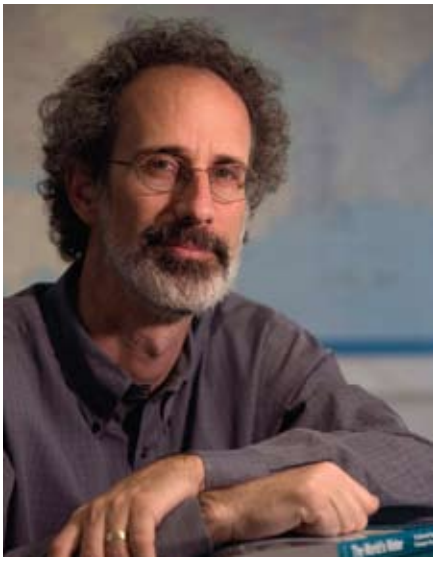
NEWS FROM MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

January—February 2011

Save the Date!

Dr. Peter Gleick to Speak at MCL Annual Dinner April 15, 2011

Marin Conservation League is pleased to announce that **Dr. Peter Gleick**, President and co-founder of the Pacific Institute in Oakland, California, will join MCL to give the keynote address at our **Annual Dinner, April 15, 2011**, at the Key Room at Hamilton. Dr. Gleick is an internationally recognized water expert and was named a MacArthur Fellow in October 2003 for his work. Dubbed a "visionary on the environment" by the British Broadcasting Corporation, Dr. Gleick has conducted research and written on the critical connections between water and human health, the hydrologic impacts of climate change, sustainable water use and globalization, and international conflicts over water resources. Tickets will go on sale in February so watch your in-box for your invitation. **The Annual Dinner SOLD OUT last year—register early!**



Dr. Peter Gleick.

Photo by Carl Ganter, Circle of Blue, ©2008

Marin's Open Lands: Planning for the Future

Dru Parker

Social trails like this San Anselmo shortcut, (shown here from both ends,) which parallels a short section of the Tomahawk fire road, contribute to erosion, sedimentation and the spread of invasive plants.

Marin Conservation League's Parks and Open Space Committee will again have a full agenda in 2011 tracking several multi-year planning processes on the County's Open Space Preserves and on Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) watershed lands. Together, the two agencies own and manage more than 36,000 acres of public lands that define Marin County's landscape. The **Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD**) Resource Management Plan Framework (August 12, 2008) describes its 34 open space preserves in terms of the vital "ecosystem services" each provides—"clean water and air, quality of life attributes; beauty and inspiration; habitat for native plants and animals; places to walk, run, hike, and ride a bicycle or horse; and a place to find peace and quiet." The MMWD watershed can be described in similar terms.

In many instances these lands are also the extended "backyards" of Marin's residential neighborhoods. As such, they are immediately accessible to local dog walkers, hikers, equestrians, and bikers. They also form the heavily vegetated wildland/urban interface (WUI) that figures so prominently in current efforts to reduce the hazard of wildfire. Populations of invasive plants have been crowding out natives and compounding the hazard of fire for decades. MCL meeting minutes from forty years ago record efforts to control invasives on Mt. Tamalpais. And both agencies are besieged by increased pressure from a growing regional population to expand recreational opportunities. Marin's success in setting aside valuable open space and federal park lands over the years has made the county a popular destination for recreationists from far beyond its borders.

Both MCOSD and MMWD are trying to engage the public in their planning processes through collaborative workshops as well as

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A Message from the President—A Year-full of EIRs

It would be nice to start the New Year with a clean slate, but that is not the nature of nature or conservation action! January 1 is meaningless to a redwood tree or a coho salmon—or, it seems, to an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Most people live out their lives successfully without ever looking at an EIR. In contrast, Marin Conservation League volunteers have carried out much of the organization's advocacy work by reading EIRs ever since the California Environmental Quality Act became law in 1970. CEQA or its federal role model the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) enters into nearly every public decision MCL monitors—development projects, parks and open space road and trail plans, vegetation management plans, water supply projects, freeway improvements, and more. Over the years, we have seen a pattern emerge: EIRs and their accompanying heaps of technical data seem to lurk in the dark corners of a consultant's cubicle, waiting for a moment like the period between Christmas and New Year's (when normal people are having fun) to suddenly appear in three volumes with deadline for comment.

I used to be on the inside writing those EIRs. Now, along with other concerned citizens, I am on the outside, restless, waiting for the opportunity to scrutinize a massive EIR document for its adequacy. In 2011, we anticipate more than our share of EIRs, some of which will already have arrived at the office by the time you read this.

