

## 2012 Community Marin update nears completion

**COMMUNITY MARIN** is a collaboration of environmental non-profits who have been working together since 1990 to establish and advocate mutually-agreed-upon recommendations concerning county-wide planning issues. The result is an environmental vision for future growth in the County—where and how much housing and commercial development would be appropriate; what areas should be protected; and a rate of development consistent with resource capacity.

After three years of effort, the Community Marin working group has now completed its third comprehensive update of the report—“*Community Marin, Our Future...Our Choice*”—that was first published in 1991. The 2012 update is scheduled for release in mid-November. (For further background, see the May-June 2010 *Newsletter* or our Community Marin webpage.)

The make-up of collaborating non-profits has shifted over the years, but most members have continued to participate actively in writing the 2012 update: **Marin Conservation League, Marin Audubon Society, Sierra Club Marin Group, and Marin Baylands Advocates**, with input

*Continued on page 6*

### IN THIS ISSUE—

President's Message—Page 2

Status Updates—Page 3

Vision Forum—Page 4

Bills' Trail—Page 5

"Red-Tape" Committee—Page 6

Events—Pages 8, 9

## MMWD

# Watershed Draft Vegetation Management Plan released



*Invasive French broom is spreading at a rate of thirty acres a year on MMWD lands. In addition to its being a major fire hazard, broom crowds out native plants that serve as critical habitat.*

MMWD

After more than four years of study, Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) has released a **draft plan** that addresses the challenges of managing the District's complex watershed vegetation. The document, titled *MMWD Wildfire Protection and Habitat Improvement Plan: Safeguarding our communities and environment* (WPHIP) builds on the 1995 *Mt. Tamalpais Final Vegetation Management Plan* but incorporates new understanding of the threats facing the watershed. The document describes actions that the District needs to take over the 15 year life of the Plan to minimize fire hazard and maximize ecological health on its watershed lands.

## Challenges of managing MMWD's watershed vegetation

In 1988, the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed was

recognized by UNESCO as one of thirteen protected areas of the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve. More than 900 species of vascular plants (50 of special significance) and 400 species of vertebrate animals (34 of special significance) have been documented on the District's 22,000 acres.

Humans have played a significant role in altering natural communities on Mt. Tam in many ways, most notably altering the fire patterns for the area. Across the country in the past century, relatively modest wildfires have been replaced by infrequent catastrophic fires. Thousands of homes are now at risk within Mt. Tamalpais' lower watershed. In addition, plants that increase this risk have invaded native communities.

These long-standing conditions are now

*Continued on page 10*

## A Message from the President—In support of Measure A



**M**CL's work to pass Marin County Measure A—Protect Open Space, Parks and Farmland—will soon be determined in the ultimate voter survey—the election. As with most ballot

measures—after the election there is more to do. If Measure A passes we will participate in the pleasant job of implementation. If it doesn't pass, we face the grim reality of trying to fill a few of the funding gaps with volunteers. The County already has a large number of dedicated volunteers helping to maintain its parkland and open space preserves, so finding more would not be easy. The farmland agricultural easement acquisition program, which has kept West Marin relatively free of urban development, would be set way back, if not stymied altogether if we lose on November 6. If you get this before the polls close—**please VOTE YES on Measure A.**

After many years at the charming but inefficient converted Craftsman residence on Fifth Avenue, MCL's office has moved to a new, modern office space at 175 North

Redwood Drive in San Rafael. Off Smith Ranch Road, take a left turn at the stoplight near AAA and you will be on North Redwood Drive. Proceed up the road and you will see the Rafael North Executive Park on your left. We are in the center 175 building, Suite 135. Most meetings, including the Holiday Party (December 14), will be in one of the two conference rooms across the hall from the ground floor office. There is plenty of parking. Our summer Picnic on the Porch will morph into Picnic on the Patio. The new site has a lot of advantages, including being cleaner, safer, drier and cheaper.

Please stop by, come to a meeting or attend the Holiday Party and become familiar with MCL's new home.

The coming of the Holidays doesn't seem to offer a break in the number of meetings we have to attend and documents that need comments. Many things are scheduled through the end of the year. These include the Marin General Hospital EIR (Environmental Impact Report), the Marin County 2012 Housing Element and EIR, San Rafael Council hearing



Dru Parker

*The courtyard at the new MCL office in North San Rafael*

on the San Rafael Airport Sports Facility and final EIR, an EIR on the Port Sonoma dredge material transfer to Carneros River Ranch, the Final EIR on GROSS Field expansion and finalizing recommendations on the Local Coastal Program. MCL has a wonderful board of directors with very talented people who pretty much share responsibility for following the many projects and studies.

I hope to see you at the Holiday Party on December 14!

*Susan Stoupe*

### Marin Conservation League's 2012 Holiday Celebration

Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup>  
4:00—7:00 pm

175 N. Redwood Drive, San Rafael

Please RSVP at [marinconservationleague.org/events](http://marinconservationleague.org/events) or  
call 415-485-6257.

This party is open to all members, their friends, and family.

Hors d'oeuvres and wine will be served.

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

### Interested in joining the MCL Board?

MCL's Nominating Committee, chaired by Vicki Nichols, is now looking for candidates for the MCL Board. Terms begin mid-April. Please contact the MCL office at 415-485-6257 or [md@marinconservationleague.org](mailto:md@marinconservationleague.org) if you would like the opportunity to continue MCL's 78-year old mission to preserve, protect and enhance the natural assets of Marin County.



