

## Jared Huffman to keynote MCL's Annual Dinner

Marin Conservation League's Annual Dinner is our opportunity to bring together members and guests for a festive occasion and to celebrate the outstanding achievements of recipients of the year's environmental awards. It is also the time for a brief annual meeting to elect officers and new members of the board for the coming year. MCL is pleased to welcome Congress Member Jared Huffman as keynote speaker for this year's Annual Dinner on April 24, at the Key Room, Homeward Bound, in Novato.

A San Rafael resident with a long record as an environmental lawyer and lawmaker, Jared needs little introduction to a Marin audience! He entered his fourth term on the Hill last year supported by 70 percent of the vote. As a member of the House Committee on Natural Resources and chair of the Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife, Jared has emerged as a leader on such issues as climate change in the Democratic-controlled Congress. He has



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## Your Measure A funds at work



*Thanks to funds from Measure A and One Tam, the plan for Roy's Redwoods will support an accessible path across the meadow, preserve the old-growth redwoods, restore Larsen Creek and the forest understory, and improve the trail network.*

*by Nona Dennis*

As one election recedes, it is not too soon to prepare for the next. On November 3, Marin voters will have the opportunity to renew Measure A – "Preserving Marin's parks, open space, and farmlands." The measure that passed in 2012 with large voter support ushered in a new era in the county's financial capacity to maintain and restore its treasured parks and open spaces and acquire new ones for the benefit of present and future generations, and to preserve its agricultural heritage. This article features county-owned park and open space beneficiaries of Measure A. Part 2 (MCL Newsletter May-June, 2020) will feature how cities, towns, and districts and Marin's agricultural lands have benefitted from Measure A.

Readers may recall the basic components of Measure A in 2012: Voters approved a one-quarter percent sales tax for nine years that would produce approximately \$10 million in revenues annually to be divided among

four programs. County parks and open space programs would receive 52 percent to restore and maintain natural resources and facilities. The County would receive another 13 percent for land acquisitions. The cities and towns and districts would receive 15 percent to fund a wide variety of their parks and recreation programs. And farmlands would receive 20 percent as a 50-50

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## A Message from the President - reflections and appreciation

### Dear Members and Friends,

As this newsletter goes to press, we cannot predict the outcome of important March 3 ballot measures. MCL campaigned actively for a Yes on Measure C (Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority), which will address countywide fire hazards in the form of coordinated wildfire protections. We support bringing environmental considerations into fire-wise defense planning. We also worked diligently to defeat Measure D. MCL is firmly committed to supporting land owner Trust for Public Land's and the San Geronimo Valley community's opportunity to restore the former golf course to a natural, fire-safe condition for the benefit of fish and wildlife habitat, passive recreation, possible regenerative food production, and expanded public access and community education and enjoyment.



And last, MCL's board agreed not to support Measure I at this time. In our letter to the SMART District Board of Directors, we urged them to work with cities to resolve traffic congestion and air pollution around stations, plan for sea level rise, give greater attention to reducing GHG emissions, and adhere to the promise of a bike/pedestrian pathway. Until we have better answers to these and other issues, and until we can be assured of greater transparency and accountability, MCL decided to withhold its support.

MCL's five Issue Committees and Board of Directors continue to dig deep into pressing environmental challenges in Marin County. Advocacy work requires understanding the facts, testifying at public meetings, meeting with decision makers, collaborating with colleagues, and discussing issues amongst committee members and our diverse and experienced board before taking positions. Behind the scenes, MCL's two professional staff make this possible by managing communications and events, producing our Newsletter, and in many other ways

supporting our advocacy work. Our issue committee meetings are educational and they are open! [Check out our web site](#) for meeting dates and agendas!

This is my last President's Message as I will be stepping back from that role, but remaining on the board and continuing to pursue MCL's mission and evolving vision. One of my proudest achievements as president has been convening a long-range planning committee that is engaged, with the board, in reviewing and updating MCL's strategic plan, mission and vision. Serving as president of this organization for the past two years has been an irreplaceable learning opportunity and a wellspring of respect and pride for MCL's achievements and for the dedicated directors, staff, committee participants, and our members who make it all possible.

With deepest thanks for your support,

Linda

## Deadline looms for implementing new CEQA "traffic" impact methodology

by Greg Zitney

On July 1, 2020, all lead agencies in California are supposed to have methodologies in place to analyze traffic and transportation impacts in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents in a much different way than they have been addressed in the past (new CEQA Guideline Section 15064.3).

MCL first discussed the new "Vehicle Miles Traveled" (VMT) methodology required by SB 743 in 2014. ("Traffic by any other name," [Nov-Dec 2014 Newsletter](#)). The article contrasted VMT with the long-established Level of Service (LOS) methodology for determining traffic impacts and mitigation measures. Now, five years later, lead agencies are facing some of the same issues in implementing the requirement. The City of San Rafael offers a case in point.

In a nutshell, VMT is a method for estimating the number of automobile trips per capita that a proposed project will generate, as well as the distances traveled for those trips to and from the project site. The primary objective in switching from LOS to VMT is to analyze *transportation* impacts (as opposed to "traffic" per se) in the broader context of achieving California's long-range goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging greater use of alternative modes of travel (public transit, bicycles, etc.) through new land development and planning policies.

