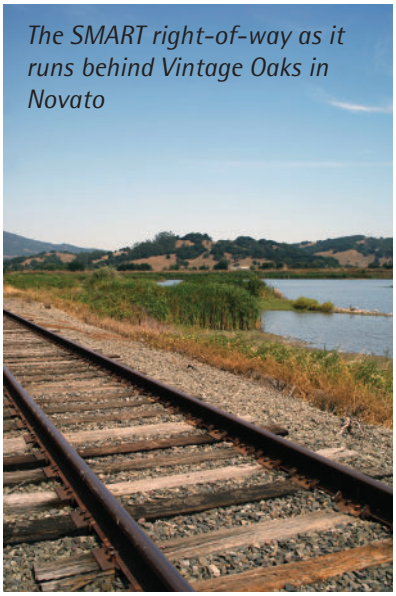
NEWS FROM MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

September—October 2011

Revisiting SMART

By David Schnapf

The controversy surrounding the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) system has again become a major topic of discussion in Marin as the cost of SMART continues to rise while the projected ridership shrinks. Recent events and upcoming actions include challenging the imminent $171 million bond issuance and a petition drive to put the issue to the voters again.



The SMART right-of-way as it runs behind Vintage Oaks in Novato

Dru Parker

Marin Conservation League has been closely monitoring SMART for many years and opposed Measure Q, the SMART ¼-cent tax measure, in 2008. MCL recognizes the critical importance of public transportation as a means of easing traffic congestion, reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, and providing mobility for people who do not drive because of age, health or financial condition. In view of MCL's long history of support for public transit, it may seem strange

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State Parks on the Line

Heart's Desire Beach, at Tomales Bay State Park, is popular with families from all over the Bay Area. The park is one of four Marin state parks slated for closure due to the state's budget woes.

Dru Parker

Adapted in part from an article by Elizabeth Whitney, Editor of the Inverness Bagpiper, *for the Inverness Association, with her permission.*

Anything that is written today about the anticipated closure of 70 of California State Parks is likely to change tomorrow. What we do know is that the closure of four of Marin's state parks appears imminent; Tomales Bay, Samuel P. Taylor, and China Camp State Parks, and Olompali State Historic Park are scheduled to close fully in July 2012 unless substitute funding is found. State budget cuts amounting to $33 million over the next two years will make it impossible for the Department of Parks and Recreation to operate all 278 parks that it currently owns and manages.

In the aftermath of the announcement of closure several months ago, alliances are being formed and many strategies to provide substitute funds and/or services to keep individual parks open are under consideration. Only through new alliances and cooperative agreements, can some of the individual parks on the list be saved. The most promising step in Marin was the August 15 announcement by Assemblyman Jared Huffman and Thomas Peters, President and CEO of Marin Community Foundation, of the formation of Open Parks Coalition to preserve Marin County's state parks. The Coalition is bringing together interested individuals and leaders of community organizations, including MCL, and government officials who share the common goal of finding ways to ensure that state parks remain accessible to all. The Coalition will meet over coming months and convene public forums.

An important step to encourage cooperative arrangements was taken by Huffman, who authored AB 42, a bill that would make it easier for the Department of

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A Message from the President

It has been a busy summer for the Marin Conservation League. Now, as the days are getting shorter, the list of critical issues to address or needing to be monitored gets longer and longer. For instance, while Labor Day signals the official end of summer, this year it also signals the staged closure of the Marin state parks over the next ten months unless means are found to avoid this. MCL, along with other visionary citizens and lawmakers, worked hard in the early 20th century to preserve California's most representative and significant lands. We will be working with other concerned organizations and individuals to develop alternatives to closure, that will protect the resources, provide public access and continued interpretive opportunities.

MCL is so fortunate to have a dedicated and skilled crew of volunteers who monitor various agencies and write meaningful letters when needed to assure our county's environmental assets are protected. Although most of the issue committees meet throughout the summer months, autumn seems to bring a renewed energy and redefined focus to them. Many have new leadership, too. Nona Dennis now chairs the Parks & Open Space Committee, Priscilla Bull and Ann Thomas are restoring the Water and Watersheds Committee and Gail Wilhelm is chairing the Land Use Committee. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend any of the issue committee meetings—meeting times are on the back page of this newsletter. They are very informative.

I hope to see you at an upcoming event—a hike, Business Breakfast or issue committee meeting!

Susan Stompe

Want newsletters via email? Email mcl@marinconservationleague.org with "ENews Only" or "ENews plus Paper" in the subject line.

MCL reinstitutes monthly Water Committee

MCL has been deeply engaged in local water supply and watershed issues for many years. The Water Committee met regularly, studied the issues, made recommendations to the Board, and advocated for sound water policy. In recent years, with regular meetings becoming more problematic, committee work was conducted irregularly, on an as-needed basis.

Recognizing increasing activity and interest in water supply and local creeks and watersheds, MCL has reinstituted its Water/Watersheds Committee. The group, headed by Priscilla Bull and Ann Thomas, will research state and regional water projects as well as our local water districts and the complexities of the Russian and Eel Rivers system on which we all rely.

In addition, the Committee will track the myriad watershed issues in Marin, such as efforts to protect and enhance our creeks and wetlands and adjacent habitat areas, as well as flood control.

As if that isn't enough to cover, the Committee will also collaborate with the MCL Climate Action Committee to review the latest research on the effects of climate change on both our water supply and watersheds. We expect to have a presentation on this topic in November.