## Status Updates

### Good News for State Parks

Two bills that promise some reprieve for Marin's State Parks were signed by the Governor recently. **Assembly Bill 1478** (Blumenfield) will return the "found" \$20.5 million to keep parks open, address critical maintenance issues, and provide matching funds to the individuals and entities that made donations to State Parks. It establishes a two-year moratorium on closing parks through fiscal year 2013-14. It also establishes criteria for selecting members on the State Parks Commission, including experience and skills in business, nonprofit management, conservation, cultural and historic resource management, park professional management, and other qualifications. **Assembly Bill 1589** (Huffman) is an attempt to help solve the budget challenges facing the department, explore alternative revenue streams, and limit the number of state park closures. It also requires the department to develop an action plan that includes revenue generating opportunities. Further details on how the two bills will be implemented will be forthcoming.

### San Rafael Airport Recreational Facility

The **San Rafael City Council's** hearing on the Final EIR and merits of this proposed 84,500 square foot indoor soccer complex is

still to be scheduled, probably in November or December. An earlier hearing was postponed pending resolution of a potential conflict of interest on the part of Mayor Gary Phillips, who keeps his airplane at the airport. The mayor was cleared of conflict, and a new date for the hearing is pending. MCL, Marin Audubon Society, Gallinas Creek Defense Council, and others have long opposed the massive project in this location, which is constrained by endangered species habitat on one side and airport safety issues on the other, and by its location in diked historic tidelands.

### Port Sonoma Dredge Material Transfer to Carneros River Ranch

Late last year MCL joined with other non-profits to appeal the decision of the **Sonoma County Board of Zoning Adjustments** to issue a permit without preparing an EIR for a project that would transfer up to 20 million cubic yards of dredge materials transported by barge and truck to Port Sonoma for disposal on the Carneros River Ranch on Hwy 37. On appeal, the Board of Supervisors agreed to authorize that an EIR be prepared. In the absence of a formal "scoping" period for the EIR, MCL nonetheless recently submitted a letter with a comprehensive listing of issues and questions that should be addressed in the analysis of a project that could continue for

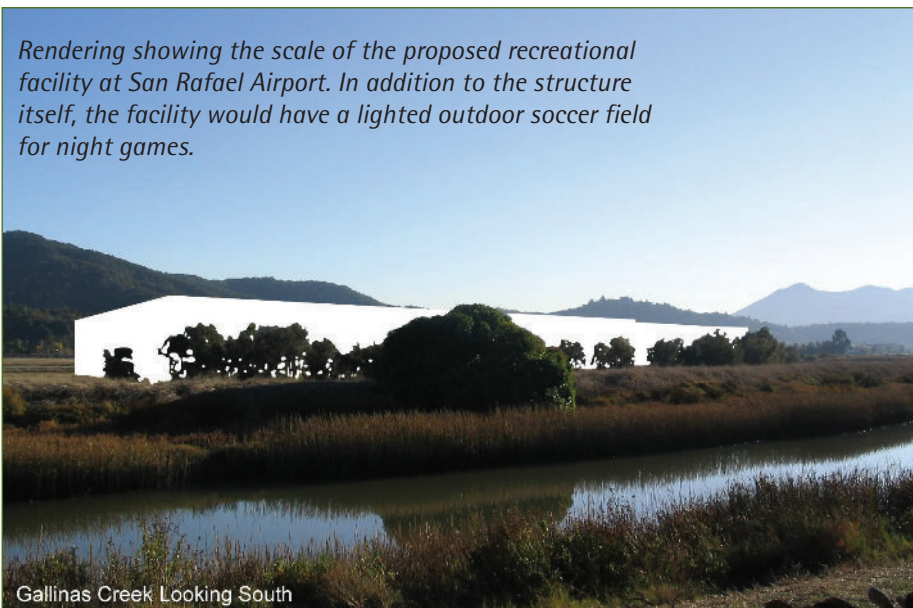
as many as 20 years and raise the elevation of 528 acres of diked historic tidelands from minus-one to plus-seven feet above Mean Sea Level. Issues raised in MCL's letter, among others, include the effects of sea level rise on the project, the loss of future opportunity to restore the area to its historic tidal marsh condition, displacement of existing recreational uses at Port Sonoma by barge traffic, increased truck traffic on Highway 37 and other local highways, air quality impacts from increased barge and truck traffic, and impacts on biological resources of San Pablo Bay. The date for release of the Draft EIR has not been set.

### Supervisors Weigh-in on Draft Local Coastal Program Amendments

At this writing, the Board of Supervisors had begun final deliberations on the **Draft Local Coastal Program Amendments** (LCPA), which have been the subject of more than three years of workshops, 19 hearings before the Planning Commission, many small meetings with interested parties, and thousands of pages of drafts and staff reports. This is the first major update ("Amendment") to the County's LCP since it was certified in 1981. After an initial Board workshop to brief the supervisors on the process and key issues, the first hearing on October 2 focused on the two most controversial LCPA sections—Agriculture and Biological Resources. A second hearing on November 13 will address carry-over *Agriculture* and *Biological Resources*. Further hearings are to be scheduled. Final Board approval of the LCPA will carry over into early 2013.

County staff has made a notable effort to reach out to agricultural, environmental, and other community interests to resolve differences in the final stages of the planning process. In turn, MCL has collaborated with **Marin Audubon Society** and **Environmental Action Committee of West Marin** in critiquing drafts of the LCP and Development Code Amendments that will implement LCP policies. We continue to argue that some policies intended to protect coastal resources, such as standard buffers for streams and

*Rendering showing the scale of the proposed recreational facility at San Rafael Airport. In addition to the structure itself, the facility would have a lighted outdoor soccer field for night games.*



Gallinas Creek Looking South

From MCL files

*Continued on page 11*

## *Future of Marin*

# Public forum looks at environment, equity, climate

by Marge Macris

**H**ow will Marin County change over the next 40 years? Will we continue to protect environmental resources, broaden housing choices, and adapt to climate change? Or will we be clogged with traffic and inundated by the rising Bay?