A year ago (Newsletter, Nov-Dec 2009) we observed that MCL's "Land Use Work Requires a Long Memory." To illustrate, we cited development projects that had been pending for years if not decades. Well, add another year! We expect a number of projects currently on the back burner to surface in 2011. These include EIRs for two Tiburon developments: a Draft EIR for the **Martha Company**'s development of **Easton Pt.**, the spectacular 110-acre site overlooking Raccoon Strait that has been the subject of lawsuits dating back to 1976 (expect anywhere from 32 to 43 very large residences to be analyzed); and a Final EIR for a more recent proposed land division on Paradise Drive—**Alta Robles**—which has just reappeared after a year in limbo. The public hearing is scheduled for January 26. This geologically sensitive site has seventeen landslides that will need repair if it is to be developed.

An environmental document for **LucasFilm on Grady Ranch** is likely to appear—perhaps as a Supplement to the EIR certified in 1996. MCL is concerned that this large industrial-commercial complex is not an appropriate land use on the edge of residential Lucas Valley. The proposed **Indoor Soccer Facility at San Rafael Airport** will merit close attention when the Final EIR is released by San Rafael. MCL has consistently opposed this project; the proposed buffers simply aren't adequate to protect a population of endangered California Clapper Rail in Gallinas Creek from the activity anticipated at this huge facility. Also on the 2011 docket: a Final EIR for **Sir Francis Drake Boulevard Rehabilitation Project**; action on a proposed hotel at **Whaler's Point**, Sausalito/Tamalpais Valley, that has been pending for 35 years; possibly a Draft EIR for **Mt. Burdell Commons**, Novato; an EIR on **MMWD's Vegetation Management Plan**; and others.

Because CEQA continues to play a key role in informing so many public decisions, and because these documents are long, often abstruse, and highly technical, MCL will continue to conduct **public CEQA education workshops**, as we did in 2010. In the meantime, we will make use of EIRs as efficiently and effectively as possible in carrying out MCL's mission: "to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural assets of Marin County."

Bears? In Marin?

Although this bounder was spotted in Sequoia National Park, there have been a half-dozen or so recent sightings of Ursus americanus *in the Point Reyes National Seashore, according to news reports and the Seashore's website. The black bear was once common to the county and an important part of the native ecosystem, but unregulated hunting wiped out the population by 1901. For more details, visit www.nps.gov/pore/naturescience/black_bears.htm.*

And remember:
Don't Feed the Bears!

Photo © Howard Ignatius, Flickr Creative Commons, www.howardignatius.com

On the Waste Front

County Plastic Bag Ban

By the time this Newsletter reaches your mailbox, the County Board of Supervisors will most likely have voted to ban single-use plastic bags from grocery establishments in the unincorporated areas of the county. The draft ordinance was introduced to the Board of Supervisors on December 6, 2010, and an amended version had its first reading on December 14. The public hearing and vote were scheduled for January 4, 2011, with a clear indication that it would be approved unanimously. At this writing, one question remained to be decided: will the ban apply to other retail establishments besides groceries as MCL believes it should?

Marin County is hardly a leader in moving to ban plastic bags, but not for lack of effort. Supervisor Charles McGlashan has worked for five years to reach this point, meeting with non-profits like Green Sangha, Surfrider Foundation, and several youth groups that are focused on plastics abatement, and with representatives of the grocery sector who will be most affected. Supervisor Susan Adams has been a strong ally, but until recently public support was lukewarm. The Town of Fairfax banned plastic bags several years ago, and United Markets in San Rafael voluntarily eliminated them simply because it was the "right thing to do." The State came close to passing a state-wide ban in late 2010, but failed to get sufficient votes. San Francisco, San Jose, Alameda and Los Angeles Counties have not waited for leadership from the State in passing similar ordinances. The mounting accumulation of plastic debris fouling stream and marine environments (19 billion bags are used annually, and less than five per cent are recycled; Marin alone uses some 138 million plastic bags every year) is in itself sufficient reason for the County and other towns and cities in Marin County to take this step. Local agencies also spend public funds every year cleaning plastic bags from storm drains.

The ordinance will go into effect January 1, 2012. (Visit marinconservationleague.org /advocacy to view the ordinance.) Basically, it will ban plastic carry-out bags from being dispensed in all grocery (and possibly other retail) establishments in unincorporated Marin County, require that reuseable bags be made available for purchase, and place a five cent or more charge on single-use paper bags made with recycled content. Exempted from the ban are dry cleaning establishments and produce bags. Education and enforcement will be the responsibility of the County Department of Weights and Measures.

Marin Conservation League will continue to pressure our State legislators to get a state-wide ordinance passed.