For many years, LOS has been a familiar tool for evaluating the impacts of traffic congestion of projects on local roadways and enabling congestion-relieving improvements

(signaling, road widening, etc.) through the collection of "mitigation fees." LOS was typically evaluated in the impact/mitigation context of CEQA documents, but no more! Public reviewers familiar with the use of LOS to assess traffic impacts in environmental documents must now try to understand the VMT methodology.

### LOS and VMT in San Rafael

Paul Jensen, Community Development Director for the City of San Rafael, acknowledges that VMT is a complex and

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## Editorial

# Focus on open space and why

It takes no more than a quick glance at this issue of the MCL Newsletter to observe that most of the articles deal in some manner with “open space.” Whether it be the advance notice of Measure A renewal on the November ballot; or a brief history of the first “Proposition A” in 1972, which established the county’s ability to fund open spaces; or a profile of this year’s Peter Behr Award winner Dr. Martin Griffin, the exemplary protector of open space as wildlife habitat – these and other articles present just a few of the facets of open spaces and park lands that cover more than half of Marin County. Another third of the county is in privately-owned open space – i.e., working agricultural landscapes, with their own distinctive native and non-native flora and fauna. From any perspective, open space is integral to the fabric of Marin and, it follows, the DNA of Marin Conservation League.

### *Our understanding of open space values has grown*

Fifty years ago, the keynote speaker at MCL’s 1971 Annual Dinner was Sol Silver, Marin County Principal Planner. At that time, the county was framing a new Countywide Plan around the now-familiar three-corridor concept: the eastern city-centered corridor, the inland agricultural rural corridor, and the coastal recreation corridor. The need for a mechanism to acquire open space was the hot topic of the year (See also Page 11 of this Newsletter).

Silver organized his talk around two questions: What is open space, and why is it important? At a basic level, he pointed out that open space, once thought of as left-over land for which there was no great demand – too marshy or steep, or otherwise inaccessible – was now seen as taking many forms and having many uses. For example, he said, we now better understand that open space functions as wildlife habitat, in flood control, or for recreation. Silver found that open space values, functions, and opportunities for protection varied with each corridor – in ecological sensitivity, environmental safety,

and human welfare and other amenities. All were important.

The County adopted the three corridors in the Countywide Plan in 1973. After approval of the open space district, the County also decided to concentrate land acquisition priorities in the eastern city-centered corridor, where, in addition to other open space values, a linkage of preserves would protect scenic ridgelines and separate communities from one another in the rapidly developing urban environment.

These days we can add a more detailed account of the values and functions of open space under the rubric of ecosystem services: energy flow through the food web, nutrient cycling and oxygen production, water supply and stream habitats, air purification, production of food, assimilation of wastes, carbon sequestration and other climate controls, soil health and stability, resilient habitat for wildlife in the face of climate change, pollination, and other attributes of biodiversity both above and below ground, as well as cultural benefits such as spiritual fulfillment and recreation. These services are vital to human well-being as well as to the non-human plants and wildlife they support.

### *Making connections and beyond*

If Sol Silver’s description of values were “Chapter 1” in our understanding of open space, and 50 years later our expanded understanding of ecosystem services were “Chapter 2,” then certainly the next chapter would have to include connecting open space landscapes at various scales and recognizing the need to manage open space across boundaries. Those concepts are already being tested in Marin with great success by the six-year-old One Tam.

For more than a dozen years, Bay Area-wide regional open space connections have been the subject of active study and advocacy. Marin’s open spaces are just one piece in a linkage of some 1.4 million acres of natural and working lands that make up much of the

“stunning and unique landscapes of the Bay Area (and that) support an internationally recognized diversity of habitats, flora, and fauna.” So begins the Conservation Lands Network (CLN), now in its 2.0 version. The Network, led in part by the Bay Area Open Space Council, brought together a coalition of 125 organizations and individuals from around the Bay Region – scientists, land managers, ranchers, conservationists, and decision makers – in 2011 to inventory natural and working lands in the nine bay area counties, plus Santa Cruz County, and develop a “greenprint” for action, supported by mapping and web-based tools. The purpose was to better understand connections between upland habitats around the region and guide future conservation efforts.

The 2.0 version, released in 2019, brings the plan to a new level, with detailed region-wide descriptions of open space features, such as plant communities, riparian habitats, wildlife groups, endangered species, etc., listings of threats such as climate change, wildfire, disease, invasive species, recreational pressures, and recommended conservation actions to take. Land managers in Marin are active participants in the Network and are collaborating across boundaries beyond Marin to learn from the experience of others. Other networks and connections and collaborations across traditional boundaries are “popping up” across the region and the state (Bay Nature, Winter 2020).

A simple truth that emerges from study of open space at all levels is that it doesn’t remain static; it is constantly in motion. MCL’s role as one of many stewards of Bay Area open spaces will continue!

Editor, MCL Newsletter

## Briefs from public lands in Marin

# Buck's Landing becomes County's newest shoreline park

County plans to acquire the 32-acre property known as "Buck's Landing" on North San Pedro Road have been floated for a number of years. The facility, including boat storage and a small shop, now closed, is in the unincorporated Santa Venetia area of eastern San Rafael. Favored locally as a historic haunt and largely hidden from public view, the facility closed in 2015 after a long decline, and the property was offered to the County in 2016 for \$1.59 million. With the supervisors' blessing, it was largely a matter of assembling the funds to make the purchase possible. The County expects the acquisition to be completed by mid-March.

