

Managing roads and trails in County open space

by Nona Dennis

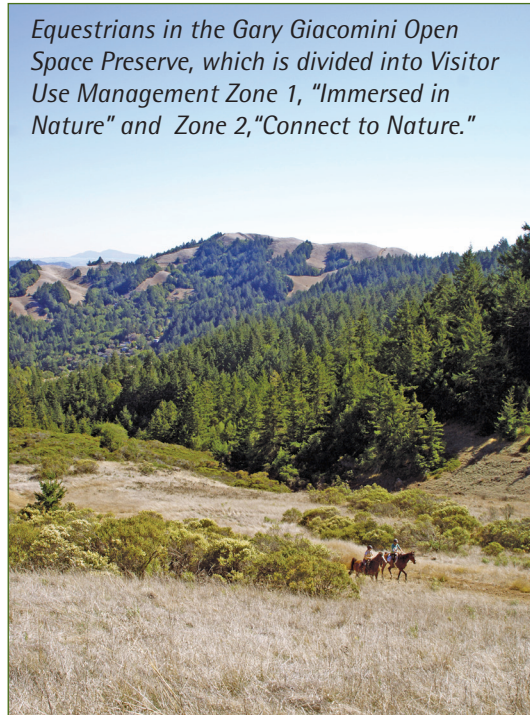
After four years of great effort, abundant public involvement, and considerable cost, Marin County Parks, formerly the Marin County Open Space District has released two major plans to guide its management of the County's 34 Open Space Preserves for the next 15 years. The first of the two, *Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan* (VBMP), was introduced on July 16 in preliminary draft form and initially met sharp criticism by County fire officials who believed that ecological protections were being weighed unfairly against needs for public safety. (See MCL September-October 2013 *Newsletter*). That draft is undergoing revision following constructive exchange of information and priorities between fire officials and the County Parks staff and will be re-released to the public in the near future.

The RTMP raises important questions for long-term implementation that are not fully resolved

The *Road and Trail Management Plan* (RTMP), second of the two plans, received largely positive reviews when it was presented to the public on October 1. It was not entirely new, as a preliminary draft had been made available for comment in November 2012.

When adopted, the two plans will provide the District for the first time in 40 years with a comprehensive inventory of valuable natural resources and a realistic assessment of physical conditions of roads, trails, utilities, and recreational uses on its preserves. They will

Equestrians in the Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserve, which is divided into Visitor Use Management Zone 1, "Immersed in Nature" and Zone 2, "Connect to Nature."



Dru Parker

also provide a framework for future decisions: a scientific information base coupled with a toolbox of policies, standards and best management practices for managing and restoring natural resources and maintaining the largely recreation-related infrastructure of roads and trails on the County's diverse preserves.

Both documents focus on the importance of protecting resources and stewardship. A central tenet of Measure A was that "natural attributes take precedence over public use." This is consistent with repeated comments by the public favoring immersion in and connection with nature. The RTMP acknowledges that many park facilities inherited by the District were never intended

Continued on page 6

West Marin ranchers address climate change

by Judy Teichman

Two recent visits to West Marin ranches by MCL Board members have added first-hand experience to MCL's understanding of efforts by West Marin ranchers to address climate change through various means such as alternative energy and carbon sequestration. While not the only such examples in Marin, they are indicative of a promising trend.

Solar Power and Ranching

Board members were joined by MALT Director Jamison Watts on their August 29 visit to the Barinaga Ranch near Marshall. In the words of Marcia Barinaga, a biologist and retired science journalist:

"At Barinaga Ranch we are continuing the ancient shepherding and cheesemaking traditions of my Basque family and ancestors in Euskada, the Basque region of Spain. Our small flock of dairy sheep graze year-round on over 100 acres of hilly, organically managed pastures on our ranch . . ."

The Ranch produced some 220 lambs this year, and milks around 90 ewes twice

Continued on page 5

IN THIS ISSUE—

- In Memoriam—page 2
- Status Updates—page 3
- Events—page 4
- National Parks—page 10
- New Director profiles—page 11

Karen Nygren— Everyone’s Environmental Conscience

We know many things about Karen Nygren, who died on September 30 after an extended and difficult bout with cancer. We know that she left behind a deep legacy and sense of obligation to the environment that was her passion. She continued, even up to the last few weeks of her life, reminding us through her e-mails to keep up the good work.



For years, Karen was a regular presence at public meetings and hearings, unabashed before the microphone, forcefully articulating her views—or on the phone, catching the ear of an elected official or journalist with the latest twist in an ongoing environmental saga. Frequently the intelligence had to do with transportation. But in her final two years, when cancer treatments often forced her to be absent, the e-mails connected her to a wide network—that, and the apparently innumerable news sources that were her daily bread.

Everyone who was on Karen’s e-mail list—and there were many—will have a different story to tell. I met Karen in 1998. She was completing a long term on the MCL Board, and I was beginning a term. I had lived in Marin County since 1960 and had been active in the environmental profession as well as in the Environmental Forum of Marin but otherwise was not involved in Marin environmental politics. Over time, Karen made a point of educating me.