Dru Parker

Residential Food Scrap Recycling

By Joan Irwin

Marin County residents are known to be early adopters of environmentally sound practices, yet we are still lagging behind San Francisco and Alameda Counties in one deceptively simple area: food scrap recycling. Depending on where you live in Marin, it's as easy as filling a green bin, and the New Year is the time to get on board. The importance of food scrap recycling is rapidly becoming common knowledge:

- ✿ Food waste makes up over 25% of existing waste going into landfills.
- ✿ Soil is built and renewed by composting food and garden waste and returning it to the earth.
- ✿ Adding food scraps to your green bin will advance the existing waste diversion goals of Marin County and future mandates toward "zero waste".
- ✿ Putting food scraps into green bins will potentially allow smaller garbage bins at lower rates, even though there will be an initial rate increase to pay for more frequent pickup of green bins.
- ✿ It works! Neighboring San Francisco and Alameda Counties have been successfully recycling food scraps for several years. In San Francisco participation is mandatory and many of the issues, such as public education, have been addressed. Alameda has been at it over seven years, and each residence pays a tax to support food scrap recycling education.
- ✿ It's an easy solution for the majority of people who have neither the time nor the space for backyard composting. And for those who are doing backyard composting, green bin recycling can take food scraps such as meat and bones that are putrescent (they smell bad!).

Marin's late start in food scrap recycling can be attributed in part to the county's 22

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Status Updates

650 No. San Pedro Rd.

This site for a proposed 12-unit residential development at the eastern end of North San Pedro Road possibly goes unnoticed by most people in Marin. Drivers and cyclists pass by every day en route to China Camp State Park, but pay little attention to the heavily forested 14.8-acre parcel that has been the subject of subdivision plans since 2003. For neighbors and residents of the Santa Venetia community, it's a different matter. They have fought to limit the development for seven years!

The site, located across from Point Gallinas Road, includes the steep slopes of San Pedro Mountain and is covered with oaks, bays, and madrone. A pond and wetland of uncertain origin occupy an area near the single driveway off N. San Pedro Road. The one existing residence and neglected outbuildings are shrouded by eucalyptus trees and French broom. The property is well-known to bird watchers like Terra Linda resident Jean Starkweather, former MCL President. For the past few years she has been observing several pairs of nesting herons who have raised their young at the top of a tall eucalyptus.

Since the application to subdivide the parcel was first filed, numerous environmental studies have been prepared. Development constraints are many: runoff from the steep slopes; the pond and wetland, which need restoration; the heron rookery whose nesting tree has been found by an arborist to be diseased and hazardous; removal of 200 trees; and the questionable safety of narrow access onto North San Pedro Road on a blind curve. For Santa Venetia residents, the main issue is traffic: any additional traffic on the already crowded thoroughfare, especially during the morning commute, is viewed as a significant impact.

650 North San Pedro Road Dru Parker

On November 8, 2010, after a two-year hiatus, the Final EIR returned to the Planning Commission for review. As currently zoned, the property could support five large homes, but in a way that would disturb much of the site, hence the need to explore other alternatives. Consideration of these will return to the Commission in early 2011. At this writing, it seemed likely that a "Reduced Density Alternative" (possibly nine or ten homes) would be environmentally preferred and still meet most of the developer's objectives. The loss of so many trees, however, even with replacement ("mitigation"), will dramatically alter the wooded nature of the site.

MCL has submitted comments to the Planning Commission and attended public hearings over the years, and continues to advocate for limiting development so as to leave much of the woodland habitat undisturbed, save the heron tree if at all possible, and restore the wetland to a higher function.

Met Towers in West Marin

In MCL's last Newsletter we reported that NextEra Energy, the nation's largest developer of wind energy, had applied to the County to install two 60-meter (197.7 foot) meteorological towers for up to three years on ranch properties north of Tomales. The purpose of these met towers, which will be supported by a system of guy wires, is to measure wind resources for possible future development of wind turbines in that area. County planning staff determined that the towers are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and authorized the necessary permits. Concerned over the possible impacts on birds and aesthetic resources in the Coastal Zone,

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The Northern harrier, a California species of special concern, is one raptor susceptible to fatal "bird strikes."

MCL, Marin Audubon Society, EAC of West Marin, and several individuals appealed the decision to the County Planning Commission and requested that an Initial Study pursuant to CEQA be required. The Planning Commission concurred on a 5 - 2 vote. NextEra appealed the adverse Planning Commission decision to the Board of Supervisors. On December 14, the Supervisors, rejecting the decision of the Planning Commission, voted to grant NextEra a permit without first requiring an Initial Study. The approval was made subject to the condition that bird deterrent devices would be attached to the guy wires and that bird monitoring, including carcass surveys, would be conducted by qualified biologists and reported to the County quarterly for the three-year term of the permit.

MCL believes that the proceedings on these applications was flawed, beginning with an incomplete staff report on August 26, 2010, followed by piecemeal submission of information by NextEra, some of which was not made public. The record was fragmented, scattered among staff reports, resolutions, amendments, and applicant exhibits. This resulted in a lengthy, disorderly proceeding. This could have been avoided had the County first prepared an Initial Study outlining the possible environmental impacts of the project followed by a Negative Declaration of Impact with appropriate mitigation measures.

WASTE NOT!