The message from speakers and the public at the September 19 forum at the San Rafael Community Center, *Choosing the Future We Want: Environmental, Equity and Climate Solutions for Marin* was that we can solve the problems facing us, but it will take careful planning, cooperation, and investment. Sponsors of the forum were the **Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative, Sustainable Marin, Sustainable San Rafael, Marin Conservation League, Marin County League of Women Voters, and Marin TV/Channel 26.** Third District Supervisor **Kate Sears** was moderator and some 170 people attended.

**Nona Dennis**, former MCL President, spoke about Marin's history of effectively planning to protect wetlands, ridgelines, and agriculture, while concentrating development in city-centered locations. She emphasized that there are limits to growth, because of public parklands, geography, water supply, and transportation. When asked to predict what Marin will be like in 2035, she envisioned a "soft" adaptation to rising sea levels, with the formation of a gradually sloping Bay shoreline that creates new wetlands, rather than extensive levees.

**Bob Brown**, former Community Development Director for San Rafael, talked about how good land use and transportation can reduce carbon pollution and curb climate change. We are threatened by drought, fires, weather disasters, and sea level rise. Smart Growth, mandated by State legislation, can reduce these threats with less land consumption, fewer vehicle miles traveled, and less cost to homeowners, even with modest increases in density. Demographic changes—fewer families with young children, more singles, more elderly—demand provision of different types of housing.

**Betty Pagett**, housing advocate with the

Marin League of Women Voters, recommended actions to increase the supply of affordable housing, especially for Marin's workforce whose commute from elsewhere adds to traffic congestion. These included local contributions to the financing of housing, jobs/housing mitigation fees, action to encourage second units, support for agricultural workers' housing, and rezoning to higher densities.

**John King**, the *San Francisco Chronicle's* Urban Design Critic, emphasized that relatively dense and walkable communities are part of the Bay Area's tradition, including in Marin town centers. They are part of the fabric that people appreciate about where we live. He recommended planning for a vibrant urbanism as distinct as is the natural setting, stressing not just density and sustainability, but also the fine-grain architectural richness of place.

Comments from the audience covered a wide range of issues. Several stressed the need for more affordable housing and the problems in getting it developed. Some raised concerns about the effects of development on traffic, schools, water supply, the tax base, and community character. Other questions included how to encourage green businesses, how to involve students in the discussion of environmental issues, and what actions individuals can take to reduce our ecological footprint. Some decried the lack of urgency in addressing the effects of climate change.

The sponsoring groups organized the forum primarily as a local response to the requirements of State legislation **AB 32** (California Global Climate Solutions Act, 2006) and **SB 375** (California "Anti-sprawl Act," 2008), which will require revisions to local general plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by linking land use to public transit. The One Bay Area plan (also called Plan Bay Area) is being prepared by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission, for the San Francisco Bay region. The resulting Sustainable Communities Strategy will be completed in December, with public hearings early in 2013.

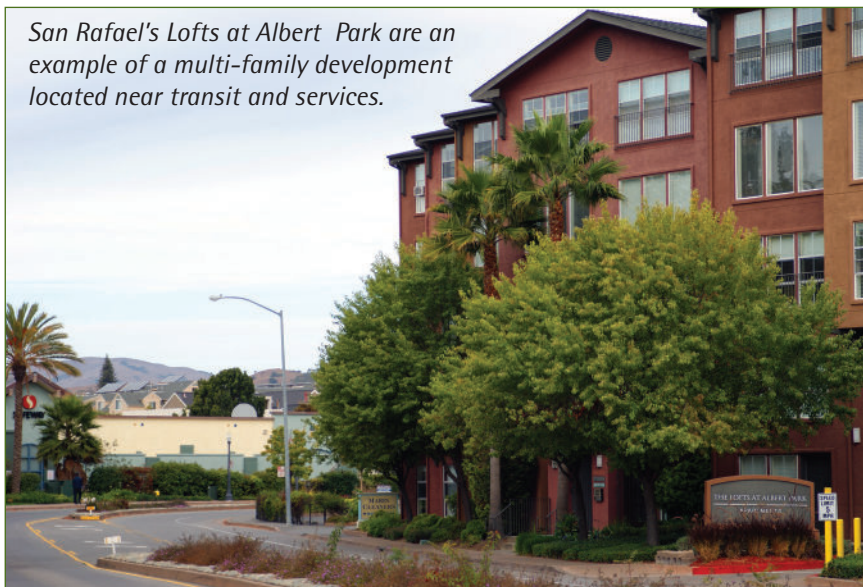
*Public meetings held by ABAG have not been productive.*

Public meetings held by ABAG on the One Bay Area plan have not been productive. Disruptive crowds, many from outside Marin, objecting to a perceived violation of local planning control, have interrupted speakers and prevented discussion of the issues. ABAG and MTC staff and their consultants have been ill-prepared to answer even thoughtful questions about the process.

The September forum, locally financed and controlled, was the first open and civil discussion of this important topic in Marin. The issues of planning, density, and local control are important and controversial. Transit-oriented development, with higher densities near transportation and other services, can have adverse effects on nearby communities as well as positive benefits. There are local examples of high-density infill development that are notorious eyesores as well as models

*Continued on page 7*

*San Rafael's Lofts at Albert Park are an example of a multi-family development located near transit and services.*



Dru Parker



# Mountain bikes greenlighted for Bill's Trail in Samuel P. Taylor State Park

Three years have elapsed since MCL successfully challenged the State Department of Parks and Recreation's ("State Parks") decision to open the almost four-mile Bill's Trail in Samuel P. Taylor to mountain bike use without adequate environmental review (see September–October 2009 *Newsletter*). Among other environmental sensitivities, Devil's Gulch is designated as critical habitat for the threatened steelhead trout and endangered Coho salmon. In response to MCL's challenge, State Parks prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report in 2010, but due to technical errors and inadequacies, they re-circulated a revised DEIR for public comment in 2011. MCL identified continuing inadequacies in the DEIR in October 2011.