After Karen left the MCL Board, she continued to be a regular member of the Land Use and Transportation Committees (later joined into one committee). She was a well-informed opponent of SMART—a position MCL held for many years to the dismay of some members. Although she tried, she was largely unsuccessful in making transportation policy “sexy” enough for others on the Committee to share her dedication to arduous TAM meetings. But her knowledge of the arcane facts of transportation in Marin was invaluable to MCL. Along with Don Wilhelm, she was our “go-to” for the latest on Measure A.

But mainly, I will remember Karen as our “nudge”—best defined as a gentle poke or push. Karen nudged everyone, to keep us caring about the environment and acting in its behalf.

We will not let Karen down.

— *Nona Dennis, Editor*

Jon Elam to serve as MCL’s President until April 2014



At its October 15 meeting, the MCL Board elected Jon Elam to serve as Interim President to serve out the current term until the Annual Meeting in April 2014.

Jon replaces David Schnapf, who recently resigned as President in order to devote more time to acting on his strong concerns over the critical status of the endangered coho salmon in the Lagunitas watershed.

Jon has served on the Board since 2011 and brings a unique perspective from an almost 40-year career as city manager and public works director to the organization. He currently serves as General Manager for the Tamalpais Community Services District (TCSD) in Tamalpais Valley. In that capacity he oversees numerous programs such as a 32-mile sewer system, refuse collection that involves food and green waste collection and recycling, and management of a park and recreation program with seven parks and many parcels of open space.

He has also been a frequent participant in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences as a delegate.

He brings to MCL an ability to solve everyday issues as well as a strong commitment to preserving the quality of life of all who live in Marin County.

Jon has a B.A. degree from UC Davis, and an MPA from Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Status Updates

Single-use bag ban

Progress toward making all of Marin County plastic bag-free continues slowly (MCL September–October 2013 *Newsletter*). To ramp up the momentum that began in Fairfax in 2007 and continued to the County, MCL is collaborating with the League of Women Voters of Marin and other organizations to encourage those cities and towns of Marin that have not yet passed a single use plastic bag ordinance to do so. Only Fairfax and the County of Marin, and recently Mill Valley, have passed such ordinances. Other municipalities in the county say they are waiting for a model ordinance and EIR to be completed by the Joint Powers Authority for Hazardous and Solid Waste. The EIR should be completed this November.

Banning single use plastic bags will primarily affect grocery stores. Meanwhile, the State Legislature continues to balk at passing a state-wide ban, while sixty-some municipalities around the state now have ordinances in place. Plastic bags are a major source of litter both on land and in the ocean where they present myriad hazards to marine life such as mimicking food. —Susan Stompe

A plastic bag is caught in a tree 20 feet off the ground in Belvedere.



Dru Parker



Dru Parker

Friday afternoon traffic to 580/Richmond Bridge backs up onto 101 in Greenbrae while the rest of the northbound lanes remain clear.

Greenbrae Interchange improvements

The contentious debate over the project the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) and Caltrans had proposed to build in the Greenbrae Interchange Corridor ended on September 26 when the TAM Board of Commissioners voted down a \$79.4 million package of improvements recommended by TAM staff.

The vote was 14 to 2, and it reflected the frustration both the TAM Board and the public have expressed over the plan's failure to solve the northbound backup problem on Highway 101 during commute hours.

Critics of TAM's plan had urged the Board to pursue a direct connection between Hwy 101 and Hwy 580 in San Rafael as the best way to reduce congestion on Hwy 101 through Corte Madera and Larkspur. MCL worked closely with the grassroots organization Marin Deserves Better on developing alternative project designs that would ease congestion, improve safety, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

After rejecting the larger of two project packages, the TAM Board considered a second suite of improvements recommended by staff, estimated to cost \$39.6 million. Missing were a number of options recommended by the TAM Working Group after six months of public meetings designed to gather public input and craft possible alternatives to TAM's massive Build Plan unveiled last December.

Board members revised the selection of projects to be funded by the \$39.6 million in Regional Measure 2 funds. They restored several that were advanced by the Working Group, and eliminated several recommended by TAM staff. With most of the freeway expansion projects dropped for various reasons, multi-modal transportation solutions gained support.

The final package that the TAM Board approved for funding included \$11.35 million for bringing the SMART train to Larkspur, \$6.5 million for widening Eastbound Sir Francis Drake, \$500,000 for feasibility studies on a Hwy 101/Hwy 580 direct connection in San Rafael, \$4.5 million for regional and local bus stops and connecting pathways, \$9 million for widening bike-pedestrian path on the bridge over Corte Madera Creek, \$3.25 for bike-pedestrian improvements on surface streets, and \$4.5 million for environmental review of the Central Marin Ferry Connection Phase II (North-South Greenway).

Stay tuned!

