

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

**Parks and Open Space Committee Meeting
August 11, 2011**

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Robert Eichstaedt, Susan Stompe, Tom Boss, Larry Minikes, Delos Putz, Joyce Britt, Ernie Stanton, Eva Buxton, Doug Wilson, Arlene Halligan, Steven Schoonover, Nancy Praetzel, Priscilla Bull, Greg Zitney, and Ron Miska (Marin County Parks).

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) MCL will hold its 9th Walk into (Conservation) History at Tomales Bay State Park, Aug. 27, 9:30 to 1:00; 2) China Camp will hold its annual Heritage Day, also on August 27, 11:30 to 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES for July 14, 2011 – Approved as submitted

ACTION ITEMS: None

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- 1) MMWD “Friends of the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed.” MMWD’s proposed “Friends” organization Business Plan has been released in final version and is posted on the <marinwater.org> web site. The District staff has incorporated additional comments and corrections, and will present the plan to the board on August 17 for adoption. The revised plan strengthened the goals statement to reinforce primacy of protecting and restoring natural resources on watershed lands. Other MCL comments on the plan are in the July 14 minutes of this committee.
- 2) MMWD Vegetation Management Plan and EIR. After a long hiatus, the District’s Vegetation Management Plan is scheduled to go forward with an EIR. MCL has been asked to support the public process and the efforts of the District to complete the Plan and EIR.
- 3) Marin County Parks and Open Space Department, and Name and Logo Change. Ron Miska, Deputy Director, explained the rationale behind simplifying the name of the department to “Marin County Parks” and designing a logo that will unify the overall department and be more visible and memorable. Among other reasons, the existing name has always been cumbersome to the public. This will create a stronger identity – “who we are.” Staff has been artificially divided between two areas of work – recreation and open space preserves. In fact, there is overlap between the two, and now all staff will wear the same patch (logo). The hawk is symbolic of strength, and the two words “preservation ~ recreation” on the logo capture the two main areas of responsibility of the department. This is also consistent with the Strategic Plan, and does not change the natural resource preservation management objectives on the open space preserves.

- 4) Roads and Trails Management Plan. The RTMP was the subject of a public workshop on June 18, and the Parks Department will hold another Saturday workshop on October 29, location to be determined. One purpose will be to overlay the roads and trails inventory maps over vegetation management “zones” from the Vegetation Management Plan to determine where the habitat sensitivities coincide with roads and trails, both existing and contemplated. Other layers of information, including data from an ongoing visitor survey, will be used in the analysis. A consultant has been selected to work with the Department on the Plan and to prepare the EIR on the RTMP.
- 5) Other Marin Parks Items. The new Marin Parks Commission is having a series of three orientation meetings. The next will be a field trip in the vicinity of Blithedale Ridge on August 17, meeting at M.V. Community Center at 1:00. Construction of the 680 Trail is making good progress, with substantial volunteer help. It may be finished before the rainy season (end of October), in which case it would be left to overwinter before opening in the late spring. The Stafford Lake Bike Park is basically designed and is undergoing CEQA environmental review. Estimated cost will be \$800,000.
- 6) Environmental damage caused by Thanksgiving “Appetite” Bike Ride through Cascade Canyon OSP. The growing interest in this traditional Thanksgiving morning mt. bike ride has resulted in crowds of over 900 riding the Pine Mt. “Loop” on MMWD lands, descending on Repak fire road into the County’s open space preserve in Cascade Canyon, and crossing San Anselmo Creek (which drains into Corte Madera Creek) four times before returning to Fairfax. The creek provides rearing habitat for the threatened steelhead trout. Frequently by late November, water is running in the creek and heavy use in crossing the creek kicks up sediment that is carried downstream to lower reaches. Any damage that occurs is shared by MMWD and Marin County Parks, but the worst potential damage is to the creek in the OSP. This is not a formal ride, so no bicycle organization claims responsibility.