One year later, the Final EIR was released (September 2012), responding to almost 600 comments and mitigating all significant impacts to less than significant levels. The FEIR gives the "green light" to the Marin District of State Parks to modify the trail for use by mountain bikes in addition to the walkers and equestrians that now frequent the trail. Although the project has been approved, it cannot be constructed until the necessary funds—about \$350,000—are available to make proposed structural changes. Since the Park is currently being operated with National Park Service funds from a surcharge on the Muir Woods National Monument entrance fee, no one knows when this might occur.

For those unfamiliar with the area, this well-used foot path built in the late 1980s originates along the banks of Devil's Gulch in

*Bill's Trail is a perfect day-hike for families and older hikers.*

Samuel P. Taylor State Park, about a mile from the Park entrance and a half-mile upstream from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Rising at a gentle grade, the path traverses steep, heavily wooded slopes in a series of switchbacks to terminate at the 1,120-foot elevation juncture with Barnabe Fire Road. Bill's Trail is a perfect day-hike for families and older

hikers. It is also used by equestrians using the long-established horse camp below and, illegally, by mountain bikes.

MCL's objections to multiuse of the trail began more than 20 years ago, not long after the trail was built. The FEIR claims that its original 48 inch tread was built to accommodate bike use. User conflicts were evident at that time, however, and it was closed to bikes. Over the years it became, de facto, a narrow foot-path as cut-banks sloughed and vegetation encroached into the tread width. The Marin District of State Parks had been studying opportunities to modify selected narrow trails to multi-use standards so as to accommodate mountain bikes in addition to hikers and horses. Bill's Trail was seen as one such opportunity. The process to make this happen began in about 2007.

Although the CEQA process has concluded and the project has been approved, bikes cannot use the trail until it has been reconstructed to improve line-of-sight, restore a 48-inch tread, and install devices to control bike speed. For this purpose, about 100 logs or rocks are proposed to be placed perpendicular to the trail to form "pinch points" and "sinuosity," design features whose intent is to break speed. The FEIR concludes that these and other modifications will mitigate the safety issue and meet standards for safe multi-use.

On the basis of long experience with close encounters between bikes and other users that compromise safety, MCL and others do not agree with these conclusions. Since bike locomotion differs dramatically from that of either hikers or equestrians and can

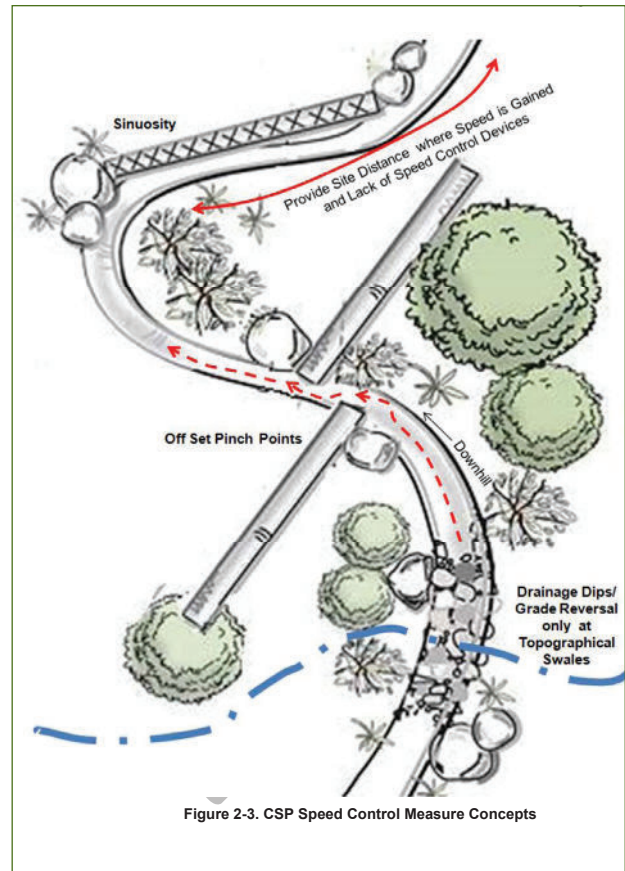


Figure 2-3. CSP Speed Control Measure Concepts

Source: California State Parks "Draft Trail Use Conflict Study," Alta Planning + Design

*"Pinch-points" to control bike speed are created by placing rocks or logs perpendicular to the trail.*

be hazardous to both, change in use will mean creating unsafe conditions as well as increasing wear and tear on the trail and disrupting adjacent habitats such as the critical fish habitat in Devil's Gulch. The likely consequence of increased bike use is that other users, particularly equestrians, will find the trail too hazardous to use and will be displaced as they have been at China Camp State Park, where bikes are allowed on all trails. In MCL's view, the FEIR should have adopted the "No Project Alternative" that is always required to be addressed in an EIR—that is, leaving the trail in its present condition with routine minor maintenance only and continuing to prohibit bikes.

MCL, Marin Horse Council, Tamalpais Conservation Club, and other critics are currently evaluating mitigation measures and other recommendations in the FEIR and will follow the project closely with local State Park officials.

## Can a citizens' advisory committee improve the County's review process?

By Nona Dennis

On May 22, the Marin Board of Supervisors agreed to appoint a citizens advisory committee to evaluate various strategies to facilitate review of development applications that are submitted to the County. In describing the purpose of such a committee, the Community Development Agency (CDA) staff report used terms like "reducing bureaucracy," "streamlining CEQA," "a more timely review of development proposals," "greater efficiencies in permit-related services", and "procedural incentives" for applicants whose projects implement Countywide Plan goals. The committee would meet monthly for six to eight months and bring back recommendations to be factored in with ongoing CDA initiatives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the County's transactions with customers in a time of reduced budgets and staff resources.

