

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

**Parks and Open Space Committee Meeting  
September 8, 2011**

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Robert Eichstaedt, Susan Stompe, Jean Starkweather, Connie Berto, Tom Boss, Larry Minikes, Delos Putz, Ernie Stanton, Eva Buxton, Doug Wilson, Arlene Halligan, Nancy Praetzel, Priscilla Bull, Ann Thomas, Julia Violich, Matt Adams (Marin Bikes), Greg Zitney, Brian Sanford (Marin County Parks), and Mike Swezy (MMWD)

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) State Parks will hold a public meeting on the Mt. Tam SP East Peak Access Design on Sept. 15, 5:30-7:30, at the Mill Valley Community Center; 2) Sept. 17 is Coastal Cleanup Day; MCL will supervise four sites (see [mcl@marinconservationleague.org](mailto:mcl@marinconservationleague.org) for details); 3) MCL is hosting a Bus-Env. Breakfast featuring Supervisor Kate Sears, Sept. 22, 7:30 – 9:00 a.m., at Embassy Suites

MINUTES for August 11, 2011 – (Forgot this action; will need approval at October meeting)

ACTION ITEMS: None

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- 1) State Parks' closings in Marin: Susan reported on save our parks campaign of the Calif. State Parks Foundation. She showed and explained various graphic materials that the Foundation has prepared for distribution, including giant postcards addressed to Governor Brown to focus his attention on the many problems associated with the closing. The deadline for turning materials in to the Foundation is Sept 22.

The Open Parks Coalition, co-chaired by Jared Huffman and Marin Community Foundation (Tom Peters) had its first meeting on August 17. No date has been set for a second meeting. The coalition will host public meetings and seek both short-term and long-term solutions to keep Parks open.

Ernie Stanton (Friends of China Camp State Park) reported on a meeting of Marin State Parks Association with District Superintendent Danita Rodriguez, which was very informative in detailing exactly what personnel and funds are required to keep parks open and operating. The ideal solution would be for a contingency fund to provide money for existing Parks personnel to continue to operate the parks.

- 2) Walk into (Conservation) History at Tomales Bay State Park. The Walk on August 27 attracted more than 40 people. The group leader was Carlos

Porrata, former ranger at the Park for 25 years. It was a successful day, marred only by a fall and one older walker who needed auto assistance.

- 3) High School Mt. Bike Teams' Activities. By invitation, Julia Violich, coach of Mt. Bike teams at Redwood High and Branson School, gave a brief overview of the growing popularity of mt. biking as a high school team sport. Under the Nor Cal program, co-ed teams at various high schools in Marin range from seven to 60 (Drake High). She estimates that about 300 kids currently in high school are mt. biking on Mt. Tam, mostly on MMWD and County Park lands; also on Tamarancho (private), and China Camp SP, largely on fire roads and a few legal multi-use trails. She feels that these are the environmentalists of tomorrow, and that they are receiving good training in trail use, etiquette, and land stewardship. She expressed the current feeling that not enough trails are open to bikers, and the areas available to them are constrained.

Coaches meet regularly. Mike Swezy and Brian Sanford have hosted meetings of coaches and have begun permitting groups for training and occasional competitive events (groups under 20?) under existing regulations. Not many "hiccups." Teams are supervised at typical ratio of two adults to six kids – they practice mostly on Sunday mornings 9 to 12, and Thursday afternoons. Kids are required to sign contracts committing to proper trail behavior and rules.

MCBC, which has heretofore focused on road biking, is taking on mt. biking and is hiring a staff person for advocacy. The MCBC Mt. bike program, according to Tom Boss, will focus 1/3 on land stewardship, 1/3 on education, and 1/3 on advocating for more accessibility in Marin – new trails or opening single-trails to bikes.