The Buck's Landing site consists of three distinct areas – uplands lying south of North San Pedro Road that about the Marin County Open Space District's recently acquired 12-acre "Heron Hill," an addition to the San Pedro Mountain Open Space Preserve; the developed area consisting of the facility itself, with parking, boat storage, and access to the boat launch; and an intact five-acre piece of the tidal salt marsh along Gallinas Creek, known to harbor both the endangered Ridgway's Rail and a rare salt marsh plant, identified by Doreen Smith of California Native Plant Society Marin Chapter as *Chloropyron maritimum* subsp. *palustre* (salt marsh, or Point Reyes, bird's beak)

Although not widely recognized, Buck's Landing is a popular gathering place for kayakers and, more recently, stand up paddlers (SUPs). One SUP blogger described his paddle journey from the 101 Surf Sports in San Rafael Creek to Bucks Landing from San Rafael north: "There is a lot of wilderness space in the North Bay – Marin has seven islands, multiple wildlife refuge and lots of green space. It's a pleasure to paddle there.

In this stretch of the paddle, you'll pass by the West and East Marin



marinas.com

*An eventual master plan for Buck's Landing will include designing for shoreline retreat to allow adaptation to expected sea level rise.*

Islands, a (national) wildlife refuge, Point San Pedro with the Sisters Islands, McNears Beach, China Camp with Rat Rock Island, and the beautiful China Camp marshes within the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve."

According to James Raives, Buck's Landing Acquisition Project Manager for Marin County Parks, the site will be managed as a park (rather than open space preserve). The first phase of planning entails preparing the site for immediate public use, with general clean-up and improvements to parking, restrooms, accessible paths, and picnic tables and benches. An eventual master plan will include designing for shoreline retreat to allow adaptation to expected sea level rise.

Marin Conservation League was pleased to write a letter of support to the State Coastal Conservancy, urging the Conservancy to grant funds not only to increase public access to the Marin shoreline and bay for small human-powered water craft – the site can serve as



Gerald and Buff Corsi, California Academy of Sciences

*Point Reyes bird's beak inhabits the tidal salt marsh along Gallinas Creek.*

a trailhead in the evolving San Francisco Bay Water Trail project – but also to incorporate adaptive design features that will make the site resilient to sea level rise. The project also offers the opportunity to educate boaters and other shoreline visitors about the sensitivity of nearby Gallinas Creek and China Camp marsh habitats of the endangered Ridgway's Rail and the need to avoid disturbance.

## Status Update

# Old business in the new decade: status of the Martha property in Tiburon

Each new calendar year, we are reminded that land use and other environmental issues carry over into the next year, sometimes for decades. Such is the case with the 110-acre Martha property (aka "Easton Point") perched on the southern end of Tiburon Ridge, with breath-taking views of Angel Island, Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco Bay Region beyond. The unique scenic and ecological qualities of the site prompted the Tiburon Open Space Committee (TOS) long ago to campaign tirelessly for its public acquisition.

This Newsletter has reported on numerous occasions attempts by the owner Martha Company, under terms of a 1976 stipulated agreement, to develop 43 home sites on a site that is "bristling with constraints," according to critics. After three attempts to complete environmental impact reports, by 2018 the owners had reached an impasse and put site and development plans on the market. A "For Sale" sign was posted, and the property is available for \$95,000,000, marked down from \$110,000,000. At the same time, the Open Space Committee recently lost a suit against the County of Marin, challenging the Final EIR for failing to adequately analyze all the impacts that would encumber any development of the property. MCL has closely tracked the 45-year battle between the Martha Company and its neighbors and the County of Marin, while supporting TOS in its quest for eventual acquisition of the property as public open space.

### Familiar trails were closed

From the end of Heathcliff Fire Road that crosses the ridge of the county's Old St. Hilary's Open Space Preserve, a trail continues past a fence and locked gate that mark the adjacent land as Private



Jocelyn Knight



Tim Rosenfeld

*The Martha property, aka "Easton Point", above the town of Tiburon, as seen from the Angel Island Ferry.*

Property. That trail and three others on the Martha property were open to walkers and their dogs until 2016, when the gap in the fence was replaced with a locked gate. Neighbors denied entry to the property they had walked on for many decades were not happy and organized themselves as the Tiburon/Belvedere Residents United to Support Trails ("TRUST"). TRUST filed a complaint against the property owners to reopen four traditional trails in accordance with the doctrine of in law dedication. The claim was denied in court, and TRUST is filing an appeal. In February, MCL agreed

to join the suit by file an *amicus curiae* in support of the appeal. The appeal is pending.

### Some "good news" to report

If there is a hopeful turn in the saga, it is that representatives of the Martha Company (which now numbers about 200, mostly family, members) at last agreed to sit down with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and TOS to discuss possible acquisition. Further, after extended negotiation, the parties agreed to an appraisal, TOS secured funding, and that appraisal is under way through much of 2020. MCL's role will be one of patient tracking, hoping for continuing discussions with TPL as the property moves one step closer to becoming the centerpiece in an expanded vision of "Tiburon ridge" as open space.