The need for such a committee, although never explicit, appeared to be linked to the April 10 withdrawal by Lucasfilm of its application to develop a large production facility on Grady Ranch. Other forces have also been at work in the move to "streamline" development review in the County. Among them are recurring attacks on CEQA statewide that were fended off in closing weeks of the 2012 legislative session but promise to return in 2013. Local CEQA critics see that as an opportunity to take on the County's CEQA guidelines, in MCL's view a misdirected search for cause. Further, housing advocates, both local and statewide, have been working aggressively to reduce regulatory impediments to infill and affordable housing, such as by placing increased emphasis on design guidelines and other criteria to enable ministerial

review of projects. While the need for workforce housing is real, projects should not be pursued at the expense of either the environment or open public process.

Twelve members of the committee have been selected by CDA staff and Supervisors, a consultant has been retained to facilitate meetings, and the first meeting was scheduled for October 31. The committee also has received an official name—the Regulatory Improvement Advisory Committee (RIAC)—and an unofficial one—the "Red-Tape Committee." The selected committee members represent a range of community interests, including social equity, building industry, County Planning Commission, environment, sustainability, agriculture, business, housing, architecture and engineering, and others.

Although a scope of work had not been distributed, it is likely that it will address four principal areas: 1) improvements to implementing CEQA in unincorporated Marin; 2) improvements in permit review and customer service; 3) facilitating permit review for projects that implement Countywide goals and policy objectives; and 4) possible fee reductions or waivers for projects that reflect public policy goals and represent targeted industries in Marin.

*In the long run, CEQA has played a positive role in Marin County.*

MCL will monitor the committee's deliberations with considerable interest. We have a particular concern that CEQA remain an effective part of the County's review procedures. Even as CEQA has become increasingly complex, driven by case law, it has accomplished what no other law before it could—i.e., comprehensive assessment of environmental impacts of projects before they could be approved; full disclosure of impacts, mitigations, and alternatives on which to base informed public decisions; and a tool for the public to understand and comment on proposed projects and to hold elected

officials accountable for their decisions. In the long run, CEQA has played a positive role in Marin County. It has been well-managed and has not been abused, even though MCL has not always agreed with EIR conclusions.

We do not deny that periodic review of county procedures is healthy, and in a time of tightening budgets, procedural efficiencies are necessary. Terms like "efficiency" and "streamlining" also can lead to erosion of public access to decision-making. A recent statement from California Native Plant Society echoes our concerns: "Too many people think CEQA is just about protecting animals and plants. It's really about protecting our role in self-government and our quality of life."

## Community Marin *from Page 1*

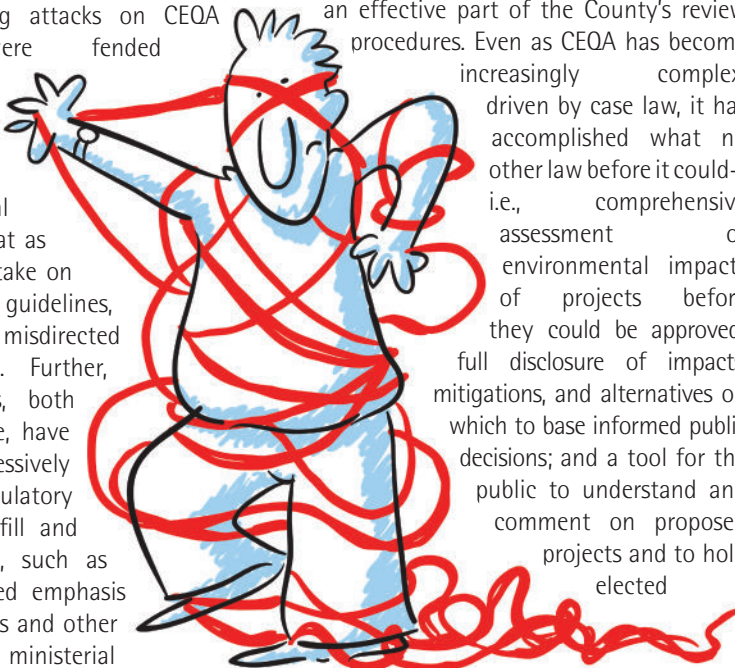
from **Environmental Action Committee of West Marin** and others, all under the leadership of **Marge Macris**, former Marin County Planning Director and a principal author of the 1991 Community Marin report. As with that first report, the 2012 update provides policy recommendations to guide planners, elected officials, and citizen groups in making environmentally sound decisions about complex issues of transportation, housing, community development, environmental protection, agricultural preservation, and the economy.

## Relation to 2007 Countywide Plan

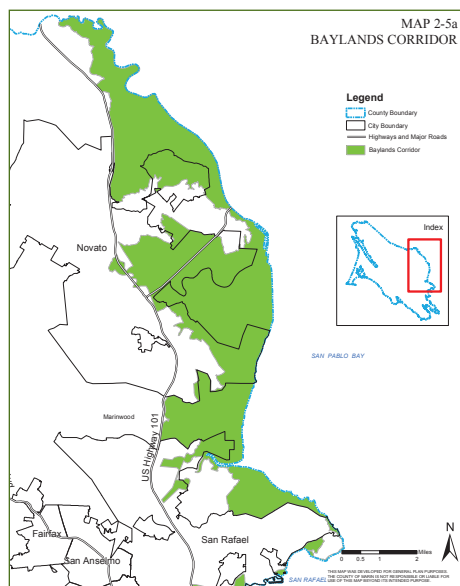
Prior to the current effort, the most recent update of Community Marin was in 2003. It played a key role in shaping the **2007 Countywide Plan (CWP)**. Many of the recommendations in Community Marin 2003 were adopted in the 2007 CWP, notably the incorporation of a fourth County corridor—a "Baylands Corridor"—to ensure protection of the shoreline and the diked historic tidelands of San Pablo and San Francisco Bays. Community Marin's recommendation of a reasonable cap on future development of the historic and resource-diverse lands of St. Vincents and the Silveira family was included. Other recommendations involving protections of streams, wetlands, and other habitats were reflected in 2007 CWP policies.