—Jana Haehl

Samuel P. Taylor State Park to Open Bills' Trail to Mountain Bikes

Four years ago, MCL embarked on a legal challenge to State Parks' plan to convert Bills' Trail in Samuel P. Taylor State Park to multi-use (MCL September–October 2009 *Newsletter*). MCL's long-standing objections to opening this tranquil, wooded 3.75-mile "path" in Devil's Gulch area of the Park to mountain bikes did delay, but, in the end, not overcome the plan! State Parks completed the Environmental Impact Report MCL had requested, and this summer announced that sufficient funds were available to begin

Continued on page 8

Events

A stunning day on the bay for the Leaders Circle Lunch

Gorgeous weather and a spectacular view greeted MCL's Leaders Circle members on Saturday, October 19, at the stunning Belvedere home of architect Liz Danel. Guests enjoyed lunch by Comforts on the deck of the 1912 Mission-Revival "Pink House," with the Bay serving as a fitting backdrop to Supervisor Kate Sears' presentation on sea level rise in San Francisco Bay. Many thanks to Vicki Nichols, Kate Sears, and Liz Danel for making this annual event so special.



photos by Jana Haehl



Clockwise from top left: Arlin Weinberger; Barbara and David Whitridge; Roger Roberts, Jean Berensmeier, Dee Roberts, David Greenberg, Randy Greenberg, Liz Danel; Barbara Farley; Randy Greenberg, Supervisor Kate Sears, Jack Krystal; Mickey the Dog

Coastal Cleanup and the blustery day

And now for something completely different: a hard-driving rain met the hardy volunteers who turned out for the annual California Coastal Cleanup on Saturday, September 21.

MCL hosted three locations for the annual cleanup. The Sausalito site, led by MCL director Vicki Nichols with help from director Chris Yalonis, had 19 volunteers, Sara and Dan Sonnet, at San Rafael's Mahon Creek, saw 18 people brave the weather; and Susan Stompe in Novato was aided by 12 volunteers.

Many thanks to everyone who participated, to Ranger Joanne Jarvis at the Bay Model,

and to the Sausalito Lions Club for the free BBQ provided to all volunteers. We'll do it again next year!



Amy Benjamin



Carla Koop

L: Kate Benjamin, Jessa Josephson, Hannah Pedersen, Annali Jacobs and Jordan Locke of Girl Scout Troop 31522 at Mahon Creek; Above: Sherry Jacobs, Annali Jacobs, Jordan Locke, Jessa Josephson and Kim Locke

Ranches *from page 1*

daily. The Ranch leases another 500 acres to a neighbor, Bill Barboni, to graze organically raised beef cattle.

Solar installations on the Barinaga Ranch consist of panels inside the entrance gate, located far enough away from the nearby Marshall-Petaluma Road to reduce the likelihood of "Friday night" vandalism. These panels provide enough energy to supply a quarter to a third of the energy needs for two houses and to operate the milking machines, compressors, and refrigeration used in the cheesemaking operation.

While the Ranch does not sell power to the grid, when the solar panels are generating more than the site is using (on an instantaneous basis) the meter "runs backwards" and the Ranch is credited for what is supplied to the grid. However, PG&E only credits up to the amount generated and used in a monthly billing cycle. This is an important difference between Marin Clean Energy and PG&E, because MCE does not limit how much energy it will buy.

Currently there are no solar panels on barn roofs, but the barns are sited to maximize their solar exposure for future photovoltaic panels. The owners anticipate increasing their use of solar for power when they have time to evaluate the alternatives, i.e., more panels near the road or panels on the roofs, which are almost a half-mile from the road and meter.

Barinaga Ranch also uses small solar units for moveable fencing and to pump water from wells in the pastures to water tanks for livestock. This is an effective way to move cattle around on the land and to supply water without the livestock having access to streams and wetlands.

Given high land values in Marin, a "value added" enterprise, such as cheesemaking, or other niche market products, is required to make a ranch truly sustainable for a ranching family without outside income. These enterprises often require significant amounts of energy. On-site solar energy is one solution.

Solar installations are expensive up front, even with rebates, and the means for generating and storing solar power are changing rapidly. Other considerations include thus-far unanswered technical questions about how much power is lost by long lines

between the meter, the solar installation, and the point at which the power is used or stored on the property. More information is needed to help everyone understand where solar installations should be located for maximum benefit and without negative environmental impacts.

Rangeland Carbon Sequestration

On October 11, MCL Board members and guests visited the Nicasio Native Grass Ranch, home of the Marin Carbon Project. For those who also attended the MCL Business-Environment Breakfast presentation by Dr. Whendee Silver, University of California, earlier this year, it was an opportunity to see the carbon project research first hand and hear the story of its circuitous origins.

Children's book author and illustrator, and Caldecott-medalist, Peggy Rathmann and her husband, Woodacre native John Wick, who said his current job description is "to keep Peggy happy" (which he is really good at), are the forces behind an amazing journey that has established scientifically that managed grassland can help to reverse global warming. In 1998, they bought their Ranch. As meat-eating environmentalists, they believed that cattle were destructive of the environment, and terminated the tenancy of a local grazer in order to create "wilderness."