*\*Update 3/9/2020: this online version reflects that TRUST has not yet filed an appeal but is in the process of doing so. MCL agreed to join the suit in support of the appeal.*

## CEQA *from page 2*

difficult concept to understand. "People are used to measuring how long it takes to get through an intersection or a roadway segment – the LOS method – as a way of assessing traffic impacts of a project, and it's been a 'quality of life' issue for them for decades," Jensen said. For CEQA document reviewers, comprehending the new VMT methodology may not be easy, and many will have difficulty with the transition.

Fortunately, SB 743 does not forbid the use of LOS by cities and counties as a planning tool, but it does eliminate the use of LOS in assessing impacts and determining required mitigation within the legal confines of CEQA. Although some jurisdictions, like San Francisco, are abandoning the use of LOS altogether, many, including the City of San Rafael, are finding ways to keep *both* methods in play as tools to assess planning and project impacts.

Because the deadline for implementing VMT closely coincides with the City's General Plan 2040 (GP 2040) update, the City has been able to develop and incorporate criteria for applying both VMT and LOS into GP 2040, scheduled for adoption in late August 2020. In December 2019, the City Council was presented with and discussed an informational report on VMT and LOS. While the Council took no formal policy action, it expressed support for continuing the use of LOS to monitor and manage local roadways and intersections citywide except in Downtown. "What this means," Jensen said, "is that, moving forward, we will continue to assess LOS for future development, but it will be reviewed as part of the project merits, for example, consistency with General Plan policies, rather than as a component of the CEQA review.

### *What's the difference?*

VMT is not a new tool for evaluating impacts under CEQA. It has been used for many years as a method for assessing impacts of projects on air quality, energy, and greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, those who have been reviewing those sections of environmental documents will likely have

some familiarity with VMT. Until now, VMT has not been used to evaluate *transportation* (now the favored terminology replacing "traffic" in the CEQA Guidelines) impacts. The ramifications could be significant with respect to how transportation impact assessments will be viewed by the affected public, whose perceptions are shaped by personal experience on congested roadways.

For example, in using the LOS method of assessing impacts under CEQA, a project proposed in an area with existing congested intersections and roadways (such as near transit centers) would be considered to have a significant impact on traffic. The same project in a suburban area with little congestion may have little or no traffic impact. Under VMT, however, essentially the opposite could be true – by being located near a transit center, the project would have lower VMT because, presumably, more occupants of the project would use public transit rather than their automobiles for commuting or other trips. In fact, new CEQA Guideline Section 15064.3(b) (1) specifically states that, "Generally, projects within one-half mile of either an existing major transit stop or a stop along an existing high quality transit corridor *should be presumed to cause a less than significant transportation impact.*" (Emphasis added) In a suburban setting, the same project would have higher VMT impacts, i.e., would result in higher greenhouse gas emissions, air quality impacts, etc., because it is not close to transit. As a result, it would require mitigation measures to offset the higher VMT.

The mitigation for significant VMT-based transportation impacts under CEQA will now



Kirsten Nolan

*Congested traffic in downtown San Rafael.*

focus on measures to reduce automobile travel demand, for example, through Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies, rather than on LOS measures designed to accommodate more traffic. Using VMT for analyzing and mitigating transportation impacts under CEQA will take some getting used to by everyone involved. According to Jensen, TDM-based mitigation will also require rigorous and continuous monitoring and reporting presumably by city staff to assess its intended effectiveness in reducing automobile trips.

MCL supports the purpose and intent of the new VMT requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from personal automobile use, but also favors the continued use of LOS as an essential planning tool under appropriate circumstances.

For more specific information and detailed discussion of the City of San Rafael's approach to implementing the VMT requirement, go to the City's website and find the Agenda (Staff) Reports for the City Council meetings of [June 3](#) and [December 2, 2019](#).

## Events

# Measure C: Defensible space and ecologically sound practices in the WUI

By the time this newsletter lands in your inbox or mail box, the March 3 election will be recent history but the election results could not be known at press deadline.

The environmental community gave Measure C – the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) – full support, but with a critical caveat – that ecologically sound practices and principles of climate resilience be integrated into the plans and programs of the Authority. In early January 2020, as the Yes on Measure C campaign was going into high gear, MCL and Organizing for Action hosted a large gathering of conservation and climate-active organizations at MCL's conference room, together with fire-professionals from across the county. They shared the views on vegetation and habitat, on the one hand as fundamental to a biodiverse landscape, and on another as potential fuel for wildfire.

It was a productive convergence of often conflicting interests – more than 65 attendees agreeing that while reduction of vegetative fuels is a key component of fire prevention, landscapes can be fire-wise and still function as environmentally diverse landscapes that maintain native plants, provide habitat for birds and other wildlife including pollinators, nurture productive soils and sequester carbon, and promote infiltration of surface water. In other words, homeowners in the wildland urban interface (WUI) can create attractive low maintenance landscapes, protect the health of neighboring habitats, and take significant steps toward reducing wildfire hazard on their own properties.



Supervisor Katie Rice welcomes attendees to the meeting.



Laurie Dell, The Grove Consultants

The group explored aspirations and concerns at the intersection of wildfire prevention and ecologically sound practices.