Community Marin 2003 also recommended reducing the amount of new commercial, retail, and industrial development in the

*Continued on page 7*



## Community Marin *from Page 6*



*Community Marin's input resulted in the inclusion of the Baylands Corridor in the 2007 Marin Countywide Plan*

county to reduce the need for additional worker housing. These recommendations were not fully reflected in the 2007 CWP, however, and as a consequence, the questions of future growth and build-out, remain unresolved.

### Changing Conditions

In response to changing conditions and needs, the Community Marin group embarked upon another major revision in 2009. That effort has stretched into 2012—a reflection of the deliberative and consensus-based process that the working group follows.

#### *Climate change requires planning now for adaptation to future sea level rise*

Foremost among new planning issues in the 2012 revision is the recognition that climate change requires planning *now* for adaptation to *future* sea level rise and other effects of global warming. Even as we pursue strategies to reduce (mitigate) the primary cause of climate change—greenhouse gas emissions—adaptation must be a high-priority and collaborative process among all jurisdictions that have lands and infrastructure vulnerable to sea level rise.

The 2012 Community Marin report also reflects the 2007 CWP's overarching theme

of sustainability. Recommendations include a variety of means to achieve greenhouse gas reductions such as “green” building codes, energy efficiencies, water conservation and efficiency measures, extended product responsibility, prohibition of single-use bags and packaging materials, renewable energy facilities that avoid adverse impacts, future development patterns to reduce auto travel and promote public transit, and many other strategies aimed at reducing Marin's carbon footprint. To counter the continuing upward trend in house size in Marin, the report advocates for establishment of a maximum size for new residences to reduce the impacts of mega-houses on the environment, resource use, and community character.

While acknowledging the need for workforce housing, Community Marin 2012 also continues to advocate for reducing the projected amount of additional growth allowed, especially commercial development, in both city and county plans. Where new development is warranted it should occur only in existing developed areas, enhancing the community-centered character of Marin, while protecting greenbelts and community separators. The report also discourages further “big box” retail centers and encourages the retention of local serving businesses. Public transportation should be designed to serve existing communities and at the same time protect the environment and the county's natural character.

### Looking to the Future

The recommendations above are a sampling from the report's comprehensive “blueprint” for the county in the future. As it has done in previous versions, the report presents recommendations for Areas of Potential Change and outlines a Strategic Action Program to be implemented in the next five years.

The 2012 Community Marin's overriding vision for the future of the County continues to make preservation of the natural environment a priority in all land use and facility planning; it places a high value on human communities that are economically and ethnically diverse and on a thriving agricultural economy that also protects the environment; and it recognizes that the potential for growth is finite and over-development erodes the quality of life.

## Vision Forum *from Page 4*

of good design.

With the understanding that development will always be limited by environmental constraints, we must consider what form future development should take. Some higher density housing, properly planned with minimal impacts on surrounding areas, can provide needed opportunities for workers, singles, and older folks. This is not to say that existing single-family communities will have to change, just that there need to be other options.

One speaker at the end of the Forum was optimistic. He predicted that there will be development near transit stops that blend into the surrounding communities. More people will use improved public and bicycle transportation. Open space and agricultural lands will be protected. Wetlands and other protections against sea level rise will be in place through cooperative planning by the cities and County.

This can happen, as shown by the history of planning in Marin. In 1972 the report *Can the Last Place Last?* established the environmental principles of the Marin Countywide Plan, adopted the following year. The plan, put together by the cities and the County, put forth the principle that environmental constraints, not the market alone, would limit and shape development in Marin.

Some of the 1973 plan's policies were not accomplished. Housing prices continue to be too high to accommodate much of Marin's work force. Public transportation has not been adequately improved. But the environmental vision of the plan, strongly supported by the people who prepared it, was accomplished through careful regulations and open space acquisition.

The next 40 years present a new set of challenges: climate change, sea level rise, an inadequate supply of housing to meet the needs of the workforce and older residents. Our history shows that by working together Marin residents can choose and accomplish the future we want by 2035.

The sponsoring organizations hope to hold another local forum, this time on the draft Sustainable Communities Strategy plan when it nears completion in 2013.

*Marge Macris is a member of Marin Baylands Advocates and serves as Co-Chair, Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative*



## Events

### Tomales Bay State Park kicks off its 60<sup>th</sup> on November 18<sup>th</sup>



Stu Smith

One of MCL's earliest and most important efforts at public land conservation is **Tomales Bay State Park**, which will begin its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on Sunday, November 18 at 10:00 a.m. with an interpretive walk led by naturalist Cathleen Cannon and interpreter Samantha Toffoli at Hearts Desire Beach (pictured). The approximately two-mile walk will take participants from Hearts Desire to Indian Beach, then up to the Entrance Station for some celebratory cake and ice cream, and back down to Hearts Desire. Participants will meet at the picnic tables adjacent the parking lot, and should dress in layers and wear comfortable walking shoes that can get a little wet/muddy. There is some elevation gain and the terrain is not suitable for strollers or children under ten. Sorry, no dogs.

Two more events are scheduled for Saturday, January 12, 2013 (astronomy) and Saturday, March 13, 2013 (kayaking). Visit [parks.ca.gov/tomalesbay](http://parks.ca.gov/tomalesbay) or Facebook (Tomales Bay State Park) for more details.

### A beautiful day for the Leaders' Circle Recognition Event at Landmarks Art & Garden Center

The stunning but little-known Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society Art & Garden Center at 841 Tiburon Blvd. was the setting for *A Witness to History*, MCL's October 13, 2012 Leaders' Circle Recognition Event. Lunch was served to nearly fifty MCL members and their guests on the brick patio of this circa 1870 cottage, believed to be the oldest surviving structure on the Tiburon Peninsula.

