) at 5 miles per hour; he said that e-bikes should be allowed for those disabled and unable to ride standard mountain bikes, subject to existing speed regulations. There was no further discussion. MCL will be monitoring to ensure that use of OPDMD's is not abused on the preserves.

- d. At the present time, Parks staff is continuing to follow **IPM protocols to manage invasive plants** on open space preserves, with the goal of reducing and eventually getting to zero herbicide use. Paul Minault has circulated the link to a "2015 Cal-IPC Report on Best Management Practices for Wildland Stewardship" (when using herbicides for invasive plant management). It was suggested that the link should be sent to all supervisors.

## 2. MMWD

- a. Mike Swezy reported on the quarterly meeting of the MMWD Watershed Committee on December 10. The Committee reviewed the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC, or OneTam) annual report for 2015 and **TLC 2016 work plan** and recommended approval of the latter by the MMWD Board (see also onetam.org).
- b. The Committee heard a preliminary design report evaluating several alternatives for the **renovation of the Log Cabin**, a long-anticipated "legacy" project. Three alternatives would be to remove the cabin entirely and restore the site to its former natural condition; rehabilitate the cabin, including installing required code and accessibility features to be ADA compliant; and partially rehabilitate the structure. Various uses for the facility were discussed, such as small-scale District events, school programs, non-profit events, etc. The Committee will seek Board approval to enter into an agreement with Parks Conservancy and a preferred approach. If the Board approves, the District would commence with preliminary design, cost estimating, needed funds, public "scoping" process, environmental review, and permitting with the County.
- c. Mike also reported that MMWD staff recommended that a comprehensive planning study be undertaken, including technical studies to identify site constraints and opportunities and possible alternatives for the **restoration of West Peak**. Staff also recommends that a public engagement program be developed to get public feedback. Staff has drafted a potential collaborative agreement with Parks Conservancy outlining a working relationship for the project and scope of services for the Conservancy and for MMWD staff. In brief, the conservancy would act as Project Manager and carry out all planning tasks. This will go to the Board at a future meeting for approval.
- d. The Board has selected members for a **Citizens' Advisory Committee** to review the collaboration of MMWD in OneTam and with the Parks Conservancy in proposed projects to ensure conformance with MMWD policies related to the watershed.
- e. Staff will begin developing alternative routes to enable a mountain bike (multi-use) connection between the top of **Azalea Hill** and Bull Frog Road. Several alternatives

are possible, including rehabilitating Liberty Gulch Road. Alternatives will be reviewed at the March Watershed Committee meeting. The schedule calls for public engagement in the spring, environmental review, and approval of a final project by the end of 2016. Due to mixed response and several uncertainties, MMWD staff is not currently considering a trail link with Cascade Canyon Preserve via Split Rock Trail

3. Tamalpais Land Collaborative (OneTam)
  - a. Sharon Farrell distributed the **OneTam 2015 Annual Report, and Work Plan for 2016**, subject to approval by each agency decision body. She sees OneTam as “adding value” to the ongoing work of the four member agencies of TLC. She advised interested persons to consult the Onetam web site for a financial statement for 2015. Looking forward to 2016, she said that a public meeting “State of Mt. Tam” focusing on biodiversity of the mountain is planned for November. She will send to MCL a PwrPt presentation on the biological diversity of the OneTam area, which she presented to the Environmental Forum of Marin Master Class in fall of 2015. Several persons present at the P&OS meeting expressed an interest in the success of the wildlife Camera Index project.
  