Business-Environment Breakfast Focuses on Food-Waste-to-Resource

Marin County holds the unenviable record of being among the world's top waste generators. But it does not have to be that way. As **Patty Garbarino**, President of Marin Sanitary Services (MSS), said at MCL's Business—Environment Breakfast on November 4, "Generation—that's what it's all about."

Ms. Garbarino and fellow panelists **Jason Dow**, General Manager of Central Marin Sanitation Agency (CMSA), **Jessica Jones**, District Manager of Redwood Landfill, and **Jon Elam**, General Manager of Tamalpais Community Services District (TCSD) explained how food scraps, which make up more than a quarter of all garbage destined for the landfill, can have a second life as a resource. These experts explored how food waste is being collected, who is converting food scraps to compost and energy, what processing is involved, and how a community-based pick-up and composting service really works.

Ms. Garbarino opened by reviewing progress in recycling residential food waste. Food scraps are being picked up by several haulers, including MSS, and turned into compost at facilities in and out of the County. Composting on this scale requires a large investment. Special haul trucks cost $250,000, and obtaining permits for a composting facility requires at least two years. Every evening, MSS sends three truck-loads of food waste (10 to 15%) combined with green waste (85 to 90%) to a 100-acre composting facility at Zamora in Yolo County. The trucks return to Marin loaded with treated compost. Because of its greater volume, commercial food waste, such as from restaurants and schools, presents wholly different challenges in collection and treatment. MSS began a pilot project in 2007 to collect and treat commercial food waste for compost. Since 2008, a partnership between MSS and CMSA has been studying the feasibility of hauling commercial food waste to the CMSA treatment plant, where it will be added to anaerobic digestion tanks to create energy for running the plant. This program, which has been tested at similar facilities, is called F2E (Food to Energy).

Will the iconic pigs residing on the grounds of Marin Resource Recovery be out of a job when the food scrap recycling program goes into full swing?

Dru Parker

Jason Dow then described CMSA's operation and elaborated on the partnership with MSS in the F2E program. CMSA treats 11 million gallons of wastewater a day from 129,000 customers in Ross Valley and San Rafael, plus San Quentin. The plant operates two anaerobic digesters, which produce methane to power the plant. These digesters currently run at 25 percent of capacity. When necessary improvements are made, they will have sufficient capacity for 20 tons of food waste per day from MSS and other haulers, expandable in the future. Together with CMSA's existing cogeneration of methane gas, the additional energy will enable the plant to become fully energy self-sufficient. CMSA anticipates a payback of less than two years on the initial investment to adapt equipment for the program.

Jessica Jones continued the discussion by describing the food composting that has been added to green waste composting at Redwood Landfill. The process involves grinding food waste hauled in by truck into 6-inch shreds to maximize aerobic decomposition; forming windrows and then creating piles to obtain optimum temperatures to further reduce pathogens and "fix" nitrogen. After final screening for useable particle size, the result is compost, which the landfill sells.

Jon Elam, who oversees one of Marin's ground-breaking food recycling programs, described TCSD's programs and its challenges. TCSD operates a three-can pick-up program for regular garbage, single-stream recyclables, and green (garden) waste. With weekly pickup, food scraps are now allowable in green cans. He explained that the success of residential food recycling depends greatly on the cooperation of the residents to participate and follow simple rules. To encourage support, TCSD has provided residents with convenient, clearly labeled kitchen scrap buckets. About 20 percent of TCSD's customers currently participate in the curbside composting program. TCSD also hosts e-waste collection days and community events centered on waste reuse. Elam said he looks forward to that the day when "waste" disappears from our vocabulary.

The program was held at the MSS Educational Classroom and was hosted by MSS, which provided a substantial continental breakfast for the approximately 75 attendees. A photo of curbside pick-up pioneers **Ted Wellman** and **Gloria Duncan**, both MCL heroes, is a reminder of the leadership that once pushed for recycling and unprecedented curb-side pickup that are now county-wide. As a consequence, three-quarters of Marin's garbage is redirected away from landfills. Diverting food scraps into useful resources, whether compost or energy, will move Marin closer to the goal of zero waste.

Announcements

MCL welcomes your newsletter articles and photos (300 dpi required). Email submissions to Dru Parker at dparker@marinconservationleague.org. The deadline for the March-April issue is February 7, 2011.

MCL updated its position on **water supply** in 2010. To view the revised document, visit marinconservationleague.org/advocacy and click on Water, Wetlands and Watersheds.

Events

MCL's Holiday Party

More than a hundred MCL members and guests attended the annual holiday party on December 3rd and contributed a full barrel of food (and cash) to the Marin Food Bank. Many thanks to holiday party Chair Betsy Bikle, Chef Stu Smith, and all the MCL board members for making this such a fun evening. Clockwise from right: Kraemer Winslow; Greg Zitney, Nona Dennis, Gary Oates; Ralph Mihan, Linda Dahl; Richard Benson, Dotty LeMieux; Jonathan Frieman.