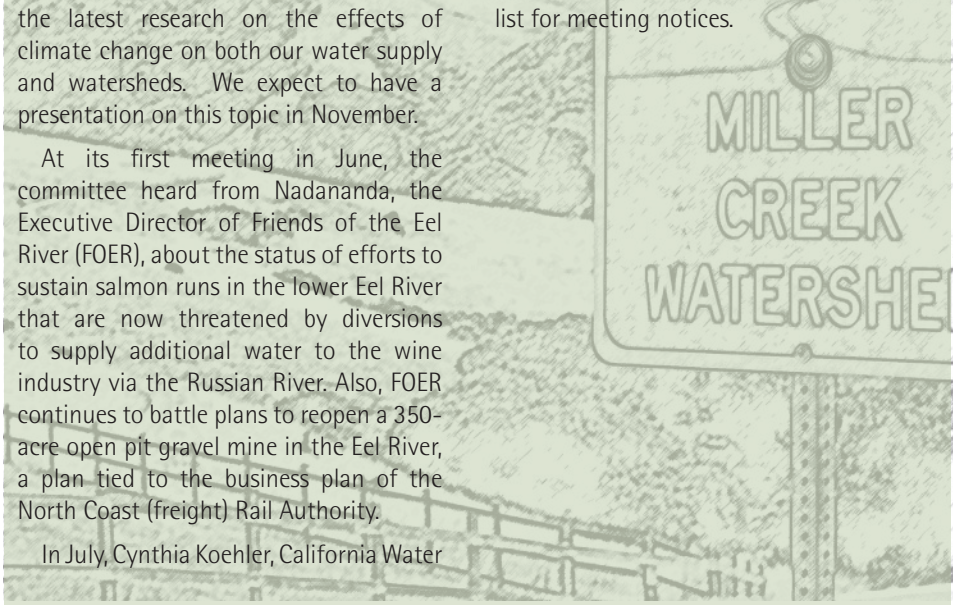
At its first meeting in June, the committee heard from Nadananda, the Executive Director of Friends of the Eel River (FOER), about the status of efforts to sustain salmon runs in the lower Eel River that are now threatened by diversions to supply additional water to the wine industry via the Russian River. Also, FOER continues to battle plans to reopen a 350-acre open pit gravel mine in the Eel River, a plan tied to the business plan of the North Coast (freight) Rail Authority.

In July, Cynthia Koehler, California Water Legislative Director for the Environmental Defense Fund and current MMWD Board member, described the ongoing attempts by the state to craft a Delta Plan that meets the two legislated objectives of ensuring California's water supply reliability while restoring the health of the fragile Bay-Delta ecosystem.

At the September 22 meeting, Jerry Meral, State Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources in charge of the Bay Delta Conservation Planning Program, will speak to the committee. The meeting will be held from 4:30 to 6:30 PM at the MCL office.

The infamous California "water wars" are ongoing, but key decisions are coming up and MCL must be a knowledgeable participant in the debate.

All MCL members and guests are encouraged to attend the committee meetings; no expertise is required, just an interest in learning and advocating for environmentally sound water policy. Contact MCL at 415-485-6257 or mcl@marinconservationleague.org if you would like to be added to the committee's email list for meeting notices.



Events

Business-Environment Breakfast, Thurs. Sept. 22, 7:30 AM, Embassy Suites

Panel: Supervisor Kathrin Sears, Makini Hassan and John Stayton: "Green" is Now!—Linking environment, community, and business in Marin

On Thursday, September 22nd from 7:30—9:00 AM, Marin County 3rd District Supervisor **Kathrin Sears**, Marin City Community Development Corporation Executive Director **Makini Hassan**, and **John Stayton**, cofounder of Dominican University's Green MBA and the Venture Greenhouse, will speak at MCL's Business-Environment Breakfast at the Embassy Suites in San Rafael, 101 McInnis Parkway.

The panel will discuss ways in which Marin's business and environmental communities are currently working together to their mutual benefit, and will cite examples of exciting work in progress. There will be an opportunity for the audience to ask questions after the presentation.

Supervisor Sears

Makini Hassan

John Stayton

Tickets are $25 for MCL members and $30 for non-members. A full breakfast buffet is included. Advance registration and payment are required by September 16. **Register at marinconservationleague.org/events**, or by returning the form on Page 7.

Sponsored in part by the **Urban Farmer Store,** specializing in efficient lighting and irrigation for the landscape.

Review: National Parks Business Breakfast

by Risa De Ferrari

On June 10th, Marin Conservation League hosted a Business—Environment Breakfast focused on Marin County's national parks. The two speakers, Golden Gate National Recreation Area General Superintendent Frank Dean, and Point Reyes National Seashore Superintendent Cicely Muldoon, together provided an informative and interesting overview of the history, current state, and continued management challenges of our national parks in Marin.

Having been born and raised in Marin County, I was especially pleased to be informed by these experts about what I believe to be one of our greatest assets here in Marin.

Superintendent Muldoon recounted the history behind the making of Point Reyes National Seashore, beginning with the threat of development of land surrounding Drake's Bay, the first public "piece" in what would become the Seashore. The development project was halted and a national park was born largely through the insistence of Congressman Clem Miller in 1962 that the land be preserved as a public park. (Point Reyes National Seashore was authorized by President John F. Kennedy in 1962. Tragically, Rep. Miller was killed in an airplane crash shortly thereafter so could not appreciate the success of his efforts.) Today, the park represents 80 miles of protected coastline and is a combination of designated wilderness and pastoral zones. It is visited by more than 2 million visitors a year.

The making of Golden Gate National Recreation Area began about ten years later, in 1972. Superintendent Frank Dean recounted that story and highlighted the unique attributes of this spectacular treasure that exists right in the Bay Area's own back yard. GGNRA is both a great wildlife preserve and an example of some of the most creative national park management and development across the U.S. As the largest urban national park, GGNRA is one of the most successful national parks in the United States today. With more than 16 million visitors a year, the park provides 110 miles of trails for visitors to explore and many other recreational opportunities. Through its non-profit partner Golden Gate Parks Conservancy, GGNRA has an unbelievable 30,000 volunteers each year helping to maintain and support projects in the park. Currently, the Recreation Area consists of almost 60 miles of lands along the Bay and Pacific Ocean. Superintendent Dean noted that the park has plans to expand south into San Mateo County through the Southern Gateway.