## Annual Dinner and Meeting

Friday, April 24, 5:00 pm - 9:00 pm,

Key Room at Homeward Bound Marin, 1385 N. Hamilton Parkway, Novato

Read details, including ticket information, in "Jared Huffman to keynote MCL's Annual Dinner", page 1

## Thank you to our generous event sponsors!

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Roger Roberts | West Marin Compost

## Annual Dinner *from page 1*

earned the highest possible environmental voting record, according to League of Conservation Voters.

In spite of the sharp party lines that plague Congress, Jared also has been able to build bridges with some moderate Republicans on the House Natural Resources Committee on issues such as permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and on Endangered Species Act protections. He continues to be a stellar representative of the diverse interests of his far flung district.

### *2020 awards for environmental achievement*

We are honored this year to present the **Peter Behr Award for Lifetime Achievement to Dr. L. Martin Griffin (Marty)**. The award celebrates Marty's lifetime of inspired efforts to save treasured lands and waters from destruction, and, over the decades, to stir a vast public to care deeply about the natural environment (see Page 9).

This year the **Marin Green Award for Environmental Leadership** will go to the **Environmental Forum of Marin (EFM)**. Co-founded in 1972 at Audubon Canyon Ranch by Marty Griffin, EFM has graduated more than a thousand Marin residents from an annual environmental training program (EFM Master Class) that provides valuable knowledge of Marin's unique environment and training in critical environmental issues like climate change. In recent years EFM has broadened its activities to present timely environmental topics to a larger public audience. For five decades, this largely volunteer organization has worked tirelessly to further environmental literacy and advocacy in Marin County.

The **Ted Wellman Water Award** is presented to an individual or organization who maintains Ted's high standards for protecting and preserving water resources in Marin and the state. This year, the award will recognize the achievements of the **Bay Shore Studies** program. Since 1974, Bay Shore Studies has been providing hands-on experiential learning in conservation science to elementary school students through field trips to the shoreline of San Francisco Bay. The tagline for the 46-year-old conservation

education program says it all: "inspiring children to protect San Francisco Bay."

The **John M. McPhail, Jr. Green Business Award** is awarded every year to a Marin enterprise that exemplifies environmental sensitivity in business and which has supported and improved communication between the business and environmental communities. This year the award will recognize **Bellam Self Storage & Boxes** as a role model among Marin businesses on how to integrate sustainable practices into the work place. Bellam Self Storage has been 100 percent solar powered since 2006 and has embedded green practices into its supply chain and installed such devices as timed light switches, low-flow toilets and sensor faucets. Leaders of the company also have personally participated in litter collection with the San Rafael Downtown Streets Team.

The **MCL Volunteer Award** honors one or more volunteers who have generously shared their time and talent to help realize MCL's mission. This year's award will go to **Doug Wilson**, in recognition of his long dedication to MCL, notably his recent insightful contributions to the Strategic Planning process, leadership of the Nominating Committee in a challenging year, diplomatic leadership of the multi-faceted Climate Action Working Group, and readiness to support the organization in many other ways.

**MCL's Youth Award for Environmental Leadership** recognizes Marin high school or college students who have made significant contributions to the community by seeking innovative solutions to environmental problems and issues. This year's award will go to **Niklas Alexander Ugalde Recarte**, a student at College of Marin, for his outstanding leadership in climate action. He was responsible for initiating fossil fuel divestiture, resulting in divestment of over \$6 million in the college's Foundation. Niklas has educated students in recycling toward the goal of achieving a zero waste campus. He organized the recent second Climate Strike on Earth Day 2020.

### *Nominated officers and board*

The annual meeting also marks a changing of the guard with election of a slate of officers and new directors on the board (see Page 12). The MCL Board is pleased to nominate Robert

Miller, PhD, as the incoming president. An economist by discipline, Bob retired from the Institute for Health and Aging, University of California, San Francisco, and is a resident of San Rafael. MCL welcomes back to the board two directors who have served in previous years: Roger Roberts, MCL President from 2006 to 2009, and Pam Reaves, who played a key role in reestablishing and co-chairing the Climate Action Working Group. Also up for election to the board is Terri Thomas, recently retired after 36 years as a natural scientist and forest ecologist with the National Park Service. For twelve years she served first as Chief of Natural Resources Management and Science at GGNRA and then as Director of Conservation Science and Research at the Presidio Trust, and in the past two years was Director of Ecology for Conservation Corps North Bay. Kim Baenisch, a graduate in landscape architecture, brings her skills from many years as a community organizer, including Executive Director of Marin County Bicycle Coalition and most recently Executive Director of Trips for Kids, since 2015 before stepping down in 2019. (See Page 12 for the complete slate)

The Annual Dinner will be held Friday, April 24, at the Key Room, Homeward Bound, at 1385 N. Hamilton Parkway, Novato. Invitations will be mailed to current members in early March. Online reservations will open mid-March: Check the MCL website for more information: [www.conservationleague.org/events](http://www.conservationleague.org/events).