Ron Miska reported that Brian Sanford and Ron Paolini are meeting to outline the issues, and will meet on site with a representative of Fish and Game to go over conditions and issues. They will work also with MMWD to consider alternative routes, possible cap on numbers, and other solutions. They are trying to get someone from the bike community to act as point person, but this is proving to be difficult due to the informal nature of the gathering – people just “show up” at different times, said Tom Boss. Apparently the Repak fire road is considered an historic descent, a personal challenge. Ron Miska is hoping for a longer term solution to come out of the meetings.

- 7) State Parks Closings. Susan Stompe and Arlene Halligan reported on a conference call on Wednesday with Calif. State Parks Foundation (CSPF). On May 13 State Parks Dept. announced that 70 parks would close and since

then staff has been developing individualized plans for specific parks. In general terms, Labor Day will be the last day of open use of parks designated for closure. Some will stay open until the 12th. Huffman's bill AB42, is expected to go to the Senate week after next, then back to the Assembly. If it passes and is signed by the governor, it will become law January 1, 2012. The bill gives the Parks Department authority to enter into agreements with nonprofit groups to operate State Parks.

CSPF has been developing a campaign around the tag line: Don't let our State Parks become just a memory. CSPF is urging groups to put pressure on the governor and both assembly and senate. CSPF is also developing a tool-kit for outreach – letters, business outreach, etc. – and collecting anecdotes on favorite parks and experiences. One of the big issues is liability insurance coverage; CSPF has been advised not to offer such coverage. Many issues are being raised about what closure means. MCL and EAC will be represented at a meeting on August 17, convened by Marin Community Foundation, to consider options to keep parks open.

Ernie Stanton, representing Friends of China Camp, reported that the Marin State Parks Association was to meet later today (Aug. 11) with District Superintendent Danita Rodriguez. MSPA will set up a working group to determine how best to support efforts to keep parks open. China Camp SP will close camp grounds October 16.

Concerns have been expressed by EAC over a proposed partnership between the Marin District State Parks and Tomales Bay Oyster Co.(TBOC) to manage Tomales Bay SP at Millerton Pt. Partnering with a commercial enterprise could set a precedent and be contrary to state park qualities (and create trash and traffic issues). Partnering with a private interest to maintain a state park would require strict criteria and public discussion. Arlene Halligan cited Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation as a successful non-profit partnership with California State Parks.

- 8) Mt. Tamalpais State Park East Peak Access Plan. The Marin District State Parks will hold another public meeting on September 15 at the Mill Valley Community Center from 5:30 – 7:30 to invite the public to critique three alternative design concepts for improvements to the East Peak. MCL has objected to alternatives that proposed developing facilities for large special events (e.g., weddings) and/or offering overnight accommodations. For further details on the East Peak design process, see P&OS Committee minutes for May 19, 2011.
- 9) GGNRA Open House. GGNRA will hold an Open House from 4:30 – 6:30, August 17, at the Bay Model in Sausalito. Among the topics will be scoping for an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the upcoming Americas Cup 34 in 2012 and 2013. A comprehensive Draft EIR has already been issued by the

City and County of San Francisco. The EA is required because many of the spectator sites and other facilities are on GGNRA lands as well as in the Bay. Marin will be concerned about impacts on traffic, waste, habitat destruction, and water quality, among other topics. The Open House will also update progress on Headlands Road construction, Redwood Creek Restoration, Hawk Hill habitat restoration, Rodeo Valley Trail, and the General Management Plan.

10) Albert Park Professional Baseball League Initial Study. Nona reported briefly that MCL sent a letter to the City of San Rafael urging the City to prepare an Initial Study to examine and mitigate the impacts of contracting for four months of professional minor league baseball each year for three years. The City staff recommended to the Parks and Recreation Commission that the proposal should be exempted from CEQA on the grounds that the use is consistent with normal use of the Albert Park Baseball field. The decision went to the City Council, who received many citizen complaints. MCL argued that the *use* is consistent, but the 1,500 anticipated spectators, and associated traffic, parking, noise, lights, waste, etc., would exceed normal *operations* of the Field and therefore impacts should be evaluated and a program of mitigations spelled out as conditions. The IJ reported Aug. 11 that the applicant had offered to do an Initial Study, and the City agreed that would be appropriate. MCL did not take a position for or against the proposal.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10
Minutes by Nona Dennis

Next meeting will be September 8, 2011