The breakfast was a fun and educational networking opportunity and provided all who attended an informative perspective on the history, changes, and challenges facing the national parks in Marin County. It is my hope that MCL will continue to provide us all with a platform for further education, awareness and protection of our incredible resources, such as the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Point Reyes National Seashore.

Risa De Ferrari is an MCL member and a Green MBA student at Dominican University.

Status Updates

Hanna Ranch

Hanna Ranch is a 19.7 acre grassy and oak-studded hill on Highway 101, just south of Vintage Oaks Center in Novato. The property, recognizable to passing drivers by the dirt bike tracks criss-crossing its three knolls. has been slated for development for many years. Approximately 165,500 square feet of commercial office and retail buildings would occupy a kind of "peninsula" that connects the Vintage Oaks Center with the main hill of Hanna Ranch. The developer is proposing to construct a 5,000 square foot restaurant and a three-to-four-story, 116-room hotel centered between the knolls, with its own associated 5,000 square foot restaurant.

Hanna Ranch viewed from Highway 37 Dru Parker

In all, five proposed new structures, along with access roads and other infrastructure, are the subject of a Draft EIR that was released in June. There is no question that the site will be visually transformed when viewed from Highway 101. The presence of wildlife in the nearby Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area and the adjacent Beverly Ehreth Ecological Pond, which served as mitigation for loss of wetlands in construction of Vintage Oaks Center, warrant careful consideration of impacts from this large development. Traffic circulation also merits attention; as the proposal is currently configured, all traffic entering the site would come through the Vintage Oaks Center from Rowland Blvd.

In commenting on the DEIR, Marin Conservation League pointed out several aspects of the development that could disrupt wildlife use of the Beverly Ehreth Ecological Pond, such as night lighting, which would need to be suppressed and directed away from the habitat; and the placement of the main access road on the "peninsula," which would sever habitat connectivity between the Pond and Petaluma Marsh to the east of the site. MCL also noted that construction within the 50 foot setback of the Beverly Ehreth Pond should be avoided.

An ancillary feature of the development is a Class I bike and pedestrian path, which would begin at the northern end of the site and continue south to Hanna Ranch Road (which would be closed to all but emergency traffic). Two potential alignments for this path are evaluated in the DEIR. The selected alignment will be granted to the City in the form of an easement/offer of dedication, thus enabling a connection with the bicycle/pedestrian path along the SMART right-of-way. The City plans to vacate a floating easement for a four-lane arterial street that it holds over the property.

The next step will be for the City's consultant to respond to public comments on the Draft EIR, followed by a Final EIR, before the City takes up the merits of the proposal.

Lawson's Landing

On July 13, the efforts of dozens of environmental professionals and activists over more than a dozen years to "Save the Tomales Bay Dunes" were rewarded by a stunning coastal victory. It took 156 pages of staff analysis, site visits by the commissioners, and a 10-hour hearing in the Marin County Board of Supervisors' chambers, but in the end, the California Coastal Commission voted to grant a Coastal Development Permit to Lawson's Landing that stood in sharp contrast to what the master plan might have allowed 12 years ago. MCL can thank the single-minded persistence of Catherine Caufield, former Executive Director of Environmental Action Committee (EAC) of West Marin, who led the campaign. MCL also acknowledges the efforts of the Lawson family in responding to the inevitable need for change in the decades-old operation of the popular resort. The key conditions of the permit, among others:

- allows camping on 18 acres only of sensitive habitat (80% reduction over 1998)
- mandates 100 foot wetland buffers
- requires removal of several roads through wetlands
- eliminates the fixed private travel trailers within five years and defines allowable camping sites for public access
- requires a new septic system but moves the leachfield out of sensitive habitat
- places 465 acres of dunes habitat under a permanent conservation easement by the Natural Resources Conservation Service
- requires a Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement Plan, whose goals are to protect and manage the dunes-wetland complex over the long term, restore natural hydrology of wetlands except in camping areas, protect habitat of listed species like the California red-legged frog, prevent spread of invasive species, and plant native species as habitat for the federally endangered Myrtle's silverspot butterfly, among others
- sets standards for traffic flow and safety and provides for additional measures if those standards are not met
- requires undergrounding of utilities

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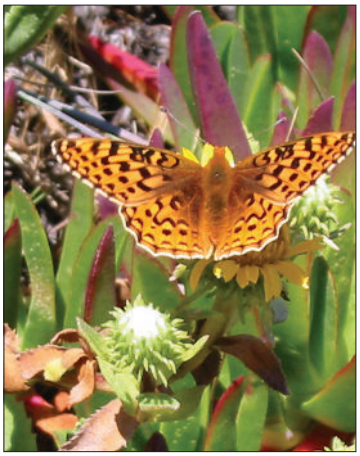


Geoff Smick, USFWS

Endangered Myrtle's Silverspot

Status Updates (continued)

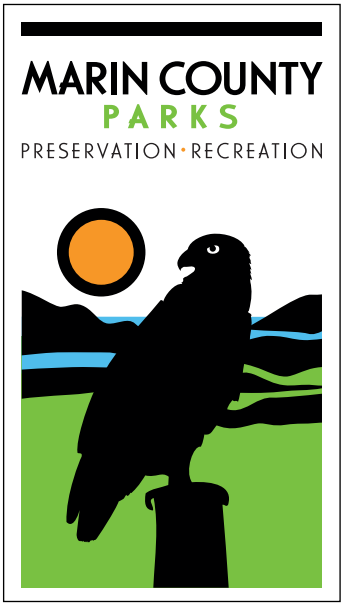
MCL believes that the twin goals that define the California Coastal Act—protect coastal resources, and provide low-cost coastal access and recreation—have been met in the Commission's decision.