After lunch, Marin Master Gardener Jeanne Price gave a tour of the historic brick kiln site, which sits on an acre of carefully restored terraced gardens and boasts an outstanding view of the Bay and Mt. Tam. Historian Dave Gotz then presented an overview of the property and the history of the Tiburon Peninsula.

For more information on how to become a member of MCL's Leaders' Circle and receive an invitation to this annual fall event, please contact the MCL office, 415-485-6257 or [mcl@marinconservationleague.org](mailto:mcl@marinconservationleague.org).



Photos by Dru Parker

*Clockwise from top right: Linda Dahl and Mary Feller; the cast-iron bell originally used as a fire bell for Belvedere; guests on the patio; Charles Brousse and Nona Dennis; Susan Stompe, Doug Lee and Don Dickenson*



## Events

# MCL volunteers take to the shoreline for Coastal Cleanup 2012

More than 57,000 Californians turned out in support of clean beaches and inland waterways at the California Coastal Commission's 28<sup>th</sup> Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day on September 15. They scoured shorelines and inland locations, picking up hundreds of tons of trash and debris at over 850 sites in 55 of California's 58 counties during the three-hour event.

In Marin, 82 volunteers from Marin Conservation League worked at three sites: Mahon Creek in San Rafael, the Bay Model in Sausalito, and Scottsdale Pond in Novato. Many thanks to site captains Vicki Nichols, Sara Sonnet and Susan Stompe and all the

volunteers for continuing to make this important—and fun—event a success.

*Girl Scouts Olivia McCabe, Maya Amyx and Kate Benjamin from Troop 31522 clean the banks of Mahon Creek. In addition to the usual refuse, volunteers found some cash and 75 tennis balls from the nearby public tennis courts.*

Sara Sonnet



## Walk into (Conservation) History #12: Mt. Tam

By David Schnapf

Marin's greatest conservation story—the preservation of Mount Tamalpais—was the focus of MCL's twelfth *"Walk into Conservation History"* held on September 22, 2012. Many in Marin take our abundant open space for granted, but at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Mt. Tam, like most of the county, was entirely in private ownership. The vision, persistence and dedication of scores of people over the ensuing decades changed this, and now almost the entire mountain is open to the public, comprising the lands of Muir Woods National Monument and Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), Mt. Tamalpais State Park, and the Marin Open Space District (Marin County Parks).

The Mt. Tam walk was scheduled this year to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the MMWD and the Tamalpais Conservation Club (TCC), both of which played major roles in the preservation of the Mountain and, fittingly, both helped out with the walk.

Starting the beautifully sunny morning at Rock Spring, the group of about 40 made the short walk to the Mountain Theater where we heard stories from the history of the Mountain Play (founded in 1913) from Nancy Skinner of the Mount Tam Interpretive Association (MTIA), and learned about William Kent from David Schnapf of MCL. Kent, three-term

California Congressman who moved to Marin as a child in 1871, was instrumental in the creation of Muir Woods National Monument, MMWD, the Mountain Theater, Mt. Tam State Park, Save the Redwoods League and TCC, donating land, money and personal effort to these ventures. While the conservation history of the Mountain involved many people over many decades, no one played a bigger or more important role than Kent.

After a stroll down Easy Grade to Bootjack, the group heard from Arlin Weinberger and Karl Baek (both from MTIA and members of MCL as well) about the creation of Mt. Tam State Park and the "crookedest" Mill Valley & Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway that carried passengers from Mill Valley to East Peak from 1897 to 1930 and, via a spur, to Muir Woods. We then headed up the "Old Stage Road" to the West Point Inn, located at the westernmost curve of the rail line, where we learned about the history of MMWD in a lively talk delivered by Jack Gibson, MMWD director



Tim Rosenfeld

### The group sets out from Rock Spring

and unofficial District historian. Completing the program, Larry Minikes, President of TCC, described some of the challenges the mountain faces over the next 100 years.

Those interested in learning more about the conservation history of Mt. Tam may be interested in two excellent new books on the subject: *To Save A Mountain—The 100-Year Battle for Mt. Tamalpais*, by Barry Spitz, sponsored by the TCC in honor of its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and *Mount Tamalpais and the Marin Municipal Water District*, by Jack Gibson. Both books are available at Marin County bookstores.



The view from Mt. Tam, yesterday and today



Historic photo courtesy of the Lucretia Little History Room, Mill Valley Public Library; contemporary photo by Tim Rosenfeld

## MMWD *from Page 1*

being exacerbated by climate change and other factors. The structure and function of watershed ecosystems are being reconfigured, and native flora, fauna and habitat have been negatively impacted. Fire hazard is increasing as Sudden Oak Death (SOD) continues to advance, leaving thousands of dead trees as fuel in its wake.

### *Draft Plan goals and actions*

The **Marin Conservation League's Water and Watershed Committee** featured the District's Draft WPHP at its October 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. (See also March–April 2009 and January–February 2011 *Newsletters* for related stories, and [marinwater.org](http://marinwater.org).) Janet Klein, Vegetation Ecologist and MMWD Resource Management Program Director, outlined the goals of the Plan and two main Alternatives that will be examined in the Environmental Impact Report, which is currently underway. She also described the Mt. Tam BioBlitz program in which MMWD is collaborating with the California Academy of Sciences to catalogue the plant diversity of the watershed that is gradually being displaced by invasive non-native plants.

The Draft WPHP, as presented by Janet, identifies 38 management actions designed to minimize fire risk and protect the ecological values on District lands. An essential

component of the plan, not surprisingly, is weed control. Recent monitoring shows 1,200 acres of French broom that is currently spreading at a rate of at least 30 acres per year on District lands. Therefore, eight of the recommended actions deal directly with controlling invasive weed species, particularly French broom, a highly flammable species that chokes out native plants and wildlife. The expansion of broom has increased MMWD's fuel loading and fuel break maintenance costs, altered ecosystem processes, and decreased both habitat value and recreational access. Combined with the effects of climate change and landscape-scale disease, these destructive processes continue to threaten biological diversity as well as the safety of surrounding communities.