All photos by Tim Rosenfeld

November Business-Environment Breakfast

The November 4th Business-Environment Breakfast (see article on page 5) focused on food waste recycling. Clockwise from bottom: Jon Elam; Jason Dow; Patty Garbarino, Jessica Jones; audience.

All photos by Tim Rosenfeld

Events

Senator Leno to speak at MCL's February 4 Business-Environment Breakfast

©Kelly Huston/Flickr Creative Commons

State Senator **Mark Leno** will discuss upcoming legislation and the state of the State Marin Conservation League's Business-Environment Breakfast Forum on February 4, 2011, from 7:30 to 9:00 am, at the Embassy Suites in San Rafael, 101 McInnis Parkway.

MCL's Business—Environment Breakfast Friday, February 4
7:30—9:00 am
Embassy Suites, San Rafael

Tickets are **$25** for MCL members and **$30** for non-members and a full, organic breakfast buffet is included. Advance registration and payment required by January 28, 2011. **Register at marinconservationleague/events** or return the form below.

Walk Into History: Hamilton
Saturday, Feb. 12th, 9:30—1:00

Hamilton Field was dedicated May 12, 1935, just a few months after the founding of the Marin Conservation League. From the initial purchase by the federal government of 776 acres of wetlands that had been diked for agriculture, to the construction of 8,000-foot long runways, to expansion of the land base to 2,183 acres—Hamilton Field played a major role in World War II as a launching pad for fighter planes and was at one time Marin's largest employer. The Army's withdrawal from the base in 1974 triggered a decades-long saga in the County over the future of the airfield. The Marin Conservation League, its North Marin Unit in particular, was closely involved throughout all aspects of the Hamilton debate.

Each episode of Hamilton's history is a tale in itself, with familiar characters and politicians. The end result—a residential and commercial community and a vast wetland restoration in progress—and the battles to achieve that result, will be the subject of a "Walk into History." The stories will be told by eyewitnesses, and we will conclude with a view and progress report on the wetland restoration as it is being implemented.

Visit marinconservationleague.org/events to register or call 415-485-6257. This program is free and open to the public.

Hamilton Field Headquarters in 1935. From the National Archives.

REGISTRATION FORM Business—Environment Breakfast: Senator Mark Leno 2/4/2011

Name(s) _____

Title/Org. _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

❒ MCL member $25 ❒ Non-member $30 Total Due $ _____

❒ Check enclosed, payable to MCL ❒ Charge my Credit Card the amt. shown above

card # _____

exp. date _____ name on card _____

card sec. code _____ signature _____

Ticket price includes full organic breakfast.

Pre-registration required by 1/28/2011

Make checks payable to **MCL** *or pay total due by credit card. Fax form to* **415-485-6259** *or mail to* **MCL, 1623-A Fifth Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901**
Refunds given only if the event is canceled.

Open Space *from Page 1*

through "on the ground" volunteer projects. The following updates are not intended to cover all planning activities of both agencies, but to draw attention to several current planning efforts that could result in significant changes in Marin's open spaces and to the recreational experience of those who use them.

MCOSD Current Planning

In 2007, the County completed a lengthy and collaborative Strategic Plan that articulated a vision and laid out goals for the future of its park and open space system. The principal goal was to: "Protect, restore and preserve the natural systems of the lands held in trust for current and future generations." The Resource Management Plan Framework (RMP), adopted by the County in August, 2008, carried that goal forward with the intent of "...guiding the stewardship of open space in such a way as to achieve balance between the need to protect and conserve resources and the public use of preserves and open space for all to enjoy now and into the future" (emphasis added). The RMP Framework outlined four management plans for resources in the open space preserves: 1) Vegetation and Biodiversity; 2) Roads, Trails and Visitors; 3) Cultural and Geologic Resources; and 4) Carbon "footprint" (feasibility study). The MCOSD is preparing the first two of these plans, described below, and MCL is actively following the planning process. MCL also is critiquing two separate recreation projects that the MCOSD is undertaking: the 680 Trail and the Stafford Lake Bike Park.

In late 2008, preparation of the **Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan** got underway, with the ambitious objective of updating information on vegetation and habitats on all of the County's preserves. Although the Plan's emphasis is on reducing wildfire risk—i.e., assessing the extent of invasive species and developing strategies for aggressive weed abatement for protection from wildland fire—the plan is also directed toward managing preserves for plant and animal diversity and addressing system-wide challenges such as preserving wildlife corridors between protected areas, conserving soil and water quality, promoting carbon sequestration, and coordinating access for emergency services with Marin County Fire, Marin Municipal Water, and local districts.

