

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Parks and Open Space Committee Meeting November 8, 2012

FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Susan Stompe, Larry Minikes, Robert Eichstaedt, Tom Boss, Jean Starkweather, Ernie Stanton, Arlene Halligan, Eva Buxton, and Delos Putz.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) Tomales Bay State Park 60th Anniversary Celebration, November 18, 10:00, Heart's Desire Beach; 2) Parks Commission Mtg *in re* Prelim. Draft RTMP; 3) Broom Bust work party, "Horse Hill," Saturday Nov. 10, 9:00 – noon; 4) China Camp State Park volunteer trail maintenance ("Park Champions", subsidized by State Parks Department); 5) Award of \$10,000 received by TCC from a privately-held "Mt. Tam Trust" for physical improvements, and funding of \$50,000 from Paul Wattis Foundation for 2013 Event.

MINUTES for October 11, 2012 – Approved

ACTION ITEMS: None

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- 1) China Camp State Park: Ernie Stanton relayed the report of Tracy Verrado, Calif. State Parks Foundation, that DPR is getting close to distributing \$10 million in matching funds to State Parks pursuant to AB 1478. Funds are intended to keep all parks open through two years. Personnel from DPR will meet with each park to determine the State's match for contributions that were collected during the past year. VenTek Pay Stations will be in place soon at China Camp. Ernie passed around the day-use fee schedule. Annual passes will be available for \$60. A full-time ranger will be assigned. Compliance with fee payment will be encouraged through citations and signs on pay stations. Volunteers and Park aids will be on the trails to assist in reminding users of fee requirement.
- 2) Samuel P. Taylor State Park – Bills' Trail: The change-in-use to multiuse project was approved on September 26 with a Notice of Determination filed with the State Clearing House and posted on SCH and DPR web sites. The NOD triggers a 30-day statute of limitations for filing a legal challenge. We were unaware of the approval until three weeks into the 30 day period. For several reasons, MCL determined that it would not mount a legal challenge to the action. Instead, we have alerted the Marin Sector Superintendent that we would like to meet to go over the conditions on the project – e.g., mitigation measures, how they will be monitored, and how appropriate use will be enforced, etc. At this point, the necessary \$350,000 in construction funds is not available. We continue to feel that State Parks does not provide adequate notification to the concerned public. Robert Eichstaedt suggested the project be considered as having two parts – modification of the Bills' Trail, and improvements to the very steep Gravesite Fire Road which descends into Devel's Gulch nearby. Work on the latter to reduce erosion could be done first, for the benefit of water quality in Devil's Gulch. The

committee continues to believe that the conditions of the trail across steep wooded slopes will make the planned 48 inch tread insufficient and hazardous for multiuse.

- 3) Parks, Open Space and Agricultural Preservation – Ballot Measure A. The committee celebrated the success of Measure A and extended thanks to volunteers who worked so hard to make it happen!

- 4) State Parks Draft Program EIR on Change-in-use Evaluation Process: Nona and Linda Novy attended a public meeting in Walnut Creek on November 3. The PEIR will be used to systematically evaluate potential road and trail change-in-use proposals in any of State Park's 270 units throughout the State. The consultant and several State Park personnel summarized how the PEIR process will work and the types of proposals that will be covered by the PEIR. These could include reconstruction or maintenance within existing roads or trails; installation of speed control devices, such as pinch points, or railings, and other safety features; rerouting of trail alignments to correct unsustainable road and trail conditions, installation of new surfaces; closure and decommissioning of existing routes; and conversion of existing roads to trails. The PEIR will not be used to cover new roads or trails. The document includes discussion of all types of physical impacts that roads and trails can have, and the standard requirements and special requirements that State Parks employs in its trail and road design, construction, and maintenance to build sustainable trails and avoid impacts. The bulk of the PEIR covers the typical topics found in an EIR, such as Geology and Soils, Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Biological Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, etc. Although CEQA does not require discussion of social or economic impacts, the PEIR does include an extensive survey and discussion of Trail Use Conflict in Appendix C, based on interviews with other land management agencies.

Comments on the adequacy of the Draft PEIR are due by December 3. The individuals on the committee were asked to send comments to Nona, who will compile them in a comment letter to the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

- 5) Marin County Parks: Preliminary Draft Road and Trail Management Plan: Several committee people attended the workshop on October 29 and generally concurred that it was very informative. Among other items on the agenda, the consultant outlined the decision process that will be used to evaluate proposed projects and determine how they should (or should not) be considered in any given time period. A committee of 12 will be formed with representatives from all stakeholder users including staff, who will work together to determine the relative importance of projects. The following questions/comments were raised:
 - Areas should be set aside where "foot people" can be entirely free from disturbance from mt. bikes – probably the "zone system" presented in the plan will help determine where these areas are.
 - Protection of habitat should be primary concern, with recreation a secondary concern in planning;
 - It is important to distinguish between "needs" and "wants" – County Parks should take care of the real needs (repair of unsustainable trails, e.g.) before it considers "wish lists."
 - Trail design and use standards need to be presented clearly;

- All trail activities are destructive to vegetation – trails should be designed to minimize this destruction
- Existing problems should be addressed before new proposals are considered – prioritize and work on problem areas first.
- It's our own park system;

We were advised to submit general comments at this preliminary stage of the RTMP Draft – not to try to “word-smith.” Comment forms are available on line.

6) Tomales Bay Ecological Reserve: A group in W. Marin has asked MCL to participate in a drive to petition California Dept of Fish and Game to put an end to hunting in this Reserve. The Reserve is one of 119 owned and managed by CDFG. Hunting is allowed on some but not others. It has been allowed in Tomales Bay for a number of years. Hunting goes on throughout the fall and early winter. The bases for the petition are that gunshot is noisy early in the morning, and that the adjacent recently restored Giacomini Wetlands supports increasing numbers of bird and waterfowl life (birds and waterfowl) that are at risk of being to be shot. Also, the Reserve is also too close to local communities to be safe for hunting. The MCL committee decided not to become involved at this time. Perhaps at a later time, there will be greater interest. This was not viewed as a critical decision by CDFG at this juncture.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, December 13 , 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. MCL new office location: 175 N. Redwood Drive, San Rafael, Suite 135.

Minutes by Nona Dennis