New Identity for Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space

Marin County's Parks and Open Space Department has developed a new logo, shown here, and simplified its name to "Marin County Parks." The public has been assured that the Department will continue to manage the County's 34 Open Space Preserves to protect the natural, scenic, and cultural resources that have prompted citizens for 40 years to work for their preservation. The change was prompted by the desire to simplify the Department's name for better public recognition and support, and to unify a staff that had been artificially separated into recreational park personnel and open space personnel, a distinction that was not consistent with the actual work of the Department. As Ron Miska, Deputy Director of Open Space, explained: "It raises public consciousness—communicates better who the Department is."

The newly renamed Department continues to move forward on two major work programs on the preserves: the Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) and the Roads and Trails Management Plan (RTMP). The two efforts have been converging in recent months as maps of roads and trails—their locations, condition, uses, and needs—are overlaid on vegetation maps that identify four "zones" representing greatest to least habitat importance and sensitivity to disturbance. The objective is to limit disturbance to habitats and guide recreational roads and trails use away from most sensitive, i.e., most constrained, areas on the preserves.

A third public workshop on the RTMP will be held on Saturday, October 29, from 8:30 to 12:30, location to be determined. At that time, preliminary information from an ongoing user survey of County parks and preserves will be presented to the public and input from previous workshops will be discussed. MCL has attended all workshops. Consistent with



"Community Marin" policy, we will continue to advocate for no net increase in trails on the preserves and for decommissioning social and illegal trails that are fragmenting or otherwise disturbing habitats.

America's Cup

Although the first events of America's Cup 34 (AC34) are a year away, planning for the sailboat competitions in 2012 and 2013 is in full swing. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released by the City and County of San Francisco this summer and has elicited extensive public comment. The DEIR describes the races and race course, support facilities, primary and secondary venues, and anticipated attendance, and then identifies an array of impacts as well as mitigation measures. The document acknowledges impacts outside of San Francisco, but only discusses the one *official* site in Marin County—Cavallo Point in Fort Baker. In fact, Marin could experience numerous impacts on transportation capacity, water quality, waste management, wildlife, and habitats from the volumes of spectators who are expected to view the events from both land sites and the Bay.

Races are planned for both 2012 and 2013. The 2012 series, the America's Cup World Series, involves twenty days of racing in late summer and early fall. The course runs along the San Francisco waterfront from the Bay Bridge, slightly under the Golden Gate Bridge, past Sausalito, along the south end of Angel Island, west of Treasure Island, along the north side of the Bay Bridge, and back to San Francisco. An alternative to have the races outside the Gate on the ocean was dismissed because the boats would have to be specially built for the open ocean.

The races in 2013 are planned to run from June through September and include the Louis Vuitton Cup, America's Cup Challenger Series, potential America's Cup Defender Selection Series and the Match. These will follow essentially the same course, but the anticipated visitor numbers are much greater. The DEIR estimates landside spectators for 2013 weekday events at 43,700 per day, a number which is anticipated to jump to as many as 316,000 on the weekends. Spectators on boats on weekends are estimated at 18,000 per day.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) on both sides of the Golden Gate Bridge will be heavily impacted by spectators and, therefore, is required under federal law to prepare its own Environmental Assessment (EA) to address impacts on the Marin Headlands and other GGNRA sites. This will be available to the public in the fall. California State Parks will probably develop a plan for Angel Island. Both areas would provide excellent views of the races, but crowd control will be essential to avoid environmental destruction.

Up to 18,000 spectators would view the events from boats

Tim Rosenfeld

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State Parks *from Page 1*

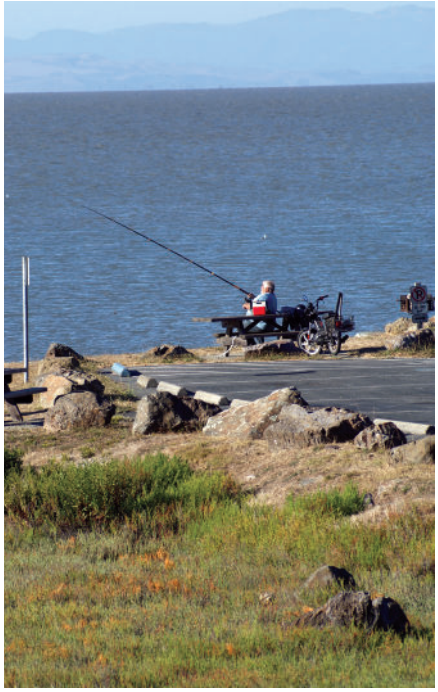
Parks and Recreation to negotiate with non-profits for partnership agreements in funding parks. Although it is likely to be signed by the Governor, the bill will not become law until sometime in 2012. Non-profit parks associations already exist in local areas and on a statewide basis, such as California State Park Foundation and California League of Park Associations. These associations are very much involved in the park financing crisis, but are currently limited in the role they can play in supporting operations of state parks. Marin's cooperating association, the Marin State Park Association, includes "Friends" associations for the state parks at Tomales Bay, Samuel P. Taylor and China Camp as well as the Olompali People. This group, which meets quarterly, operates on a very small budget, but is building capacity to take on a larger support role.

At the state level, the march toward closure has begun. Closing parks will mean moving people around—not laying off real people, but giving up about 225 of some 500 vacancies in the system over the coming year. The intent is to have all 70 parks closed by July of 2012 unless partners come forward to help keep parks open.

Ruth Coleman, Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, testified at an oversight hearing conducted by Assemblyman Huffman at Spring Lake Regional Park in Santa Rosa on June 10: "It is not possible for the state to keep operating state parks at current levels. There is no way to keep reducing down, down, down on every park. There are 70 parks that we are no longer able to operate." The cost of delayed maintenance also has been building for many years of underfunding. The Legislative Analyst's Office reported at the June 10 hearing that the persistent underfunding of park maintenance over many years to the tune of $120 million annually is now estimated at $1.3 billion. "That backlog could reach $2 billion by 2020."