By 2002 Peggy and John saw coyote brush

and weeds taking over what had been grass-covered hills. This led to a series of attempts to deal with the consequences of removing the grazers, including hand pulling, mowing, spraying and ultimately bringing in cattle to eat woolly distaff, only to have it reappear in increasing numbers. These steps culminated in what has become a long-term relationship with agroecologist Dr. Jeff Creque, who advised them to develop management goals for their land.

Devoted birders, Peggy and John decided they wanted to create a habitat for ground-nesting birds. They brought cattle back onto the land for brief periods of strategic grazing to do the work that migrating elk had done in centuries past. They were rewarded with increasing numbers of quail and meadowlarks.

Observing the return of deep-rooted native grasses such as *Danthonia* (oat grass), the seeds of which have been in the soil for centuries, Jeff Creque mused, "I expect that this management is increasing soil carbon." What they needed was a protocol for measuring it. That challenge led to Peggy, John and Jeff forming the "**Marin Carbon Project**" and to controlled experiments in the single application of one-half inch of greenwaste compost to increase carbon sequestration on the Nicasio ranch and at the U.C. Sierra Foothills Research Extension Center in December of 2008.

Continued on page 6

John Wick (right) explains his controlled and monitored human waste compost demonstration project to MCL Board members. The project is part of the ongoing research at the Nicasio Native Grass Ranch.



Grace Rogers

Ranches *from page 5*

Within one year, the single application of compost ignited a state change of carbon in the soil (i.e. change to elemental carbon) that the Century Ecosystem Model shows will last for at least 30 years, possibly 100 years. They have observed 50 percent more grass and an additional 26,000 liters of water and 2,000 pounds of carbon per hectare (2 ½ acres) per year for the last 6 years in the soil! The experiment established the potential that managed grasslands have for removing carbon from the air, increasing water retention in the soil, and providing a beneficial use for all compostable materials on Earth, including human waste.

The Marin Carbon Project now has three full-scale local demonstration sites and is organizing for global adoption of their carbon-beneficial practices.

John concluded a clear, illustrated mini-lecture on carbon sequestration for



Judy Teichman

Jon Elam, MCL President and Director of Tamalpais Community Service District, a partner in the Marin Carbon Project research into converting human waste into compost.

his guests: "We now see atmospheric CO₂ as a vast, untapped free resource to be put to beneficial use in our food-producing soil systems."

RTMP *from page 1*

to support the level and types of year-round recreational use they currently receive. In attempting to balance protection of sensitive resources, improving visitor experiences, and ensuring safety on the preserves, the RTMP raises important questions for long-term implementation that, as discussed below, are not fully resolved.

Scientific Basis for Decision-Making

The VBMP lays a foundation for the RTMP by identifying and mapping the important ecological and cultural features in the preserves that warrant special protection from human incursion, including recreation. The VBMP classifies vegetation on the preserves into four zones, based on the presence and condition of ecological and/or cultural resources and level of human disturbance. The most valuable and sensitive zone – areas that support vegetation types or species with highest biological value such as unique or rare remnants of biological diversity – is dubbed the "Legacy Zone." The other three zones descend in order of sensitivity to the "Highly Disturbed Zone," that is, vegetation closest to developed areas that receive the highest level of human use. The VBMP also identifies threats to biological diversity, such as from the invasion of broom and other weedy plants and excessive human activities, including clearing fuel breaks and heavy recreational use.

The RTMP builds on the VBMP inventory by assessing and ranking the conditions of dirt roads and trails (totaling some 270 miles) – their soils, gradient, tread condition, drainage, erosion, stream crossings and potential to impact water quality and endangered fish, presence of landslides, and other geologic and hydrologic features in each preserve. The assessment shows a huge backlog for repair and maintenance; it also reveals that the District could reduce the impact of roads and trails by decommissioning those that are redundant. For example, 27 percent of the roads and trails on the preserves that offer similar routes between point A and point B could be consolidated or entirely

Continued on page 7

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RTMP *from page 6*

removed. The assessment also surveyed visitor use: walkers constitute about 75 percent of visitors (46 percent of all walkers are accompanied by their dogs), mountain bikers about 25 percent, and equestrians less than one percent, although their use is more concentrated in certain areas of the County. More than 90 percent of visitors are local Marin County residents.

Policies for Visitor Use

The RTMP also establishes a policy framework to guide future use of the preserves. An itemized list of 80 system-wide policies bears close reading because some conflicts among policies are evident. For example, the 2007 Countywide Plan trail policies call for expanding the Countywide Trail System, acquiring additional trails, and enhancing public trail use for all user groups, including multi-use trails as appropriate. At the same time, other policies in the RTMP propose decommissioning redundant trails where possible to ensure that, on average, there is no net increase in road and trail density on the preserves. Marin's open space preserves already have more miles of road or trail per acre than other public lands in Marin and the Bay Area.