MMWD and MCOSD are trying to engage the public through collaborative workshops

By late 2009, political pressure from mountain bikers to open more trails to bikes was mounting and along with it, complaints about illegal bike trails and conflicts with hikers and equestrians. The controversy was sufficient to prompt the Board of Supervisors (acting as Directors of the MCOSD) to convene a lively workshop on November 3, 2009, followed by another public meeting of the Board of Supervisors in February 2010. During the intervening months, Supervisors Susan Adams and Steve Kinsey worked as a subcommittee with MCOSD staff to develop recommendations for near-term actions to relieve some of the pressure while at the same time allowing MCOSD staff to move ahead with the long-term Resource Management

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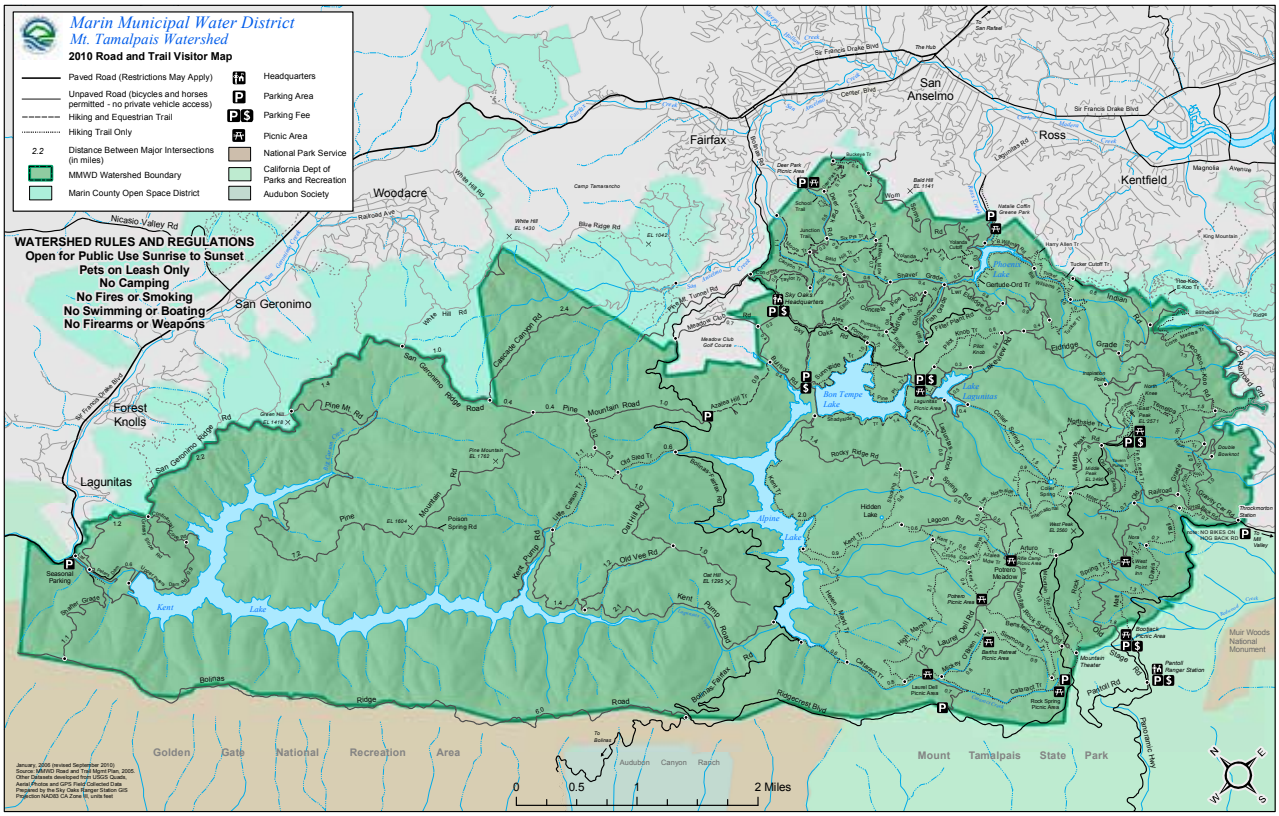
Open Space *from Page 8*



Plans.

One of the interim projects brought up at the February public meeting was the long-standing plan to construct the "**680 Trail**," which has been discussed in previous MCL Newsletters. After more than six months of studying the environmental pros and cons of various alternative alignments for this 3-mile multi-use trail and responding to many vocal concerns, including MCL's, the MCOSD Director Linda Dahl will recommend a final alignment to the Board in early 2011. Plans are that construction likely will begin in late spring.

A second interim project suggested at the February 2010 meeting was the development of a **full-spectrum, off-road bike park at Stafford Lake**. That plan has recently been the object of a preliminary feasibility study to estimate costs and identify environmental issues. It is likely that the Novato-area park will be considered more seriously in 2011, at which time costs and environmental requirements will be examined in greater depth.

The **Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP)** was the second program element outlined in the 2008 RMP Framework. Work on the Plan had its kick-off with a series of four public workshops during the first week of December, 2010 in Novato, San Geronimo Valley, Mill Valley and the Marin County Civic Center. Although billed as "public scoping" meetings, these informal workshops were designed to solicit public input on "what works and what doesn't" on open space lands.