The closing of parks is not an ideological issue. No particular constituency wants to close parks; rather, there is a groundswell of resistance to the prospect of parks closing up and down California. Several local areas have raised funds to keep lifeguards on beaches and other essential services going in their parks. This apparent support for the parks does not explain, however, the statewide defeat of Proposition 21, the ballot initiative that would have placed an $18 surcharge on vehicle registration to fund the state parks' operation and provide free access to them for California vehicle owners. That proposition passed in Marin County by 63%. Of the 11 counties that supported the tax surcharge, all but two were in the greater Bay Area, from Mendocino to Monterey.

The specter of a closed park creates more questions than answers, and no easy solutions. Across the state, the economic cost of closed parks will reveal another, local side of the story: loss of tourism income, and cost of law enforcement and fire protection from illegal activities such as dumping trash, setting campfires or growing marijuana in unsupervised parks. These are only a few examples of the new problems presented to local governments when parks are shut down. As the news sinks in, it is becoming clear that closing parks is not a solution to the people who live near them. In fact, most of the burdens will fall on local communities scrambling to make sense of it all. The Coastal Commission also has chimed in. Executive Director Peter Douglas has stated that closing off access to the coast will require a Coastal Commission permit!



Dru Parker

A day of fishing at China Camp State Park

Assemblyman Huffman sees the issue as both a short term and a long term challenge, and at this time he is focusing on immediate solutions. "A world class state park system is not an expendable item," Huffman said. The California State Parks Foundation's action wing—Save Our State Parks—is waking up awareness on this issue. Environmentally-based groups in the North Coast and Sonoma County have already formed an Alliance; members showed up and testified at Huffman's hearing on June10. The benefits of California's parks to generations of users are being expressed over and over in editorials and testimonies. The relevance of parks for low-income families comes up in every discussion, making the parks also a social

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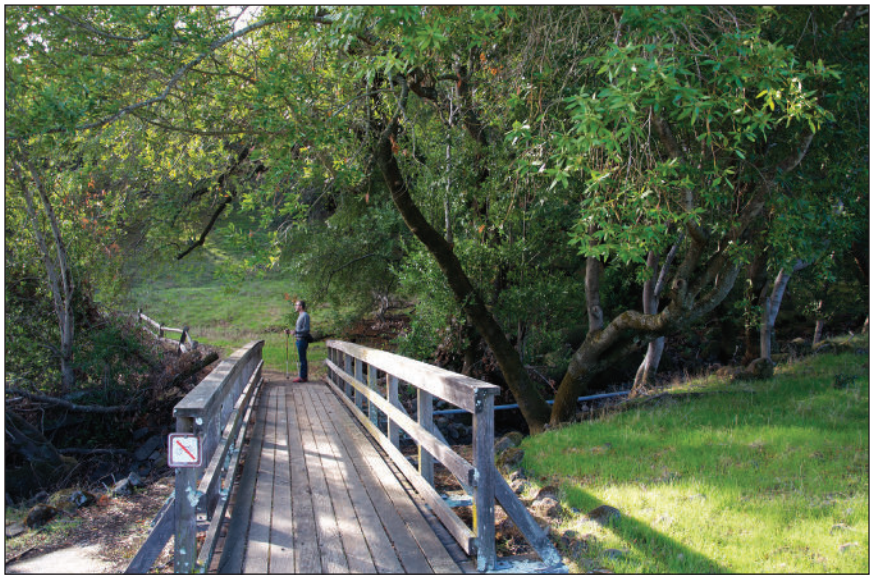

©Punkture, Flickr Creative Commons

Olompali State Historic Park

State Parks *from Page 6*

justice issue.

Huffman also wants to envision longer-term solutions, especially as governments focus more and more on downsizing. He wonders, for example, how we might "stop looking at false boundaries" between various park entities and recreation areas and devise a common management of public lands. "Do we really need four land stewards (in Marin County)? There's got to be a more efficient way to protect and maintain public lands. Out of the cooperative funding that is evolving could come fresh approaches to safely and intelligently preserve the natural landscape for public access."

In the Marin District, the four State Parks will be open with their usual hours through Labor Day 2011.

Regional cooperation is currently under discussion among the land management agencies in Marin County, Representatives of Point Reyes National Seashore, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Marin County Parks, and Marin Municipal Water District have been meeting to explore county-wide cooperation. The new Coalition held a strategy meeting August 17 and will initiate further public meetings. Huffman acknowledges that a fully cooperative trend will take a few years to manifest. "For the time being, the job is patching holes in the sinking ship of state. For the longer view, the job is a whole new ship."

In the Marin District, the four state parks will be open with their usual hours through Labor Day. Following that weekend, the schedule for full or partial closure for individual parks remains to be determined. After that, it is unclear what will take place. The permanent closure, reflecting deeper budget cuts, would happen in July of 2012.

A proposed operating agreement has been under discussion for more than a year between Tomales Bay Oyster Company (TBOC) and the Marin District's Tomales Bay State Park at Millerton Point. According to preliminary terms, the oyster company would take over maintenance of the parking area in exchange for setting up picnic tables and a grill available to overflow traffic from the oyster company's facility a half mile away. TBOC would maintain toilets, cut grass, pick up trash. This arrangement, which would keep Millerton open year-round, has raised the concerns of environmental organizations and many others who view the arrangement as commercial exploitation, with likely impacts on traffic and on the park resources.

The most recent offer to surface is the proposal by another private company, Lagunitas Brewing Company of Petaluma, to operate Samuel P. Taylor State Park. The implications of commercial-state partnerships could be precedent-setting and will require full public discussion. At this writing, no formal proposal had been received by the State Parks Marin District.

Nona Dennis receives EAC's Peter Behr Award

MCL's Nona Dennis, past President 2008—2011, received the Environmental Action Committee (EAC) of West Marin's annual Peter Behr Steward of the Land award at their annual dinner on June 24 at the Dance Palace in Point Reyes Station. EAC has been active in protecting the environment of West Marin since 1972.

