

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

**Parks and Open Space Committee Meeting
October 13, 2011**

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Robert Eichstaedt, Susan Stompe, Jean Starkweather, Joyce Britt, Connie Berto, Tom Boss, Larry Minikes, Ernie Stanton, Eva Buxton, Doug Wilson, Greg Zitney, Michael Hanrahan, Mary Hanley, Robert Dobrin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) Marin County Parks Commission -- meeting of new commissioners on administrative matters – October 20; 2) Tamalpais Conservation Club Bd. Meeting and Open House at new office, Marin Art and Garden Center, October 15, at noon; 3) Broom busting and pizza volunteer event, Horse Hill OSP, Lomita Ave., Mill Valley, Nov. 5. 9 – 1.

MINUTES for September 8, 2011 – Approved as submitted

ACTION ITEMS: None

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- 1) State Parks' closings in Marin: Susan reported that Tomales Bay S.P. and Samuel P. Taylor S.P. will remain open for four days (Tomales Bay) and five to seven days (S.P. Taylor), operated by Pt. Reyes National Seashore and GGNRA, with additional revenues for operations coming from a \$3.00 entry fee at Muir Woods. The federal parks are concerned about potential impacts of closing the parks that neighbor their lands. The Open Parks Coalition, co-chaired by Jared Huffman and Marin Community Foundation (Tom Peters) met on August 17. No date has been set for a second meeting. Ernie Stanton (Friends of China Camp State Park) reported that informal talks are going on between District Superintendent Danita Rodriguez and Marin County Parks concerning possibility of collaborative State-County management of China Camp. Danita has asked for help from the Marin State Parks Association in raising \$25,000 to fund an interpretive staff person to serve all four parks. A press conference at China Camp S.P. on September 29, 2011, sponsored "Environment California," attracted several San Rafael politicians, the media, and local residents.
- 2) Bill's Trail is back in the form of a Recirculated DEIR (RDEIR), which covers topics that were omitted from the first DEIR and supplements the DEIR. The document does not cover safety except indirectly as a subtopic of Aesthetics (i.e., the user's perception of safety). MCL and other organizations continue to have fundamental concerns about safety of the proposed 48-inch trail for multiple use, especially given the steep slide slopes. So-called pinch points to slow bike speed will not resolve this problem. MCL is also concerned about

impacts of erosion and sedimentation in Devil's Gulch. Comments on the RDEIR are due to State Parks by October 31.

- 3) Thanksgiving "Appetite Seminar" Mt. Bike Ride The Marin Parks Dept and MMWD Watershed staff met with representatives of bike associations and, later with conservation interests (Nona Dennis (MCL), Larry Minikes (TCC), and Barbara Salzman (MAS)) on September 29. This traditional annual ride attracts up to 900 or so mt. bike riders from all over, who typically do a loop from Fairfax to White Mt. area and back through Cascade Canyon OSP, fording San Anselmo Creek steelhead habitat in four places, in violation of OSP Management Plan and EIR. Biking groups have agreed to redirect route away from Creek and "get the word out" to the mt. biking community to follow alternative routes. The two land management agencies will prepare maps to redirect riders and will monitor the event. Conservation interests will also monitor event.
- 4) Marin County Parks' Roads and Trails Mgmt Plan/EIR Workshop, Oct. 29 Committee agrees that upcoming workshop should deal with specific proposals and alternatives and not engage in more small group or free-for-all activities. Proposals could include specific trail segments to serve as connectors, sensitive areas, trails to be decommissioned, etc. , and present reasonable alternatives for discussion.
- 5) Other Marin County Parks: Stafford Lake Bike Park Neg. Dec Negative Declaration is available for public review, with comments due no later than Oct. 21 It can be found on-line.
- 6) Other Marin County Parks: Morrison Property Acquisition: (See Minutes for September 8) MCL will collaborate with MOST to consider campaign to raise \$100,000 for remaining portion of needed funds. Everyone agreed that the campaign will have to focus on the surrounding neighborhoods in San Geronimo Valley, although not exclude the larger County.
- 7) GGNRA Air Travel Management Plans (ATMP), Environmental Assessment (EA). ML submitted comments on the scope of an EA and ATMPs for GGNRA and Pt. Reyes National Seashore. Currently two commercial air tour companies (i.e., flights below 5,000 ft. above ground level) conduct tours under Interim Operating Authority (IOA) issued by FAA and NPS. These were authorized under the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000. The two companies are permitted to conduct a total of 5,190 flights per year, but currently operate below that level, and not at all over PRNS. FAA and NPS are jointly preparing an ATMP for each park. MCL is concerned that noise and visual presence of low-flying aircraft, such as helicopters or seaplanes, could disrupt wildlife behavior and disturb the visitor experience on the ground. Low flying aircraft currently disturb neighborhoods en route to the coast. Alternatives will include the current situation (operating under

IOAs); placing conditions on tours by limiting them to certain sites, frequencies, hours, rerouting flight tracks, etc.; or prohibiting such tours to designated sites. MCL has submitted comments for the scope of the EA.

8) Other GGNRA Issues: Draft General Management Plan (DGMP) and EIS
GGNRA has been undergoing a major update to the 1980 GMP over the past four years. There has been extensive outreach in the form of newsletters and public meetings. An Open House was held on October 4 at Tamalpais High School. The displays illustrated the three broad management alternatives, identified the “preferred alternative,” and showed where specific management zones, or approaches, could be applied to individual sites as appropriate to their ecological and cultural and scenic resources, their history of visitor use, and their sensitivity to human activities. MCL’s focus is on the Marin Headlands and Muir Woods. Those interested are encouraged to read at least the summary of the plan, available at <http://www.nps.gov/goga/parknews/gmp-draft-for-review.htm>

9) San Rafael Airport Soccer Complex. This project has been out of public view for more than 2 years. MCL commented on the DEIR for this 85,700 sq. ft. indoor soccer complex that would house two soccer fields, gymnastic and dance facilities indoors, plus a lighted outdoor soccer field and soccer warm-up field, with parking for 284. The site is directly north of the San Rafael Airport runway. In 1983 a “land swap” involving two parcels was negotiated that designated higher intensity uses like Autodesk and Embassy suites hotel near to the 101 corridor, with the intent reserving the eastern parcel, including the airport, for lower intensity uses. This land swap recognized the sensitivity of the airport site as diked, filled former marshland in close proximity to endangered species marsh habitat along the forks of Gallinas Creek. The restrictions listed “public and private recreation” as appropriate uses, but did not expressly prohibit structures on the reserved land. MCL has continued to oppose the project as a violation of the *intent* of the restrictions, if not the *letter*.

In addition to environmental issues, neighborhoods have a variety of concerns: noise, traffic, lighting from a facility that will be open nightly, and safety. The San Rafael Planning Commission will conduct a hearing on the FEIR and merits of the project on November 15.

10) Pt. Reyes National Seashore DEIS: Ten-Year SUP for Drakes Bay Oyster Co.
(For discussion and action November 10 meeting)

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

Next meeting will be November 10, 2011