The MCOSD web site describes the 200 miles of unpaved roads and trails that traverse the County's open space preserves as former logging and ranch roads, fire roads, narrow hiking trails, and wildlife trails. Many of the trails have been improved and are used regularly by hikers, dog walkers, equestrians, bird watchers, mountain bikers, and others who simply enjoy being in nature. Others remain in an unimproved condition. The demand for recreational use of the roads and trails continues to grow, and with that come increased conflicts among user groups and impacts to the natural environment. Informal ("social") trails either remain from before public acquisition or have developed through repetitive use, while illegal trails have been constructed by renegade mountain bikers. These unplanned trails are not designed properly and therefore contribute sediment to streams, destroy vegetation, fragment habitat, invite spread of invasive weeds, and create visual scars. It is a constant struggle for MCOSD to keep up with the maintenance, restoration, enforcement, and improvement of both formal and informal roads and trails.

The RTMP and related EIR will study types and locations of roads and trails for public use in the preserves and identify key improvements where they are necessary. It will compare impacts of alternative strategies to achieve a fair and appropriate range of recreation opportunities that have minimal impacts to the natural environment, are safe and avoid conflicts among users, and are financially feasible to construct, maintain, restore, and enforce. MCL will be participating throughout the planning process with natural resource protection as a primary concern.

For more information, contact Planning and

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Open Space *from Page 9*

Resource Chief Elise Holland at eholland@co.marin.ca.us or call (415) 507-2820.

MMWD Vegetation Management Plan; "Friends of the Watershed"

The Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) undertook a major update of its **1994 Vegetation Management Plan** in 2007, and throughout 2008 conducted a series of public workshops to explore the range of tools capable of controlling the spread of invasive plant species. At last count, the watershed contains nearly 1,000 acres of invasive plant species, primarily French broom. Alternative levels of abatement were presented to the public in 2009 and a Draft EIR was initiated. Both the Plan and DEIR are still pending.

Like the MCOSD, MMWD also inherited

MMWD's "Friends" proposal is modeled after the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

a road and trail network that had been intended for different purposes. MMWD's watershed lands were assembled around 1912, and the roads and trails reflected a colorful history: Native American routes, logging roads, livestock routes, railroads, fire breaks, and old telephone and power lines. Most of these routes needed improvements to reach modern design standards and water quality best management practices. To address these needs, the District approved its first comprehensive road and trail plan for the watershed—**Mt. Tamalpais Watershed Road and Trail Management Plan**—in 2005.

MMWD has now taken on a new project that, if successful, will bring new financial support for the array of responsibilities that the District carries out across its extensive watershed. The proposed "**Friends of the Watershed**" would consist of a non-profit companion association to the District, modeled after the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, which carries out myriad activities to support GGNRA.

As background, MMWD owns and manages 18,500 acres on Mt. Tamalpais, and 2,750 acres draining into Nicasio Reservoir. Its core mission is the delivery of high-quality water to some 190,000 water supply customers. Beyond that, the District is responsible for endangered fish in Lagunitas Creek, managing wildfire risk, ensuring public safety, managing natural resources such as control of invasive species and protecting sensitive wildlife and plant species, and providing public access. Recreation, although not a core element of MMWD's mission, has also become a major management responsibility. In recent years, watershed programs have been expanded to include school programs, water conservation education, monitoring species at risk, improving roads and trails, and confronting the unknown consequences of climate change.

Photo courtesy MMWD

Lagunitas (above) and Bon Tempe (below), in the Mt. Tamalpais watershed, are two of MMWD's seven reservoirs.

Ben Davidson, www.bendavidsonphoto.com

All of these activities currently depend on limited financial resources. To expand any of these programs—or even sustain them at reasonable levels—will require other financial means of support. The "Friends" organization is being designed to raise funds for these broader stewardship programs by establishing an independent non-profit association supported by members, foundations, sponsorships, donations, and similar sources of funds. During initial investigation of the "Friends" concept, representatives of comparable land management agencies and conservancies, foundations, associations, and local non-profits, including MCL, were interviewed. MMWD conducted two workshops, in the fall of 2010, to solicit ideas from the community and to present the draft business plan for public comment. The District expects to launch the organization and begin a District-wide fund-raising campaign this year.

As the "Friends" business plan has evolved, MCL has supported the idea, but with important qualifications. In particular, MCL is interested in how MMWD's "Friends" will cooperate with similar associations to minimize redundancies and coordinate programs. While the purposes of the "Friends" association are exemplary, the huge proliferation of worthy environmental causes dilutes the County's donor resources and volunteer pool. MCL is also concerned that plans for a new educational facility may be larger than necessary.

MCL urges a conservative approach: strong on educational, scientific, and restoration programs and modest in administrative and capital expenses.