Nona was honored for her involvement in several recent West Marin environmental issues, including Lawson's Landing, Drakes Estero Wilderness, Bill's Trail in Samuel P. Taylor State Park, Salmon Enhancement Plan in San Geronimo Valley, and the Local Coastal Program update, representing Marin Conservation League and working in collaboration with EAC and others.

Congratulations Nona!

REGISTRATION FORM Business—Environment Breakfast: Supervisor Kathrin Sears, Sept. 22, 2011

Name(s) _____

Title/Org. _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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

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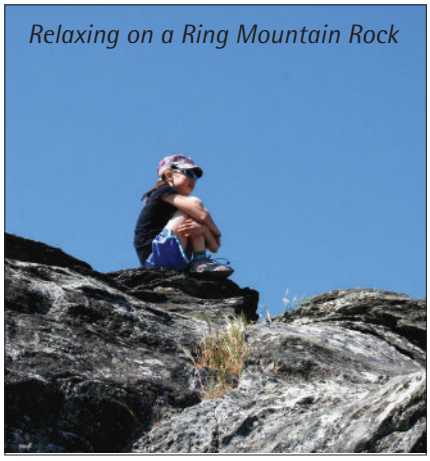
Ticket price includes full breakfast buffet.

Pre-registration required by Sept. 16, 2011

Make checks payable to **MCL** *or pay total due by credit card. Mail form to* **MCL, 1623-A Fifth Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901, or call 415-485-6257.**
Refunds given only if the event is canceled.

Event Roundup

The Ring Mountain Walk Into History on April 30, led by botanist Eva Buxton (left) and MCL's past presidents Jana Haehl and Nona Dennis, drew more than fifty people of all ages to to this very special open space preserve.



Relaxing on a Ring Mountain Rock

Walk photos by Tim Rosenfeld. Picnic photo by Laura Schifrin

On July 30, nearly 90 picnickers converged on the MCL office for the annual Picnic on the Porch. The barbecue featured grass-fed beef from Marin Sun Farms and Let's Be Frank dogs, fruit pies from Upper Crust Pies, Moylan's beer, and other culinary delights provided by the MCL Board. Film Night in the Park donated the door prize. Next up: The Holiday Party in December, which benefits the Food Bank.

Status Updates *from Page 5*

Other public agencies with responsibilities for waterfront construction, water safety, public access, and water quality include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, San Francisco Bay Conservation & Development Commission, and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. The entire DEIR can be read by visiting www.SFplanning.org.

Local Coastal Program

The County's grueling three-year effort to update the 1981 Local Coastal Program (LCP) is expected to conclude in November. The final series of public hearings before the Planning Commission on the Draft document are scheduled for September 19, October 10, October 24, and November 7 (contingent meeting), with final hearing and adoption on November 14. For MCL's perspectives on the Draft LCP, see www.marinconservationleague.org. To view the Draft LCP text and other documents go to the County's website at www.MarinLCP.org.

SB 375 and the Sustainable Communities Strategy

Following a round of public meetings in each of the nine Bay Area counties to introduce and take public comments on an "Initial Vision Scenario," the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) are preparing alternative scenarios that will be released in the early fall. ABAG's and MTC's "One Bay Area" workshop in Marin County on May 11 received mixed reviews, many of them negative, suggesting that local concerns on housing and land use have not been fully considered in the attempt to guide local growth from a regional level.

See www.marinconservationleague.org. for further details.

New Director Profiles: Fred Holden and Chris Yalonis

Marin Conservation League elected five new Board Members at its Annual Meeting on April 15. Two are profiled here and the rest will be introduced in future issues of the Newsletter.

Fred Holden, Belvedere

Fred has practiced law in San Francisco for 37 years and is a partner in the international law firm, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP. His practice is focused on the purchase, sale and restructuring of financially distressed businesses, especially those based in multiple countries. He has also represented trustees in some of the largest international frauds.

Fred has long been active in California and Marin County environmental issues and has served on the board of directors of Marin Audubon Society, as finance chair and membership chair.

Fred and his wife, Patricia, a graduate of the Environmental Forum of Marin, have two children and have probably hiked every trail in Marin County. A fourth-generation native of Northern California, Fred enjoys virtually every outdoor activity, from triathlons to gardening, and is an avid sailor.

As a child growing up on the California Delta, Fred observed the start of the degradation of that estuary. As a surfer in his college years, he was tarred by the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, a catalyst of the modern environmental movement. As a law student, he assisted in the passage in 1972 of the California ballot proposition that led to the creation of the Coastal Commission.

Chris Yalonis, Fairfax

Chris is a 25 year veteran in market intelligence and stakeholder feedback, strategic planning and sustainability consulting. He is founder and managing partner with Sustainametrics, a sustainability consultancy, which helps businesses, government agencies and colleges green their operations and products/services. (www.sustainametrics.com) He is a board member for the Center for Land Based Learning, one of California's largest non-profit organizations for youth learning in sustainable agriculture.

As a 20 year resident of Fairfax, he has been active in Marin County conservation and recreational programs with Ross Valley School District, Point Reyes National Seashore and GGNRA activities, and the Marine Mammal Center. He has an MBA from Indiana University, a BA (Economics) from Miami University (Ohio), and is a graduate of the Presidio Graduate School in Sustainable Management. He is certified in sustainability assessments and planning, GHG emission foot- printing, energy efficiency and renewables best practices. He is a member of the International Society of Sustainability Professionals.