A key set of broader policies in the RTMP establishes Visitor Use Management Zones that reflect both the importance of sensitive resource conditions (such as those mapped in Vegetation Management Zones in the VBMP) and appropriate conditions for visitor experience. These visitor zones are highly generalized, covering all or parts of the 34 preserves depending on sensitivity of resources and proximity to urban and high-use areas. Zone 1 (Immersed in Nature) designates preserves that are minimally developed and contain the most undisturbed opportunities for solitude and habitat and wildlife viewing. Zone 2 (Connect to Nature) offers similar opportunities for solitude and wildlife viewing but has a greater numbers of visitors than in Zone 1. In Zone 3 (Actively Managed), encounters with other visitors are more frequent, and opportunities for wildlife viewing may be disturbed by higher levels of use. Finally Zone 4 (High Use) is easily accessed for recreation, and a visitor can expect frequent encounters with other



Dru Parker

The very popular and easily accessed Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow Divide Open Space Preserve on a recent weekday morning. This Preserve is in Visitor Use Management Zone 4: High Use.

people.

For example, the Giacomini Open Space Preserve (OSP), the second largest of the preserves at 1,500 acres, is broadly divided into Zones 1 and 2; the Immersed in Nature Zone 1 area has important habitat continuity with adjacent MMWD lands. In contrast, Little Mountain and Verissimo Hills OSPs near Lake Stafford are both entirely in Zone 4. General policies considered appropriate to each zone will guide their future management.

Decision and Work Tools

The RTMP concludes by defining a series of steps to evaluate potential future road and trail projects, followed by a catalog construction standards and best management practices. The decision process purports to be objective and transparent, with the intent of involving continuing public input, both in suggesting road and trail projects and in reviewing the process that leads to recommended projects. An Appendix to the RTMP gives examples in Cascade Canyon OSP (primarily in Zone 1) of how proposed projects would be scored against two dozen environmental, physical, and social criteria. The standards for construction are typical of conditions placed on all construction

contracts, and best management practices focus on protection of wildlife and special status species, cultural resources, hydrology and water quality, avoidance of geologic hazards, noise and air emissions abatement, and management of invasive plants.

Unresolved Questions

Despite all the rich information it contains, the RTMP, in MCL's view, reveals important gaps and raises serious questions on how the plan will be implemented over time. Foremost, is the fact that although the RTMP is called a "Plan" it is not actually a plan. By its own admission, it does not prescribe a list of projects, even obvious ones illustrated in the RTMP by roads and trails in serious need of repair. As a consequence, the RTMP may give a clear view of the landscape conditions as they exist today, but it offers no clear destination or vision for what the preserves should look like 15 years hence. The tools are laid out, but neither road-map nor destination is defined. In effect, what the Plan provides is a process to evaluate projects proposed by the public and others incrementally, using ranked and weighted decision criteria that give the impression of precision without the benefit of

Continued on page 9

Status updates *from page 3*



State Parks will soon be removing the 'no bikes' signage at Bills' Trail

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adapting the trail for use by mountain bikes. Bills' Trail in its current condition is ideally suited to hikers and equestrians of all ages. It has also been used illegally by bikes over the years.

Construction will take more than a year and involve restoring the trail to approximate 48-inch tread width, pruning vegetation to improve line-of-sight, adding bridges and other stream crossings, and installing logs or rocks perpendicular to the slope and alternating on either side of the trail – called “pinch points” – at up to 100 locations. This latter technique, which is intended to create “sinuosity” and thereby control bike speed, is relatively new in State Park specifications for multi-use trails.

Devil's Gulch is an important tributary within the 101-square-mile Lagunitas Creek watershed, all of which is designated as critical habitat for the endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead. The watershed is already the subject of rigorous studies to identify sources and to control soil erosion and sedimentation that currently impacts that habitat. In objecting to the conversion, MCL raised three primary concerns: Further erosion and sedimentation from expanded use by bicycles; disturbance to the forest wildlife, including human-sensitive species such as mountain lion; and compromised safety for non-bike users of the trail.

State Park officials, including trail designers and field personnel, invited interested parties to meet on September 5 to review the process

and calendar for construction. Representatives came from Marin Conservation League, Marin Horse Council, Tamalpais Conservation Club, Marin County Bicycle Coalition, Access4Bikes (who initiated the request for mountain bike access to the trail), and International Mountain Biking Association, lobby for the mountain bike community at large. State Parks' trail expert Karl Knapp described the technical details of the conversion, reassuring those present that although State Parks has made mistakes in trail design in the past, this project will be carried out under rigorous environmental standards and state-of-the-art construction practices.

Notwithstanding these responsible intentions of State Parks, MCL and many others who have enjoyed walking or riding the trail on horseback feel that its serene and remote character and sense of safety will be permanently compromised by the addition of mountain bikes.

—Nona Dennis

State's "Parks Forward" Commission moves ahead

The State Department of Parks and Recreation has concluded a series of ten public workshops throughout the state on the Parks Forward Initiative (PFI), including one in San Rafael on October 2. The Initiative was prompted by the Little Hoover Commission's report on State Parks earlier this year (MCL September–October *Newsletter*). The workshops were conducted by the State Parks

and Recreation Commission, chaired by Ernest Chung, for the recently formed Parks Forward Commission to provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the Initiative and provide input.

The meeting was structured around three themes on which the public was encouraged to comment:

- *Sustainable funding (of the Parks System)*
- *Effective partnerships*
- *Meeting the needs of all Californians*

Each theme was introduced by a panel of knowledgeable people, followed by public comment.

