

## MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

### Parks and Open Space Committee Meeting May 9, 2013

#### FINAL MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Nona Dennis, Chair; Greg Zitney, Susan Stompe, Larry Minikes, Jill Templeton, Eva Buxton, Kim Baenisch, Katherine M. Jones (Marin County Parks), Roger Roberts, Doug Wilson, Laura Lovett, Judy Teichman, Mike Swezy (MMWD), Susan Christman (Volunteer Leadership Team for Mt. Tamalpais Watershed Trust), and Sharon Farrell and Michelle O'Herron (Golden Gate Parks Conservancy staff).

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AGENDA ADDITIONS: Bay Area Open Space Council Annual conference, May 16, 8:30 – 4:30, Presidio, San Francisco; Olompali Heritage Day, May 19, 10 – 4; MCL Business-Environment Breakfast with Jamison Watts incoming Exec. Dir. of MALT, 7:30 – 9:00 a.m., June 14; Mt. Tam Jam, benefit for Mt. Tam State Park produced by T.C.C., June 22, 11 – 7:00. The agenda was re-arranged , putting discussion of State Parks Little Hoover Commission Report as item 2.

MINUTES for April 11, 2012 – Approved

ACTION ITEMS: None

#### INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. MMWD “Friends of Mt. Tam Watershed” proposals Mike Swezy, MMWD Watershed Manager, reviewed the background for the District’s long-standing desire to develop a non-profit “friends of the watershed” organization and provided an update to information he had given the Committee on March 14. Last year the District convened a group to examine various options for such an organization. They considered three options: 1) Option 1 – form a new 501c3 non-profit organization; 2) Option 2: Participate in a Watershed Collaborative; and 3) Option 3: Maintain the current Mt. Tamalpais Watershed Fund at the Marin Community Foundation. After some study, the group believes that Option 2 – a broad collaboration among the various land management agencies and corresponding non-profit associations like the Golden Gate Parks Conservancy – is the most promising. A broader collaboration would have the advantage of addressing issues that cross agency boundaries; it would consider all of Mt. Tam and not just the watershed; and it would be more cost-effective than establishing a new non-profit. The MMWD Board has asked its Watershed Committee to consult widely with stakeholders and the general public on the various options.

A collaborative non-profit organization would represent the four land management agencies that cover various parts of Mt. Tam, possibly within the framework of the existing Golden Gate Parks Conservancy. Sharon Farrell, who is responsible for Resource Conservation for the Conservancy, outlined the programs currently under the Conservancy’s “wing”: Golden Gate Raptors, Native Plant Nurseries, numerous habitat

restoration projects, etc. The focus of the Conservancy in this collaboration, of course, would be on GGNRA lands north of the Bridge, as well as on the rest of Mt. Tam.

No details have been discussed as to allocation of revenues or resources, or responsibilities, but the Conservancy would probably take the lead in fund-raising. A leadership team would probably be formed representing the collaborating agencies, with core staff doing much of the actual work on actual projects. Some questions were asked regarding administrative arrangements – e.g., would the Conservancy take an administrative overhead? Ans: Since revenues are diverse, some restricted and some not, allocations of funds would probably be on a project-basis. Other arrangements are under discussion. The next step involves numerous small-group meetings, and a larger public workshop will be held on June 19, the time and place to be determined.

2. State Parks Little Hoover Commission Report. Roger Roberts gave a brief summary of key points in the recently released Little Hoover Commission Report: *Beyond Crisis: Recapturing Excellence in California's State Park System*. The report is the result of a year's study of the administrative and fiscal issues that increasingly have plagued the State's Department of Parks and Recreation in recent years. The Report found that the department as currently managed cannot sustain the state park system into the future with its present unpredictable revenues, lack of modern business tools, and other fundamental, system-wide problems. Most obvious is the reality that parks operations cannot be supported by user fees alone: there is need for dedicated funds. The Report outlines a new model that is more realistic, more entrepreneurial, up-to date in its business methods, and more flexible, while still respecting the public legacy represented by these lands. It is possible that parks would be evaluated as to their statewide significance, and those that do not meet criteria, would be turned over to local control (and support).

Roger summarized some of the key concerns contained in his Memo of March 30, 2013 (attached). Some questions raised by the Committee: How will the Parks Department implement recommendations in the Report? We understand that it will be on the Parks Commission agenda in the near future. Where will it go from there? What criteria will be used to determine which parks have "statewide significance? Will they be based on revenues generated by users (which would leave out many important parks)? Would raising fees reduce attendance and created an equity issues? How might staff training be improved to better utilize existing resources and increase flexibility? How much consideration will be given to how the Parks originally came into being? What is the role of the State Parks Foundation?

The Committee agreed that we should study its recommendations, particularly as they might affect decisions concerning Marin County State Parks, and submit a letter to the Commission, with copies to our legislators and State Parks Foundation. No mechanism or timing for comment has been suggested as part of the report process. The letter should be drafted soon, however.

3. Updates on Marin State Parks Both Olompali and Tomales Bay SP are open 7 days a week; camp sites opened in May. Olompali now has a Park Host, which enables better

access to museum and improved enforcement of parking fees ; Tomales Bay SP needs stronger community support. Judy suggested writing a column in the two West Marin papers to get the word out.

4. Marin County Parks. Greg Zitney, Chair of Marin Parks and Open Space Commission, announced that the Commission will meet on May 23. The agenda will be available on the web page soon. The EIR on the Vegetation Management Plan will begin soon.

Attachment: Memo, March 30, 2013 – Subject: Little Hoover Commission Report on California’s State Park System

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, June 13, 3:00 – 5:00

Minutes by Nona Dennis