Saturday, Sept. 17: Coastal Cleanup in Novato, Sausalito, San Rafael

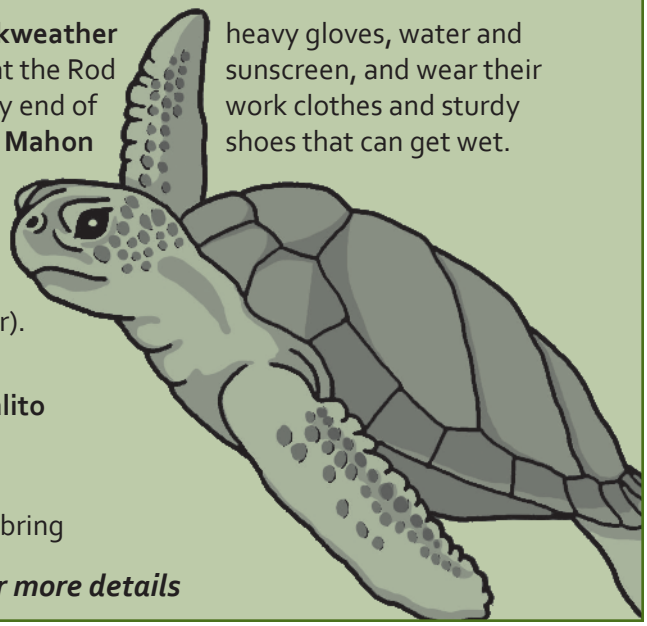
Join MCL on Saturday, September 17 from 9 a.m. to noon for the **27th Annual California Coastal Cleanup.** In 2010, 2,038 volunteers in Marin collected 8,462 pounds of trash over an approximate distance of 90 miles.

MCL will host four locations for the annual cleanup. Novato volunteers will begin at the **Scottsdale Pond Gazebo,** south of Rowland Blvd. on Redwood Blvd.

San Rafael volunteers can meet at either the **Starkweather Shoreline Path** (meet at the Rod and Gun Club at the very end of East Francisco Blvd.) or **Mahon Creek,** (meet at the intersection of Anderson and Lindaro behind San Rafael Corporate Center).

The Southern Marin site will be at the **Sausalito Waterfront,** meeting at the Bay Model.

All volunteers should bring heavy gloves, water and sunscreen, and wear their work clothes and sturdy shoes that can get wet.



Visit marinconservationleague.org/events for more details

SMART *from Page 1*

that MCL opposed SMART when it was presented to the voters in 2006 and again as Measure Q in 2008. MCL was not alone in opposing Measure Q. Simply put, after detailed analysis, MCL found that SMART was not a cost effective system and that there were better, more environmentally friendly ways to invest limited tax money in public transit; the low projected ridership numbers implied that SMART would not have a meaningful impact on either traffic congestion or green house gas emissions.

Ridership projections cut

Three years have passed since Measure Q was passed by a slim margin of a combined Marin and Sonoma two-thirds vote and unfortunately many of MCL's predictions have been confirmed. For example, in June of this year SMART's ridership projection was cut to less than 2000 daily rides, less than half of the 2008 projection. SMART's miniscule ridership projections are not surprising. Ultimately, the success of any commuter rail system, such as SMART, depends on four interrelated factors: 1) the size or critical mass of the population it serves, 2) the destinations it goes to, 3) the frequency of service, and 4) the cost of service. People will not abandon their autos to ride a system that doesn't take them where they want to go, is too costly, takes too long to get them to their end destination or provides infrequent service. SMART, as currently configured, raises issues under each of these factors.

It is doubtful that SMART has the critical mass needed to support commuter rail on a sound financial basis. Marin and Sonoma have a combined population of less than 730,000 dispersed over a wide area. The SMART proposal approved by the voters in 2008 would have had 14 stations serving 10 communities with a population of 422,000. Because of financial problems, the system has been reduced to an "initial operating segment" (IOS) of 9 stations serving 6 communities with 360,000 people. MCL is not aware of any commuter rail system in the U.S. successfully serving such a small population. By comparison, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) has 44 stations serving 24 communities with a total population of 2,700,000. Caltrain has 32 stations in three counties with a combined population of over 3,300,000.

Dru Parker

The smaller multi-use Cal Park Tunnel pathway is popular with both pedestrians and cyclists—but the main bore of the tunnel, which links San Rafael to Larkspur Landing, will remain closed to SMART until additional funding is identified.

More than any other factor, in order to succeed a rail system must take people to and from their jobs. The success of BART is attributable to the fact it takes tens of thousands of commuters each day to and from their jobs in the major employment centers of downtown San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley. While BART also serves many other important regional destinations, such as airports, universities, government centers, and shopping districts, the bulk of its ridership comes from taking people to and from their jobs. Likewise, Caltrain serves major job centers in San Francisco, San Jose and the Silicon Valley. In contrast, SMART would not serve any major employment center and has few real destinations. SMART will go to the San Rafael and other, smaller transit centers, where riders could transfer to buses that go to other locations. But the bus ride from the San Rafael transit center to downtown San Francisco, for example, takes a minimum of 45 minutes, plus waiting time (and another fare), making it unlikely many people would use SMART to get to jobs in San Francisco. Notably, the connection to the Larkspur ferry, which would have provided a direct, relatively quick link to San Francisco, has been dropped from SMART's initial operating segment.

More than any other factor, in order to succeed a rail system must take people to and from their jobs.

SMART's funding problems

Since 2008, SMART has repeatedly revised its financial analysis, most recently in August, and each revision has been for the worse. There is no reason to believe SMART's financial problems will get better any time soon. Like any public transit system, SMART fares will cover only a fraction of costs, and so success of the system will depend on the availability of substantial government funding. It appears that the sales tax revenues earmarked for SMART are inadequate, and other sources of funding are drying up.