Food Scraps *from Page 3*

separate districts (incorporated cities, special districts and other County-administrated areas), each with its own contract, its own rules, and its own special requirements. These 22 districts contract with at least five different hauling companies, and these

Don't have this service? Tell your hauler to GET ON BOARD!

contractors each have separate arrangements with the various landfills to which they haul the garbage and compostables. By contrast, the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and the City and County of San Francisco are able to set blanket standards for their waste management practices.

If you get your garbage bill from Mill Valley Refuse you are in luck (except Almonte). They led in Marin by working with all of their franchise cities to begin food scrap recycling in August 2010. Marin Sanitary Service began food scrap recycling in Ross Valley North in April and in Fairfax a short time later. San Rafael and the remainder of Ross Valley should begin early in 2011. Five neighborhoods in Novato are in a trial started by Novato Disposal in April 2010, which should be expanding in early 2011.

Jeff Cushner/Flickr Creative Commons

Countertop compost containers, like this one-gallon ceramic version from Norpro, are available in several styles and finishes and contain an odor-reducing filter.

Getting started at home

Most households in Marin have been putting garden waste in green bins for a number of years. It's easy to add food waste to your green bin instead of putting it in the garbage or down the disposal. For households with food scrap pick-up, collection has been stepped up to weekly collection from the previous bi-weekly service. What better time than the New Year to learn a new habit; you may not have eaten up all those holiday leftovers. Instead of throwing away brown lettuce leaves, banana skins, shriveled frozen canapés you'll never eat, turkey carcass and chicken bones or anything that was recently alive, you can be building soil and helping the environment.

There are two simple rules:

1. **Stop throwing away food scraps or putting them down the sink disposal.**
2. **Put them in the GREEN bin!**

You will need a small container close at hand in the kitchen. A good way to start is to shop in your cupboards for an unused bowl, pot, or other covered container to put on your counter or under the sink that will hold a few days of food scraps. Specialty containers are also available at many local hardware stores and kitchen or container supply stores.

When you are preparing a meal or during clean-up, see Rule #1.

When the small container is full, see Rule #2. (You may want to wrap scraps in a newspaper.)

The garbage man and the designated composting facility take care of the rest. In about two months your food scraps, along with those of your neighbors, will become a rich soil amendment full of nutrients that can be added back to the soil for your plants.

What's Next

Currently, food scrap recycling is for residents only. The exciting future of commercial food scrap recycling is **FOOD to ENERGY (F2E)**. Already some innovative sanitary districts (including East Bay Municipal Utilities District) are turning food scraps from restaurants, schools, and grocery stores into energy. Central Marin Sanitary Agency, which serves San Rafael and Ross Valley, is in the planning phase with partner Marin Sanitary Service to generate the energy needed to run their plant from "digested" food scraps and possibly sell some energy back to the grid.

Home-produced food scraps can be turned to black gold for the soil and maybe some real gold too. Marin will benefit, you will benefit. If you do not currently have food scrap pickup service, call your town/city/sanitary district to tell the hauler to **GET ON BOARD!**

Joan Irwin is a Marin Master Gardener and a 2010 graduate of the Environmental Forum of Marin

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What are food scraps?

A: **YES**—fruit, vegetables, coffee grounds, meat scraps, pasta, coffee and tea (including the paper filter and bags), bones, food soiled paper towels and napkins, food-soiled containers that are all paper, like a pizza box.

NO—plastic of any kind, diapers, pet waste.

Q: How much will it cost?

A: There may be a small initial increase to your garbage bill to pick up the green bins weekly rather than biweekly. If there is an increase, it can often be offset by reducing the size of your garbage can from 32 gal. to 20 gal.

Q: What about raccoons or rodents?

A: If you do not have animal problems today, you will probably not have them by moving food scraps from the garbage to the sturdier green bin. Try a Bungee cord if raccoons are active. Jon Elam of the Tamalpais Community Services District also recommends placing your bins at least two feet apart so clever raccoons cannot climb atop your black bin and lift the lid of the adjacent green bin.

Q: Do I have this service in my area?

A: Call the number on your garbage bill and ask. If they say no, call your city/town/sanitary district and request it.

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Monthly Committee Meeting Schedule (subject to change):

Land Use and Transportation:
1st Wed. of the month, 8:00 - 10:00 AM

Parks & Open Space:
2nd Thurs. of the month, 3:00 - 5:00 PM

North Marin Unit (NMU):
Call 415.485.6257 or see our website for meeting details.

Meetings (except for NMU) are at 1623-A Fifth Avenue, San Rafael

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

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Walk Into History: Hamilton

On MCL's February 12th Walk Into History, you will learn the history of the battle over Hamilton and how a unique partnership is restoring the runways of Hamilton Army Airfield to their original wetlands state.

See page 7 for more details and visit marinconservationleague.org/events to register for this free public Walk Into History.

Dru Parker