In San Rafael, the first theme, *Sustainable Funding*, was introduced by Ron Miska, Deputy Director of Marin County Parks, and Bob Doyle, General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). Miska gave strong and heartfelt support for protecting and nurturing public lands as living elements of our state requiring public support and sustenance. Doyle reviewed the history of EBRPD and the progression of properties acquired and community needs, noting that public preferences had evolved from golf courses in the 60's to urban creeks and trails in 2013. Both recognized the need for basic operational financing as well as supplementary funding for significant capital projects and infrastructure.

In response, individuals engaged with a variety of state parks emphasized the need for stable state funding; others recommended involving independent support organizations like the Golden Gate Parks Conservancy or the Yosemite Fund. Some encouraged trying again for a ballot measure at a lesser amount than Proposition 21, taxing oil and gas extraction to go to state parks, statewide bicycle licensing, applying visitor fees to hourly use, keeping fees low for universal participation, and improving fee collection systems at the parks.

The second theme, *Effective Partnerships*, was introduced by Frank Dean, Superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area; Greg Moore, President of the Golden Gate Parks Conservancy; Lauren Dixon, of Sonoma County Parks Alliance; and Bill Keene, General Manager of Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. They all stressed

Continued on page 9

Status updates *from page 8*

the importance of communication, working cooperatively, enlisting corporate support for supplies and services, engaging private organizations with expertise in philanthropy; trust and cooperation are essential, they said. Commenters from the public pointed out that small support organizations have a problem meeting liability insurance requirements. They also emphasized that parks need to be relevant to the public. Partnerships vary from park to park—from full-time to occasional programs—and volunteers in those programs can be utilized in hundreds of ways. Tribal groups also want a role. Regardless of size, all partnerships need vision and commitment to be effective!

The third theme, *Meeting the Needs of all Californians*, was introduced by Michele Luna, Executive Director of Stewards of the Sonoma Coast and Redwoods, whose stewardship work extends beyond just state parks; and by Rue Mapp, the founder and CEO of Outdoor Afro, whose organization has grown nationally and made parks relevant to African Americans, thereby increasing that group's use of parks dramatically.

Some of the public input came from horseback riders, who observed that trails accessible to horses have decreased in California as well as across the country. Others suggested better marketing of the parks' benefits to people of all ages, working with the travel organizations of ethnically diverse populations, continuing acquisitions of diverse ecosystems, looking at the British National Trust as a model, and providing trained personnel to educate visitors on the history and natural assets of each park unit.

Susan Stompe, representing MCL, asked if the Commission would consider possible divestiture of any State Parks, as suggested in the Little Hoover Commission report, and if so, would the public be able to weigh in on developing criteria before the Commission considers any such divestitures. Ken Wiseman, Chair of the Parks Forward Commission, responded by saying: "We have heard many good ideas; nothing is off the table at this point."

—Susan Stompe

RTMP *from page 7*

A mountain biker rides down a newly rerouted section of the Luiz Fire Road in the Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow OSP.



a long-term context or vision. It appears that this process will be repeated annually.

Among the many systemwide policies in the RTMP, several address the importance of safe trails, including the need for sight distance, width, curve radii, vegetation clearance, etc., "consistent with anticipated uses." However, standards to support these policies, especially where shared use is anticipated, are notably absent from the design standards, which focus exclusively on sustainability. No standards are given for appropriate trail widths for individual or shared use, or other design features to impede speed or avoid blind corners. One policy states: "An effort will be made to identify blind corners and post signs instructing users to slow down and announce their presence. . ." but this is advisory only.

Comments on the Draft EIR can be submitted to jraives@marincounty.org by December 2.

Another policy prohibits dangerous mountain biking activities, but the Plan avoids discussing the possibility that opening narrow trails to mountain bikes will require design and rules stronger than mere encouragement of good trail etiquette. In other words, issues that arise from shared use of trails, issues that have been raised in policies, have not been translated into basic standards and best management practices in this Plan. Nor does the Plan acknowledge that without clear rules and meaningful enforcement, the myriad policies that purport to guide behaviors on the preserves will often simply be ignored.

Finally, MCL recognizes that Marin County

Parks has many challenges to face, among them the continuing pressure to expand recreational use of the hard-won open space preserves. Their biggest challenge, as stated on the first page of the document, is "instilling a common sense of citizenship and stewardship among visitors to the preserves. It is impossible to legislate those values with policies and laws."

MCL's long-standing position gives highest priority to protecting natural habitats on the preserves and, to that end, advocates no net increase in trails. Safety and visitor experience are also high priorities. To these ends, MCL has agreed to work with primary user groups as the RTMP rolls out—hikers and walkers, who constitute the majority of visitors but are not politically organized; equestrians, whose need for safety on trails is specialized, and mountain bike interests, more recently on the scene but highly organized as advocates for access to public lands. The intent is to promote a shared culture of responsible behavior that respects the safety and experience of all visitors and protects Marin's beautiful and diverse preserves.

