

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

**Parks and Open Space Committee Meeting
November, 10, 2011**

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Robert Eichstaedt, Susan Stompe, Jean Starkweather, Connie Berto, Joyce Britt, Tom Boss, Larry Minikes, Ernie Stanton, Eva Buxton, Greg Zitney, Arlene Halligan, Delos Putz, Bill Long, and Nancy Praetzel. Also: Guest Maureen Pinto, from "Ocean Riders of Marin"

ANNOUNCEMENTS: 1) Jared Huffman and Dr. Tom Peters will co-host a town meeting on the current status of State Park closures in Marin on November 15 p.m. to 7:00, at the Jewish Community Center; 2) Also on November 15, San Rafael Planning Commission will consider the FEIR for the San Rafael Airport Recreational Complex. The meeting Agenda was rearranged to accommodate Bill Long's need to depart early.

MINUTES for October 13, 2011 – Approved as submitted

ACTION ITEMS: None

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- 1) Efforts by Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) to raise funds for acquisition of Morrison Property. Bill Long, President of the MOST Board presented background information on the on-going campaign to raise \$100,000 locally to complete the \$650,000 purchase price for the former Zangpo (now Morrison) property that adjoins the Giacomini OSP. The approximately 20-acre parcel is considered a key addition and will be called the "Manzanita Fireroad Preserve." MOST is looking for lead donors, and \$13,000 in pledges have already been identified. A campaign brochure will be out by December 1. MOST will serve as fiscal agent for the campaign. Cooperation is coming from the San Geronimo Valley Planning Group and S.G. Valley Land Trust. Susan Stompe agreed to take a request to support the campaign at the next MCL Board meeting.
- 2) State Parks' closings in Marin: Susan reported on a second meeting of the Open Parks Coalition, co-chaired by Jared Huffman and Tom Peters on November 8. The purpose was to update attendees on progress in State Parks' partnership with GGNRA and PRNS to keep Tomales Bay and Samuel P. Taylor SPs open with funds from a new \$2.00 fee at Muir Woods. The Coalition also received an update on state-wide efforts, by Elizabeth Goldstein, Exec. Director of the California State Parks Foundation. Linda Dahl reported on successful coordination efforts among the five entities that manage Marin County public lands. A main purpose of the meeting was to

develop a preliminary agenda for a town hall, scheduled for November 15, as announced above.

- 3) Marin County Parks Department -- Commission. Greg Zitney, County Parks Commissioner reported on the October meeting of the Commission, in which Dennis Scremin was appointed Chair and one commissioner resigned due to a conflict. Terms of one and two years were determined (Greg Zitney's term is for two years). The discussion focused on roles and responsibilities of the Commission. Staff will list tasks and match them to commissioners' areas of expertise. Commissioners were urged to engage in outreach to public and encourage public to attend commission meetings. One reason is to develop greater public interest in a future county-wide fund-raising measure. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for November 17.

- 4) Marin County Parks Roads and Trails Management Plan. Several people reported on the Workshop on October 29 at the Wellness Center. Some attendees had to leave before the wrap-up. The User Survey results provided some interesting information for the 17 OSPs that were surveyed. Actual numbers of users were counted, but participation in the survey was voluntary, so samples sizes were somewhat limited. Among the results: hikers outnumber bikers except at China Camp (which was included due to its proximity to San Pedro OSP); equestrians were scarce overall. Trail use differs by time of day, with more hikers out in the a.m., and bikers in the p.m. The data require more analysis to be useful. The inventory of roads and trails is complete; the survey, which mapped 1,000 foot segments, found 35 miles in addition to the roughly 200 miles that had been expected. The exercise for the workshop consisted of reviewing and revising previously proposed trail routes (Workshop of June 18) to better reflect maps of sensitive (e.g., "Legacy" and "Restoration") vegetation zones and varying condition of roads and trails. People who attended agreed that more criteria are needed to determine the "condition" of roads and trail and their appropriate uses, such as mapping blind curves and other safety considerations. The next workshop will be in January or February, by which time staff will have developed broad alternatives for analysis in the EIR.