### *2020 Environmental Achievement Award Winners*

Peter Behr Lifetime Achievement Award: Dr. L. Martin Griffin (Marty)

Marin Green Award for Environmental Leadership: Environmental Forum of Marin

Ted Wellman Water Award: Bay Shore Studies Program

John M. McPhail, Jr. Green Business Award: Bellam Self Storage and Boxes

MCL Volunteer Award: Doug Wilson

Youth Award for Environmental Leadership: Niklas Alexander Ugalde Recarte



## Marty Griffin to receive Peter Behr Lifetime Achievement Award

by Nona Dennis

In the lineage of conservation heroes in Marin – and there are many – some are remembered not only for their lifelong commitment to saving threatened natural environments but also for the particular areas that benefitted from their actions. Laura Lyon White, known locally for her role in founding the Mill Valley Outdoor Art Club at the turn of the past century, is more broadly remembered for her conservation of redwoods, both coastal groves and sequoia groves in the Sierra Nevada, ahead of her time. William Kent, in addition to buying and donating Muir Woods to the federal government (urged on by Laura White and her husband Lovell!), will forever be associated with saving Mt. Tamalpais. Caroline Livermore and her three colleagues who founded Marin Conservation League are most often linked with early acquisition of lands for county parks that would become state parks – and Peter Behr, for whom MCL's lifelong environmental achievement award is named, is known among many other notable actions for leading "Save Our Seashore" to clinch the funds for purchase of the lands that make up Point Reyes National Seashore.

Marty Griffin logically follows in this lineage and, in Marin, merits major credit for saving three critical estuaries on the Pacific Coast – Richardson Bay, Bolinas Lagoon, and Tomales Bay. In so doing, he helped to spare thousands of acres of coastal lands from development. We are fortunate that he documented this history in his 1998 book "Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast" – an account of 20<sup>th</sup> century conservation in Marin and Sonoma Counties.

### *From medicine to conservation*

Dr. L. Martin Griffin (Marty) was busy in his medical practice when he was recruited into action in 1957 by his medical patient and neighbor Elizabeth Terwilliger to save Richardson Bay. Nine hundred acres of the bay were destined to be filled and developed as a residential community. In joining the battle he unwittingly launched his second career (of several)! as conservation activist. It was from Caroline Livermore in that campaign that Marty, almost four decades her junior, learned a basic lesson in buying treasured lands that would last him a lifetime

of negotiating strategic land acquisitions: "Flash the cash and let them know you mean business." Later he would learn how to secure options on parcels with a handshake or, at some risk, a modest personal check. He learned from his training as a "medical sleuth" to diagnose environmental ills and develop land treatment programs, many of which called for outright purchase to save lands from desecration or development. And along the way, he came to recognize that human health can be closely linked to environmental health.

The initial base for acquiring land was Marin Audubon Society, formed in 1957 by Livermore to gain political clout from National Audubon to prevent the filling of Richardson Bay. After the collaborative victory in Richardson Bay, Marty shifted his attention to Bolinas Lagoon, where the first target for purchase was Canyon Ranch, home of the egret and great blue heron rookery he had once experienced as a boy. The ranch was slated to be subdivided, and timing was critical. The Lagoon was also threatened by plans to extend freeways across the length of Bolinas Ridge and by the "Gilmore Plan" for a massive theme park in the lagoon itself. Over the years beginning in 1961 and extending into the 1970s, Marty, with his colleague Stan Picher, would make strategic purchases of other canyons to augment the "Audubon Canyon Ranch" property, and in Bolinas Lagoon itself, would collaborate in purchase of Kent Island to kill the Gilmore Plan.

Along the way, Marty helped launch a docent training program to embed education in ecology as a key function of the Ranch itself, and, sensing the need for knowledgeable environmental advocates in the larger Marin community, he co-founded the Environmental Forum of Marin. Together, these programs have directly and indirectly touched the lives of thousands of people, and they endure to this day (see Annual Dinner, [Page 1](#)).



Jocelyn Knight

### *More land to save along Tomales Bay*

Turning north to Tomales Bay, Marty and Stan began buying up small parcels along the east shore, to forever thwart the prospect of a freeway, a water transmission pipeline from the north, or any other shore development. The crown jewel was the gift of Cypress Grove to Audubon Canyon Ranch, the result of Marty's midnight call to the owner, according to his account.

Point Reyes National Seashore had been authorized, but the prospect of a community of 150,000 envisioned in the West Marin Plan in 1967 loomed. With key Tomales Bay shore land properties secured by Audubon Canyon Ranch, and the institution of A-60 zoning in 1970 by Marin County to protect agricultural land from turning into subdivisions, that vision faded until it disappeared entirely. Marty deserves major credit for turning this tide of development.

A lengthy list of credits could be added to this brief account from the years that followed in Sonoma County, and, continuing to today, from Marty's never-ending pursuit of environmental integrity wherever it is threatened. Peter Behr, a comrade-in-arms in many of Marty's earlier pursuits, would be pleased and honored to share MCL's Lifetime Achievement Award!

## Measure A *from page 1*

match with other donations and grants to fund agricultural easements and thereby protect Marin's multigenerational family farms. The County would administer all funds, subject to review by an appointed citizens oversight committee. These parameters are unlikely to change in the 2020 renewal.

