

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
Parks and Open Space Committee
December 14, 2017, 3:00 – 5:00

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair, Greg Zitney, Larry Minikes, Linda Novy, Roger Roberts, Tom Boss, Eva Buxton, Gordon Bennett, Robert Eichstaedt, Arlin Weinberger, Kate Powers, Larry Kennings, Nancy Benjamin, Jon Campo (MCP), and Mia Monroe, GGNRA.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS and CHANGES/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: 1) MMWD Watershed Committee meeting, Dec. 21, 1:30, MMWD Bd Room; 2) Parks & Open Space Commission meeting, January 18, 3:00 – 5:00.

MINUTES of Nov. 9, 2017 approved

INFORMATION UPDATES:

1. Marin Parks and Open Space

The purpose of discussion was to review the year and consider how the RTMP is progressing: what is working well, where is there need for improvement. Among the comments:

1) CEQA implementation continues to be problematic, in particular the preparation of “Consistency Assessment” document as a form of CEQA compliance for specific projects where no new impacts are anticipated. The differences between Initial Study/Neg Dec and Consistency Assessment need to be fully explained, since the staff effort to prepare the documents is roughly similar, but the negative effect (in public perception) is considerable and has prompted two law suits that are still awaiting settlement. One commenter added that “old trails” already in use that are improved should be acknowledged as such (i.e., as pre-existing) in CEQA documents.

2) Some concerns regarding CEQA compliance, which comes at the end of the project review process, too late for constructive input, in MCL’s view, may be alleviated by the work of the Environmental Roundtable, whose purpose is to identify environmental issues and constraints early in project proposals. There is considerable value in early detection of environmental constraints, to avoid being “blindsided” as project reaches construction stage. The public also requests staff’s work (during project review) to be more transparent – e.g., how are proposed projects evaluated using criteria in the RTMP? One commenter proposed placing more interpretive signage on trails with sensitive resources – wildlife and/or rare plants.

3) The committee agreed that several trail projects completed in the recent construction season have worked out well: “Gasline Trail” realignment and Middagh Trail improvements, both in the Alto Bowl OSP, and Irving Fire Road repair.

4) The Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan work program was also discussed. The goal of engaging the public and agencies is being met; staff is getting more public input on treatment plans. Questions were raised about how the San Geronimo Valley Golf Course will be managed, and what the “natural” vegetation would be – redwoods? The future use and management of the golf course will have broad community input.

2. **MMWD**

Mike Swezy was not present, but submitted a comment on MCL’s P&OS Committee work with the water district. He observed that the POS committee serves as useful clearing house for information regarding all parkland activities. It is the best way to keep current, and meetings foster informal and in-depth communication between agency staff and community groups/individuals. The district staff value feedback from committee members; staff appreciate support but also appreciate clearly stated criticism. The district values collaborative projects, like “Slow and Say Hello” and joint public hikes. The POS meetings offer land managers the opportunity to provide accurate and timely information to members, which is valuable for contentious issues.

Mike reported on the status of current district projects: Two road repair projects (Phoenix junction and slide on Eldridge) are being wrapped up and should be open in early winter. Other slides from last year will be repaired next year. Azalea Hill Neg Dec is being revised and will incorporate results of a new plant survey to be conducted in spring. The second phase of the resilient forest project was delayed to 2018 due to contractor diversion to North Bay fires. The EIR for the Biodiversity, Fire, and Fuels Integrated Plan will be released in late 2018. The Lagunitas Creek Flood Plan project, Phase 1, was successfully completed. Staff could arrange a public tour. The Board is considering funding a 100-year celebration in 2019 of Alpine Dam.

3. **State Parks**

Arlin Weinberger reported that the public continues to receive no information on how profits from “Sound Summit” held on Sept. 9, 2017. We are hoping that staff from Marin Sector State Parks can attend the January 11 meeting of this committee.

4. **National Parks:GGNRA**

Mia Monroe reported that the NPS and State Parks are revising their collaborative agreement concerning ongoing work in the Redwood Creek Watershed, whose responsibility for land management they share. (For 5 years, Muir Woods collected a \$2.00 surcharge to assist State Parks; that ended 1 ½ years ago.) The SP is now working with Matt Leffert (GGNP Conservancy) to develop projects under the sponsorship of OneTam that can be leveraged with profits from Sound Summit events.

Mia reported on the public meeting held on November 28 by NPS and the county at Tam Valley Community Center concerning the upcoming Muir Woods reservation system and status of other elements of the MOU between NPS and county, now in its 3rd year. The concessionaire (Ace Parking Management) was present to outline details of the reservation system. They began assisting NPS in directing parking on December 16, and will continue to serve as “parking ambassadors” as the system goes forward. The web site will go on line January 1, and parking reservations will be required as of Jan. 16, 2018. People arriving on bicycle or on foot will not need a reservation. Reservations for commercial buses will not begin until later in spring 2018. Beginning Jan. 20, 2018, shuttle service will run every weekend and holidays, and every day in summer between June 18 and Aug. 10. Reservations will be required. Many detailed questions are addressed in a FAQ section of the web site: GoMuirWoods.com. Parking on the road will be enforced by the County Sheriff, and funds from tickets (\$99.) go to County.

Mia also reported briefly on other events and ongoing projects:

- New GGNRA Superintendent **Supt. Laura Joss**’ beginning date is December 1. Carey Feierabend, former head of planning, is now Deputy Superintendent. (Both were present at the November 28 meeting.)
- A combined EA (federal) and IS (County) is in process for the “FLAP” project to rehabilitate Muir Woods (Frank Valley) Road. Under separate funding, designs for a replacement of the concrete bridge also are moving forward. Construction is unlikely to begin before 2020.
- The Sustainable Access Plan for Muir Woods parking areas may go forward in 2018.
- The Salmon enhancement and bridge replacement project inside Muir Woods is going through State Historic Preservation Office permitting process and has moved into the design phase, expected to be completed in fall of 2018.
- The “Coho jumpstart” program (removing salmonid juveniles from Redwood Creek for hatchery rearing followed by returning adults to the Creek) has shown 100% survival of fish returned to the Creek.

5. Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS)

In a brief update, the NPS is considering at least six alternatives for study in the EIS and Amendment to the General Management Plan, which will address the future of ranch lands on the Seashore. NPS held public meetings in October, and MCL convened two public workshops in November to offer assistance in writing comments for consideration in the EIS. The MCL Agricultural Land Use Committee has primary responsibility for tracking this project; P&OS Committee will support the effort.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00.
Minutes by Nona Dennis

The next meeting is January 11, 2018