Comments/questions/concerns from meeting attendees:

- How can kids train to 99% of capacity without breaking speed limits? (Julia: training is 50% indoors, actual trail riding is rarely at threshold – uphill training is for endurance, etc.).
- Why can't bikes be licensed? (Bikers not opposed to license, but rangers can't bring enforcement action simply on basis of license report – must witness event; more discussion needed).
- Are coaches present for training? (See above, ratio of coaches to kids)
- It would be more responsible if coach, not kid, is front-runner in a training group.
- 200 miles of roads and legal trails are available now; why is there a need for more trails? The frequently expressed need for more trails for bikes is a fallacy. (Larry Minikes offered to trail-ride with Julia to demonstrate this sufficiency of bike routes)
- Policy in "Community Marin" is that there should be no *net* increase in miles of trails on Marin public lands – i.e., if any new trail is proposed,

equivalent miles of “social trails” should be decommissioned and restored.

- The advertising for mt. bike sales typically promotes irresponsible (technical, exciting, risky) behaviors – problems more frequently are with older riders, not kids.
- What about night riding, which is frequently observed? (These is not done by any high school teams – more likely by older adults)
- For everyone’s safety, riders shouldn’t wear ear plugs – can’t hear warnings.
- Safety is essential, but so is preserving quality of experience for non-bikers.
- Education has not worked in the past; can we hope it will work now, and who will receive the education?? How will bikers from out of county be educated?

Those present agreed that communication among mt. bikers and non-bikers is useful and important; the dialogue is ongoing!!

- a. “Thanksgiving Appetite Ride” This informal annual ride attracts up to 900 or so mt. bike riders, who typically do a loop from Fairfax to White Mt. area and back through Cascade Canyon OSP, returning to Fairfax. The Cascade Canyon Fire Road (“Repack”) descends steeply and leaves the OSP by crossing San Anselmo Creek four times. Crossing the creek by all the bikes has become a major environmental impact that violates the Management Plan and EIR for the OSP, as well as group regulations for both Marin County Parks and MMWD. According to Brian Sanford, Linda Dahl has met with biking groups (no one group claims responsibility for the event) to consider alternative routes. The two land management agencies will prepare maps to redirect riders away from the Repack to alternate routes. Linda will convene a meeting of environmental and other interests on September 29, 1 – 3:00, in Rm 260, Civic Center, to discuss further.

4) Marin County Parks’ tour of fuel break areas in Mt. Tam OSPs. Doug Wilson reported on site visit of main areas on OSPs where fuel breaks have been created, opening up bare land that invites invasion of broom and other non-natives. Appears to be a vicious cycle: shrubs are cleared for fuel break, and more invasives come in. The field trip was very informative, and highlighted the obvious problems.

5) Other Marin County Parks Information. County Parks is required by federal law (corollary of ADA) to provide access to public lands for motorized mobility devices – e.g., electric bicycles, segways, other; the District is working to comply with the law and, at the same time, to institute means of identifying whether the user of a device is qualified as disabled.

- 6) Current NPS/GGNRA Issues: GGNRA is required to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for those elements of the America's Cup 34 events that will affect NPS lands. A Draft EIR has already been prepared by the City/County of San Francisco. A scoping session open house was held at the Bay Model on Aug. 17 to identify issues to be covered in the EA. The main areas in Marin County that will be impacted by events in both 2012 and 2013 are Ft. Baker and the Marin Headlands. Scoping comments are due by Oct. 6 (?? Need to confirm). MCL has already commented on the Draft EIR, and will submit comments for the EA.
- 7) Albert Park Professional Baseball League Proposal. MCL sent a letter urging the City of San Rafael to require an Initial Study, per CEQA, for the Centerfield Partners' proposal to institute three years of professional league baseball at Albert Field. The City agreed to this, but the applicant has decided instead to scale back the proposal to one year, with fewer improvements in the facility.
- 8) Support for purchase of 22-acre Morrison property adjoining Giacomini OSP. Marin County Parks has applied for a grant of \$350,000 from the State Coastal Conservancy to purchase this property, which has been a high priority to preserve public access to the OSP and public lands beyond. The estimated price is \$650,000. County Parks will put up \$100,000, leaving the balance to be raised with the help of non-profits. MCL wrote a letter to the Coastal Conservancy supporting the grant.
- 9) Miscellaneous. State Parks will release the final EIR for Bill's Trail in mid September, according to Roy McNamee of the Marin District Office. The Program EIR being prepared at the state level for change-in-use of roads and trails is still underway; technical studies have been completed the DEIR is being written.

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

Next meeting will be October 13, 2011