4. State Parks in Marin:
  - a. Nona reported that the **State Parks Transformation Team** reported last November on progress in the two-year transformation process, an effort primarily by Parks Department staff that is being funded by the Resources Legacy Fund. They have made significant advances in six key task areas: 1) Modernization of organizational structure, systems, tools, and technology; 2) Opening pathways to leadership for qualified employees, not requiring peace officer status; 3) Embrace and manage partnerships, and create new nonprofit partner; 4) Prioritize necessary support to protect natural and cultural resources; 5) Extend park access to underserved communities and engage younger generations; and 6) Improve efficiencies and establish stable funding structure.
  - b. Susan commented that, notwithstanding the ambitious work of transformation, fundamental problems persist, such as the absence of rangers or any dedicated staff at **Olompali and Tomales Bay State Park** – i.e., the lack of basic funds to hire ranger staff to manage existing small park units. Tom Boss noted that **China Camp State Park** has one full-time ranger and will have an additional ½ time ranger, to be shared with Mt. Tam State Park. Concern was expressed that FOCC volunteers took on large responsibilities and that may not be a sustainable model.
  - c. Arlin Weinberger reported that some of the \$40,000 promised by the promoter of the rock concert held in September (**Sound Summit**) has been used to purchase defibrillators (to supply each truck), and water gauges to stop leaks. Some funds will be used by a Conservation Corps crew to reduce fuel on the mountain

5. National Parks in Marin.

- a. A meeting on January 6 in Tam Valley was convened jointly by NPS and Marin County to give a status report on how the **MOU to reduce/eliminate parking on Muir Woods Road** is being implemented. The NPS completed their EA on the reservation system and has signed the MOU (already signed by the County). Mia Monroe reported on progress: posts are being installed this week to remove parking from the roadside; Parking restrictions are being enforced. Materials are being installed to manage polluted runoff from the road. Federal funds will be available for major rehabilitation of Muir Woods Road, including culvert replacement and repair, in 2017-2018. Mia noted that the Muir Woods Monument fee increase to \$10 will help pay for other projects to improve salmonid habitat, consistent with the recently reprinted Redwood Creek Vision.
  
- b. The EA/IS for realignment and restoration of the 2+ mile **Redwood Creek Trail and Extension of Dias Ridge Trail** has been circulated by NPS and State Parks, and comments were extended to January 15. Robert Eichstaedt outlined the two projects that are joined in the document. Basically, the RCT realignment corrects a number of environmental problems, such as the need for horses to wade through the Creek in three locations, winter flooding, and encroachment into the Creek's floodplain. It is a major project with numerous new bridges (one is 110 ft long) that will be phased over four years. The extension of Dias Ridge Trail will take some land away from the paddock for Golden Gate Dairy stable, but at the same time eliminate the hazard of walking or riding on the shoulder of heavily-traveled Shoreline Highway. MCL submitted a letter generally supporting the project but noting that some problems need to be addressed in final design, e.g., safety measures to eliminate hazards for hikers and equestrians meeting mountain bikes (on lower segment of Dias Ridge Trail), and to ensure that bikes do not use the RCT or approach it (illegally) from north Miwok Trail at a blind intersection. MCL also noted that parking at either end of the RCT, which may become more popular with the planned improvements, was not addressed in the EA/IS and could pose environmental problems as well as traffic congestion.
  
- c. The **Pt. Reyes Comprehensive Ranch Management Plan process** is still six months from being produced as a Draft Plan and EA for public comment. In the meantime, Judy Teichman expressed concern that the elk herd on Home Ranch will continue to grow; ranchers are not being permitted to cut coyote brush, which is encroaching into pasture land and will compete with forage species. It was suggested that the matter be discussed in the Ag. Land Use meeting on January 22.

6. Other topics.

- a. Eva Buxton expressed concern that the recent announcement by SPAWN (Turtle Island Network) of its intent **to plant 10,000 redwood trees** along Lagunitas Creek to foster carbon sequestration as well as restore habitat is not based on knowledge of the historic distribution of redwoods, and, if planted along Lagunitas Creek, could

compromise the broad-leaved tree and understory species that make up a diverse riparian community. She states that a plan should be developed, made public, and that the environmental impacts should weighed against possible benefits.

Meeting adjourned at 5:20

Minutes by Nona Dennis, Chair