### Impact of Measure A

What has Measure A, with expenditures totaling approximately \$40 million in Fiscal Years 2014-19, accomplished for county-owned parks and open spaces? Whether you have recently strolled on Mt. Burdell Open Space Preserve with a County naturalist to see early blooming wildflowers; kayaked in the Bay at McNear's Beach; walked with your dog past a herd of goats munching their way through a field of broom; hiked, biked or ridden your horse past new trailhead signs or across reconstructed bridges and trails in open space; borrowed a free Park Pass from



your local library; volunteered to identify some of the several million images of local wildlife caught by cameras positioned by the Wildlife Picture Index; or participated in any of dozens of One Tam volunteer opportunities or public gatherings: you have experienced just a few of the activities and work programs made possible by Measure A funds. The vast majority of programs and activities are out of sight, or at least out of public view. And yet their impact on the County's natural resources and quality of life are profound. MCL has been fortunate to participate in many of these programs and, at a minimum, receive monthly updates on activities funded by Measure A.

When the measure was passed, the county's parks and open space functions, although funded by different revenue streams, had merged into one "Marin County Parks Department" and were functioning as an integrated team. But the department was struggling under budget shortfalls, burdened by

millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, and facing increasing challenges in managing problems such as invasive plant species and vegetative fire hazards. Popular parks were more than forty years old, with facilities in need of upgrade or replacement. No money had been budgeted by the county for land acquisition for many years. The department had experienced cuts in staff and other resources, making it difficult to carry out essential maintenance, let alone conduct scientific research or offer public programs.

Measure A was like a transfusion of new life! In no special order of priority, the results of that transfusion have been immeasurable. Beginning with a staff of two, the department was able to build a natural resources team with expertise in wildlife, forest and fire ecology, habitat restoration, and other disciplines. In the wake of the North Bay fires, vegetation on the county's preserves and in the wildland-urban interface is being managed with a new urgency by an experienced team.

The department has used Measure A funds to leverage millions in outside grants, thus enabling acquisition of key lands. The county acquired 16-acre Sky Ranch, a former equestrian facility that straddles Fairfax and San Anselmo, to add to Bald Hill Open Space Preserve and provide access to 100,000 acres of other public lands. The department assisted Marin Audubon Society in purchasing the 5-acre "Green" parcel to add to the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. Measure A funds enabled purchase of a significant portion of the long-sought Bowman Canyon property in Novato to add to Mt. Burdell Preserve. Buck's Landing has become the County's newest shoreline park, with funds from Measure A leveraging a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy's Greenhouse Gas Reduction fund (See page 4).

As the reach of One Tam, which originated in 2014, has expanded, the county has used Measure A funds to partner in ongoing major projects such as the renewal of Roy's Redwoods Open space Preserve in San



*A free pass to county parks is a popular "check out" at Marin libraries.*

Geronimo Valley, Bothin Marsh Evolving Shoreline project on Richardson's Bay, the Bolinas Wye project to accommodate sea level rise on roads at the north end of Bolinas Lagoon Open Space Preserve and reduce barriers to wildlife migration.

This thumbnail sketch should also include the annual \$100,000 Community Grant Program funded by Measure A that has brought thousands in our overlooked populations to experience Marin's parks and open spaces, often for the first time. And it should account for the miles of trail renovation, realignment, and habitat restoration taking place throughout the open space reserves – trails that are used by thousands every day.

### Campaign to renew gets under way

The campaign to renew Measure A will get off the ground with a presentation to the County Parks & Open Space Commission on March 15, followed by a report to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) later this spring. Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) is taking the lead in polling and organizing a countywide campaign. In May, the Marin community can expect to hear a report from polling, and in June and July, the BOS will consider ballot language. For more information on the accomplishments of Measure A see <https://www.marincountyparks.org/about-us/measure-a>. A separate web site will be established for the campaign.

## History Notes

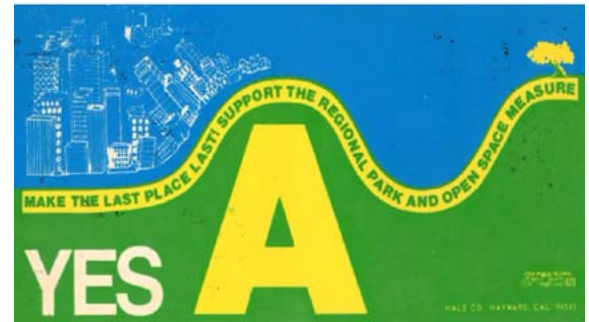
### Marin County's first "Measure A"

The upcoming renewal later this year of Measure A – Preserving Marin's Parks, Farmlands and Open Space (see Page 1 – harks back to another election 48 years ago. On November 7, 1972, Marin voters were asked: "Shall the Marin County Regional Park District be created and established?" Energized by a groundswell of public interest in preserving open space, the response to that earlier Measure (Proposition) A was an overwhelming yes vote, according to Barry Spitz's account in "To Save a Mountain: The 100-year battle for Mt. Tamalpais." The victory was the climax of efforts that had begun in the 1960s and, bolstered by huge grassroots support, gained momentum toward fulfilling the dream of establishing a countywide or regional unit of government authorized and funded to acquire and manage open space. The supporting argument on the ballot stated that the measure would "provide a predictable, long-term source of funds to bring the most threatened undeveloped lands into public ownership so that they may be enjoyed in perpetuity by all the citizens of Marin County."

The desirability of preserving open space at the county level had been discussed throughout the 1960s. Several significant lands in Marin had been set aside as state parks and there would be more in the future; Point Reyes National Seashore, signed into

law in 1962, was finally becoming a reality with the opening up of federal funds for acquiring the ranches; and People for a Golden Gate National Recreation Area (PFGGNRA) was amassing popular and political support that would lead to establishing a large federal park in 1972, including major lands on the Marin side of the Golden Gate.