Next Steps

The RTMP is accompanied by a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report. Comments on the Draft EIR can be submitted to James Raives at the Open Space District (jraives@marincounty.org) by December 2. The County Parks and Open Space commission will hold a public hearing on the EIR on November 19. Further public meetings on the merits of the RTMP will take place early in 2014.

Notes from Marin's National Parks

Walking your dog in GGNRA

After an almost three-year hiatus, Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) unleashed a revised plan and Supplemental EIS to determine how best to manage dog walking in the park (for a detailed account see MCL May–June 2011 *Newsletter*). The overall purpose of dog management planning at Golden Gate sounds deceptively simple: "to determine the manner and extent of dog walking in appropriate areas of the park, provide a clear, enforceable dog management policy, provide a variety of visitor experiences, improve visitor and employee safety, reduce user conflicts and preserve and protect natural and cultural resources and natural processes."

In reality, dog management is one of the most contentious management issues the Park Service must deal with on 22 sites within the 20,000 acres that are owned and managed by GGNRA. Seven of the sites are in Marin: Stinson Beach, Homestead Valley (west of Mill Valley), Oakwood Valley/Alta Trail (in and south of Tennessee Valley), Muir Beach, Rodeo Beach, Marin Headlands, and Fort Baker.

The revised Plan designates only one site in Marin as a "regulated off-leash area."

After receiving 4,700 comment letters on the Draft Plan and SEIS released in January 2011, the Park Service embarked on gathering new data and conducting additional research that, in turn, required changes in management strategies and impact analysis. The effort was also prompted by the acquisition of new lands in San Mateo County.

The revised SEIS examines essentially the same six alternatives that attempt on a site-specific basis to provide a balanced range of visitor experiences: some areas allow on-leash and off-leash/voice-control dog walking, and some areas with sensitive resources and or visitor safety concerns prohibit dogs entirely. Alternatives at several sites in Marin County have changed since the first Plan. The revised Plan designates only one site as a "regulated off-leash area"—Rodeo Beach. Elsewhere



Dru Parker

A stand-up paddleboarder and his dog come in from their ride at Rodeo Beach.

dogs must be on-leash, either restricted to paved areas or on trails designated for dogs.

To learn more about rules for particular sites in Marin County, the public is invited to attend an open house at the Tam High Gym on November 6 from 4:00 to 8:00. Comments on the SEIS can be submitted at the meeting or to parkplanning.nps.gov/dogplan. The comment period ends January 11, 2014.

Muir Woods traffic again in the spotlight

The National Park Service continues to grapple with traffic, congestion, and parking at the ever-popular Muir Woods National Monument and has proposed solutions that are unacceptable to locals. The Monument attracts almost a million visitors each year; last July 5 alone saw 6,000 visitors in one day. Large numbers of visitors searching for parking in the limited lots create congestion. Up to 475 cars can end up parking illegally on the unimproved shoulder of Muir Woods Road, requiring visitors to walk on the narrow, hazardous road to the Monument entry. Conditions for both visitors and local traffic are patently unsafe, and pollutants can compromise water quality in the adjacent Redwood Creek.

Three agencies are working together to engage the public in the planning process: the National Park Service, California State

Parks (Mt. Tamalpais State Park wraps around Muir Woods), and the County, which has jurisdiction over the county roads. Basically two projects are proposed for study, one of them for implementation in the short term, and the other envisioned over the long term.

A realistic cap needs to be placed on visitor loads

The first project is operational—a reservation system designed to spread visitor use away from weekends into week days and peak hours to earlier and later times. Its intent would not necessarily be to restrict total daily visitors. Reservations would be based on arrival time, attendants would manage parking, and fees for cars (not people) would be charged to manage the system. Riders of shuttles, such as from Manzanita parking lot, would be "rewarded" for not bringing a car. Since no physical changes would be necessary, the reservation system does not require environmental review. Although many details remain to be worked out, this project has not met huge opposition except in its failure to control total numbers of visitors

The second and longer-term project envisions site improvements at and near Muir Woods. It proposes a menu of options such as reconfiguring existing parking lots to add a few slots, reconfiguring the crossing of the Dipsea Trail, extending the trail from parking lots to more distant parking, relocating restrooms, and installing a controlled parking

Continued on page 11

National Parks *from page 10*

lot for 180 vehicles off Panoramic Highway, on Dias Ridge. This last option was soundly rejected almost ten years ago, including by MCL, on environmental grounds, and shows similar signs of public rejection this time (see www.mounttamtaskforce.org).