- 5) Thanksgiving "Appetite Seminar" Mt. Bike Ride. A meeting between Marin Parks Dept and MMWD Watershed staff and bike associations and, later, conservation interests, was reported at the October meeting of this committee. Mt. bike groups have agreed to get the word out, and the two land management agencies will prepare maps to redirect riders away from Repack and Cascade Canyon OSP and will monitor the event. Conservation interests will also monitor the event. Nona sent a Memorandum to Marin County Parks and MMWD to provide additional guidance on the event, reminding them that other damage can occur than to the Creek itself if roads and trails are wet.

- 6) Marin County Parks: Stafford Lake Bike Park Negative Declaration. Susan reported that MCL will submit comments on the Negative Declaration, and will appear before the Board Supervisors when they consider certification and approval of the project. MCL has expressed concerns particularly about erosion of trails and sedimentation in Stafford Lake, as well as dust. There was some discussion of whether a special fee could be charged beyond the current parking fee. Apparently this is not possible for reasons of liability (charging a fee would remove the Parks Department's exemption from liability, per State Code 846 ??)
- 7) GGNRA Marin Equestrian Stables Plan. GGNRA has completed a draft Plan , and will hold an Open House on December 7, 4 :00 to 6:00, at Tamalpais Valley Community Center. Robert Eichstaedt invited Maureen Pinto of Ocean Riders of Marin, who have operated the Golden Gate Dairy Stables in Muir Beach for 14 years in partnership with the Park Service and Green Gulch Zen Center. Maureen described the best management practices under which the stables are operated and plans for continuing improvements. The Park's Draft Plan has raised several issues, however. In keeping with the Draft GGNRA General Management Plan's management approach for the stable area as "Evolved Cultural Landscape," the stalls would be moved in order to rebuild the facility to "look like" the historic complex. The plan interferes with manure management, plans to harvest rainwater, visibility of stalls, and other improvement projects for the facility. Operation of the stables will have to be put out to bid, in keeping with Park regulations; however, it is likely that Ocean Riders will be the successful bidder, since they are most familiar with the facility. Comments can be submitted to GGNRA until December 16 or at the Open House on Dec. 7th.
- 8) Other GGNRA Issues: Draft General Management Plan (GMP) and EIS . MCL submitted a letter on the Draft GMP and EIS (attached).
- 9) San Rafael Airport Soccer Complex. MCL will submit letter to the San Rafael Planning Commission commenting on the adequacy of the Final EIR, and opposing the project. Roger Roberts will present MCL's position at the November 15 Commission meeting.
- 10) Pt. Reyes National Seashore DEIS: Ten-Year SUP for Drakes Bay Oyster Co. The Draft EIS considers the impacts of extending for a period of 10-years the existing Special Use Permit for Drakes Bay Oyster Company in congressionally-designated wilderness in Drakes Estero. Nona described MCL's role in the early establishment and designation of wilderness at Pt. Reyes National Seashore and outlined the legislative, legal, and policy background under which a 40-year Right of Use was issued to then-Johnson Oyster Company in 1972 after the Park purchased the land on which JOC operated. Subsequently, the Estero was designated potential wilderness under the Pt. Reyes Wilderness Act, in 1976. Legal interpretations and

adopted NPS Management Policy ruled that the Park did not have the authority to extend the lease on its expiration in 2012. A rider on a federal appropriations bill in 2009 gave the Secretary of the Interior discretionary authority to extend the permit. The EIS considers four alternatives: Alternative A would terminate the permit in 2012; Alternatives B, C, and D would extend the permit for 10 years under various Drakes Bay Oyster Company operating scenarios until 2022, at which time the Estero would convert to full wilderness. The committee members gave various views on the issue: the area designated as potential wilderness is not pristine (unlike more remote wilderness areas); if the oyster company goes, the ranches may be threatened; the oyster operations appear to coexist with other wildlife; allowing the commercial operation to continue past expiration date sets a dangerous precedent for other designated wilderness areas; the operation is educational; the oyster operations have impacts on other wildlife species; the legal history is clear that the DBOC permit should expire in 2012, vs. the legal history is ambiguous. The committee did not reach consensus.

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

Next meeting will be December 8 , 2011