The concept behind Measure A, 1972, was to complement park lands of statewide and national significance by setting aside scenic lands of local or regional importance. As recounted by Spitz, development plans were beginning to spill out of the valleys up and over surrounding uplands, such as across the lower ridges of Mt. Tamalpais that link Mill Valley, Corte Madera, and Larkspur, collectively known as Northridge, or the ridges that separate Sleepy Hollow from Terra Linda. These lands were too small and scattered to qualify as state parks, but they were important to local residents and defined the dominant pattern of eastern Marin urban geography: developed communities largely clustered in valleys and separated by natural ridges and upland greenbelts. They were also in the hands of private owners with development ambitions.



Marin Conservation League. They reminded him that the County had a good General Plan with a fairly ambitious open space element, but no plans to implement it. Josque replied that in the absence of political direction and budget, he had no means to begin acquiring lands. That visit was the spark that ignited public and political interest and got the wheels rolling, he claimed.

It took almost three years of political maneuvering, including state legislation to establish an open space district and authorize setting a tax rate. And it took the collective action of thousands of hours of grassroots efforts and education to gain public support necessary to pass a tax measure. The board of supervisors became the governing body of the newly formed Marin County Open Space District, and a county parks and recreation commission was established for citizen guidance. Then the process of acquiring land began – piece by piece, to form the network of open space preserves that now defines eastern Marin.

No one could anticipate the impact of 1978's Proposition 13 would have on cutting tax revenues in half or later County budget shortfalls. That's another story. Even with sharply curtailed funds, the promises of the first Measure A have been kept. The story doesn't end with acquiring land, however; it must be managed. Josque wrote (as quoted by Barry Spitz in To Save a Mountain): "Open spaces, like parks, only improve with time and become more precious as population grows. We should all continue to work at it and never give it up."

#### From parks to open space

The County had formed a parks and recreation department in the 1960s, but it was focused on public beaches and picnic grounds (Spitz). Then-director of the department Pierre Josque (deceased 2011) recalled a visit in 1969 from Nello Kearney and Mary Donnelly of



David Hansen, 1979

*The Northridge area, spanning ridges of Mt. Tamalpais from Mill Valley to Corte Madera and Larkspur, was the initial target for land acquisition in the campaign for an open space district.*

**MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE  
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Greg Zitney, Novato

*Board of Directors meetings are held at 7:00 PM on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at the MCL office and are open to the public.*

**Staff**

Kirsten Nolan, San Rafael  
Outreach & Communications Coordinator

**Contact Information**

175 N. Redwood Dr., Ste. 135  
San Rafael CA 94903 | 415.485.6257  
[www.marinconservationleague.org](http://www.marinconservationleague.org)  
[mcl@marinconservationleague.org](mailto:mcl@marinconservationleague.org)

**Issue Committee Meeting Schedule  
(subject to change—check website)**

*Land Use and Transportation:*

1<sup>st</sup> Wed. of the month, 1:00—3:00 PM

*Parks and Open Space:*

2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs. of the month, 3:00—5:00 PM

*Fire and Environment Working Group:*

2<sup>nd</sup> Mon. of the month, 1:00 PM—3:00 PM

*Climate Action Working Group:* 3<sup>rd</sup> Fri. of the month, 9:00—11:00 AM

*Agricultural Land Use: meets quarterly;*

*North Marin Unit: Check website for times and locations*

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.

*Editor: Nona Dennis*

*Design and Production: Kirsten Nolan*

*Printed in Marin on recycled paper with soy ink.*

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Marin Conservation League  
Annual Meeting & Election, April 24, 2020

**Proposed Slate of Officers and Directors for 2020-2021**

The Marin Conservation League's Nominating Committee, chaired by Doug Wilson, has nominated the following persons for election as MCL Officers and Directors at the 2020 Annual Meeting and Election. All MCL members who attend the meeting are eligible to vote.

**Nominated for Election as Officers for 2020-2021**

President - Robert Miller, San Rafael  
First Vice President - Mike Swezy, Fairfax  
Second Vice President - Greg Zitney, Novato  
Secretary- Susan Stompe, Novato  
Treasurer - Ken Drexler, Fairfax

**Nominated for election as  
Directors new to the MCL Board**

Term ending 2022  
Pam Reaves, San Rafael  
Roger Roberts, San Rafael

Term ending 2023  
Kim Baenisch, San Rafael  
Terri Thomas, Sausalito

**Nominated for re-election to  
the MCL Board:**

Term ending 2021  
Vicki Nichols, Sausalito

Term ending 2022  
Doug Wilson, Mill Valley

Term ending 2023  
Nona Dennis, Mill Valley  
Larry Minikes, San Rafael  
Linda Novy, Fairfax  
Jeff Stump, Inverness

**These Directors will continue to serve existing terms**

Term ending 2021  
Roger Harris, Corte Madera  
Larry Kennings, Mill Valley  
Sarah Loughran, San Rafael  
Kate Powers, San Rafael

Term ending 2022  
Bob Berner, Dillon Beach  
David Lewis, Novato  
Arlin Weinberger, San Rafael