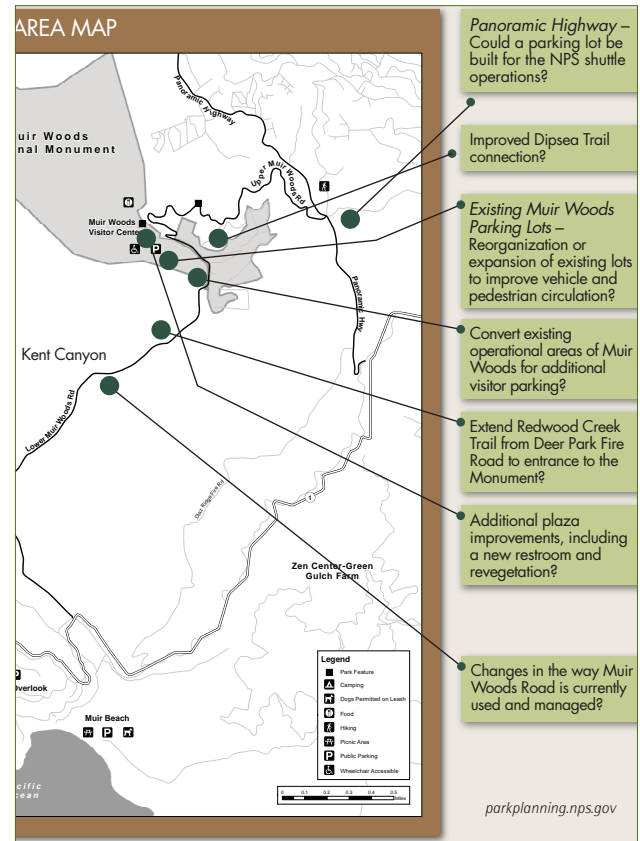
Critics point out that the most significant question confronting park planners is the need to determine optimum visitor capacity for Muir Woods. The conclusion of MCL and many others is that a realistic cap needs to be placed on visitor loads, both to ensure the long term health of Muir Woods and a positive visitor experience. NPS planning appears to be targeting attendance at 4,000 visitors per day. Is this a realistic cap?

These issues were debated previously over a period of two years (2003–2005), and there has been no noticeable shift in public opinions in the interim. A recent meeting on September 18 brought out the public in full force and a second meeting will be held at the Tam Valley Elementary School on November 20 at 6:30. At that time, the various options

will have been consolidated into distinct alternatives, which will be the subject of an Environmental Assessment and further public comment. Public scoping comments will be taken until January 11, 2014.

Please visit parkplanning.nps.gov/muwo_parking, and parkplanning.nps.gov/muwo_access for more information.

An NPS display banner, "Elements of a Possible Solution," from the September public meeting, shows ideas for relieving congestion at Muir Woods



New Director Profiles

Marin Conservation League elected six new Directors at its April 19 annual meeting. Two are introduced here.

Doug Wilson, Mill Valley



Doug Wilson was born and raised in the Bay Area and has been a member of MCL since the 1980s. His interests have tended toward land use, transportation and open space policy. In past years Doug served on the Fairfax Town Council and as mayor, on the Marin County Parks, Open Space and Cultural Affairs Commission, chaired the Marin County Solid Waste Advisory Committee and represented Marin on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Previously

he served as a member and Chair of the Sierra Club Marin Group Executive Committee and currently sits on the Marin Baylands Advocates.

Doug is a retired builder and construction manager with a BA, and MA from UC Berkeley and now has time for pursuing art. One of his recent ceramic sculptures won top honors at the Marin County Fair.

Sally Gale, Petaluma



Sally Gale is a leader in natural resource conservation and protection in Marin's ranching community. As a board member of the Marin Resource Conservation District for the past 18 years, Sally has overseen advances in habitat restoration, stream enhancement and water quality improvements on rangeland throughout Marin County. Additionally, Sally and her husband Mike have become models for environmentally sensitive and humane food production as well as sustainable land management on their Chileno Valley Grass Fed Beef Ranch, where they produce beef, lamb, apples, tomatoes and eggs for sale directly to the public. Each Fall, Chileno Valley Ranch is open Sundays for organic apple picking and farm tours for children.

In 2011, Sally and Mike Gale received the John M. McPhail Jr. Green Business Award from MCL for their outstanding model of land stewardship and enhancement of wildlife habitat at Chileno Valley Ranch.

**MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
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*Board of Directors meetings are held
the 3rd Tuesday of the month at
7:30 PM and are open to the public.*

Staff:

Dru Parker, Operations Manager
Molly Foley, Operations Administrator

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**Committee Meeting Schedule
(subject to change)**

Land Use and Transportation:
1st Wed. of the month, 9:00 AM–Noon
Parks and Open Space:
2nd Thurs. of the month, 3:00–5:00 PM
Water and Watersheds: Last Thurs. of
the month, 4:00– 5:30 PM, San Rafael
Corporate Center
North Marin Unit: Varies, check website

Marin Conservation League was founded in
1934 to preserve, protect and enhance Marin
County's natural assets.

MCL is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.
All contributions and memberships are tax-
deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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You're invited to ~

**Marin Conservation League's
2013 Holiday Celebration**

Friday, December 13, 4:00-7:00 pm
175 N. Redwood Drive, San Rafael

Please RSVP at marinconservationleague.org/events or call 415-485-6257.
This party is open to all members, their friends, and family.
Hors d'oeuvres and wine will be served.

Help the hungry! MCL will be
accepting donations of food
or cash to benefit the
Marin Food Bank at this free event.
Visit marinfoodbank.org
for a list of most-needed items.