SMART already has been forced to seek additional funding from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Sonoma County Transportation Authority and the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM). MCL, along with other environmental groups such as the Sierra Club Marin Group, objected to TAM's recent gift of $8 million to SMART as violating the

Continued on Page 11

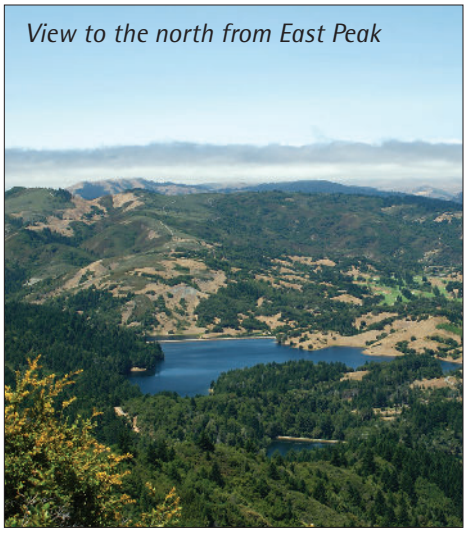
East Peak Design Meeting Sept. 15

The narrow winding road leading to the East Peak of Mt. Tamalpais State Park can be daunting, but the views of Marin and the Bay Area make the trip worthwhile! From 1896 to 1930, the peak was a popular destination from Mill Valley on the Mt. Tamalpais & Muir Woods Railway. The road replaced the railroad, and a vast parking lot of asphalt was installed later. A small snack stand and visitor information building, restrooms, picnic tables, and a ramp to meet accessibility requirements were added over the years. Mt. Tamalpais Interpretive Association recently raised funds to rebuild the car barn in commemoration of the peak's colorful railway history.

Beyond the spectacular views the peak offers limited amenities for visitors, and those facilities that do exist lack design and cohesion. First-time visitors are greeted by a sea of asphalt (right) and parking fee kiosk, and after experiencing the spectacular views are left to wonder: "Where do we go now?" The State Parks Marin District is partnering with the National Park Service in their *"River, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program"* to prepare a new plan for the peak.

Last year, local landscape architecture firms volunteered in an all-day charette (design process) to "improve the visitor experience" on East Peak. The opportunities: remove excess asphalt; create a defined and accessible visitor center (e.g., snack bar, restrooms, interpretive materials, picnic areas, and other amenities); provide for outdoor education; protect natural and historic resources on the site; and others. MCL and other interested organizations were invited to critique the four concepts. From these designs, NPS and District staffs have developed three alternative concepts.

The Park District is inviting the public to give its views of the alternatives at a meeting on **September 15 at the Mill Valley Community Center, from 5:30 to 7:30** (RSVP by September 13 to pcava@parks.ca.gov or 415-898-4362).



View to the north from East Peak

A sea of asphalt greets visitors to the East Peak parking lot

Dru Parker

SMART *from Page 10*

spirit if not the letter of SMART's 2008 promise to Marin voters that it would not raid TAM funds earmarked for local transportation projects. Moreover, shortly after the TAM gift, SMART revealed an additional funding shortfall of $45 million.

Future funding prospects are bleak. The lingering recession and unrelenting budget cutting in Sacramento and Washington have intensified the competition for tax dollars to provide essential government services.

MCL believes that an unbiased, independent review of SMART should be undertaken before the issuance of bonds

Federal, State and regional transportation agencies are all facing drastic cuts and will inevitably need to focus their limited resources on funding the most cost effective transportation projects. SMART will be competing for transportation dollars with BART, Caltrain, and SF Municipal Railway, all of which serve much larger populations and have much larger political constituencies. It is hard to imagine that SMART would come out on top in this competition.

Other obvious solutions to inadequate funding would be to raise fares and/or cut service, but either action would drive people away from the system and back into their cars. Thus, SMART's own ridership projections were lowered when the size of the system was reduced by the IOS. The increasing estimates of the cost to build and operate SMART make it questionable whether the entire system presented to the voters in 2008 will ever get built. In addition to cutting the scale of the system, other targets for cutting might include the bicycle path or measures to mitigate SMART's environmental impact on sensitive wetlands along its route. SMART agreed in August to defer the launch of service by two years so that it can "bank" sales tax revenues and thereby build up its financial reserves.

MCL has not yet taken a position on the recently announced petition drive to put a "Repeal SMART" initiative before the voters. However, in February of this year MCL wrote the SMART board urging it to take a fresh look at the project in view of the substantial funding shortfall and the fact that the project now being promoted is considerably different than the project that was put to the voters. Since SMART had been previously turned down by voters until finally passed, it can be inferred that voters approved the specific project on the ballot and did not intend to give a blank check to the SMART board to build whatever system they can afford. Although SMART and its advocates now argue that they need "flexibility," the voters did not approve flexibility; they approved a specific proposal. As it urged SMART in February, MCL believes that an unbiased, independent review of SMART should be undertaken before the issuance of bonds. MCL will continue its monitoring and analysis of SMART.

David Schnapf is an attorney, Greenbrae resident and MCL board member. For prior documents and positions on SMART, including the 2006 financial analysis, see www.marinconservationleague.org / advocacy/196-smart.html.

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Board of Directors meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 PM and are open to the public.

Staff:

Dru Parker, Operations Manager

Laura Schifrin, Operations Administrator

Contact Information

1623-A Fifth Avenue
San Rafael CA 94901

TEL 415.485.6257

EMAIL mcl@marinconservationleague.org

www.marinconservationleague.org

Committee Meeting Schedule

Land Use and Transportation: 1st Wed. of the month, 9:00 - 11:00 AM

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

Water and Watersheds: 4th Thurs. of the month, 4:30 - 6:30 PM

North Marin Unit (NMU), Climate Action: 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.

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

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San Rafael, CA

September—October 2011

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Ernest Clayton Wildflower Prints
Sale proceeds benefit MCL

In the period from 1938 through 1952, San Anselmo artist and English native Ernest Clayton painted 200 water color studies of California wildflowers, mostly from Marin County. Most of these studies were purchased by the San Francisco Library in the 1950s.

The artist's daughter, Mary Donnelly, was active on MCL's Board. Her daughters, Nancy Praetzel and Eugenia Herr, who used to accompany their grandfather on his specimen-collecting hikes, have now issued a series of these beautiful studies as giclee prints.

Twelve prints, including the three shown here, can be seen and purchased at the MCL office. Each measures 6 x 11 inches and is for sale for **$40**, plus sales tax. These prints make beautiful and unique gifts, and a portion of the proceeds will benefit Marin Conservation League.

Visit marinconservationleague.org/support for additional images or to purchase online.