### *Alternative Approaches*

The District employs a basic "Integrated Pest Management (IPM)" approach to weed control. This widely-used program identifies all available methods for managing weeds with the least possible hazard to people and the environment. The Draft WPHP evaluates twenty-five control methods, including hand pulling, mowing, prescribed burning, flaming, mulching, grazing, pressurized water, hot foam, and several herbicides.

Two alternative approaches to controlling broom based on IPM are presented in the Draft Plan and will be the subject of the EIR analysis. Both use combinations of

mechanical equipment, hand labor, and prescribed fire. The principal difference between them is that Approach 1 also would employ formulated organic herbicides, such as naturally occurring compounds like vinegar and clove oil, and Approach 2 would employ limited amounts of three conventional chemical herbicides—glyphosate, triclopyr, and/or clopyralid—in combination with two possible surfactants to increase absorption.

The three chemical herbicides were selected after extensive research based on District needs and environmental effects. (See [marinwater.org](http://marinwater.org) for background reports.) Thirty herbicide-use restrictions would be instituted

to protect water quality and minimize risk to people and the environment. These restrictions include limitations on quantity and frequency of use, timing, and proximity to water and other sensitive resources, as well as requirements for applicator training, reporting, and public notification.

According to the Draft Plan, Approach 1 can achieve some but not all of the identified goals and objectives. Eighty-nine percent of the fuel break system would be completed and few weed elimination goals would be

### *The Plan must simultaneously protect people, property and habitat*

met; the total acreage of broom infestation would increase by approximately 300 acres over 15 years. The cost of this approach is estimated at almost \$5,600,000 per year.

Approach 2 comes closer to achieving goals and objectives. The entire fuel break system would be completed, and the weed management targets met; that is, the total area infested by broom would decline by approximately 165 acres over 15 years. Implementation cost is estimated at nearly \$1,600,000 per year.

The Draft WPHP identifies surrounding areas that are most at risk from a wildfire originating on District lands and recommends completing the cross county fuel break system (an interagency project currently in progress) and some 50 distinct fuel break projects.

The Plan also focuses on protecting biological resources and ecosystem functions on largely undisturbed watershed lands that are connected to other extensive tracts of protected open space. These areas provide critical migration corridors and refuge for species as they adapt and move in response to changes in their environment, such as the spread of forest diseases (SOD) and non-native species ("ecosystem disruptors").

### *Setting Priorities*

The Draft Plan prioritizes actions by defining five vegetation management zones that differ in ecosystem functions, degree of disturbance, and management needs. Fortunately, 90% of the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed (Zone 1) consists of high-quality habitat and biological value with minimal human disturbance and weed invasion.

*Continued on Page 11*



Top—Monarch by McBeth; Bottom—Western Tiger Swallowtail by Len Blumin; both from flickr Creative Commons

*The Monarch (Danaus plexippus) and the Western Tiger Swallowtail (Papilio rutulus) butterflies are found on MMWD lands. These pollinators require specific native plants on which to lay eggs—plants that are being replaced by invasive broom. A 1992 study pinpointed French broom as responsible for reducing arthropod populations by one-third in the GGNRA.*



## MMWD *from Page 10*

Recommended actions in that Zone call for eliminating isolated broom populations and employing an Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) program to stop emerging weed colonies before they can get a foothold.

The varying conditions, such as service roads, fuel breaks, habitat quality, and level of weed infestation in the other four Zones call for different approaches to weed control. In some zones, control would be limited to reducing fuel load, and in others to preventing the spread of weeds into other zones.

The WPHIP also identifies the need for habitat restoration at seven locations in the Mt Tamalpais Watershed as well as the island in Nicasio Reservoir. Restoration includes re-contouring slopes, rerouting trails, removing accumulated dead plant material, amending soils, and seeding and/or planting native species as needed.

Finally, the Draft WPHIP prioritizes actions in relation to the District's existing resources and focuses on the most important, achievable objectives that will simultaneously protect people and property from wildfire, preserve existing high-quality habitat and significant species, pose minimal risk to the people who work and recreate within the watershed, protect the population that depends on the watershed as its source of water, and also carry out preventive maintenance. To respond to conditions and laws as they change over time, the Plan provides a template for *adaptive management*, i.e. a "learn by doing," approach.

### *Next stage: Draft EIR*

The next step, the Draft EIR, will analyze the environmental effects and mitigations of the two main Alternatives and the many actions that the Plan proposes. The Draft EIR will get underway in early November, and the first public Scoping Session will be held in the near future. The public may sign up for emailed updates at [marinwater.org](http://marinwater.org).

Until the Draft EIR is completed and information can be comprehensively reviewed, MCL does not endorse any particular approach.

## Status Updates *from Page 3*

riparian areas and wetlands, may be too easily "adjusted" downward, thus weakening overall protections of coastal resources. We are also concerned that certain uses such as "intergenerational homes" and large on-farm processing facilities will be permitted on agriculturally-zoned land without adequate environmental review.

The next step will be submittal of the County-approved LCPA to the California Coastal Commission (CCC) for certification, itself a lengthy procedure. Throughout the local process, County staff has communicated with Coastal Commission staff in an attempt to resolve differences that might arise in later review. A number of differences in interpretation of Coastal Act requirements still exist; it remains to be seen how the County's LCPA will be received by the CCC.

### 650 North San Pedro Road ("Baycreek")

On October 16, 2012, the Marin County Board of Supervisors voted 4 to 1 to approve County Development Agency (CDA) staff recommendation for a proposed residential development at 650 North San Pedro Road ("Baycreek") in Santa Venetia.

The final approval allows construction of ten market-rate homes of a modest size and requires payment of in-lieu fees for two affordable units off-site.

MCL last reported on the status of this project in the September–October 2012

*Newsletter*. At that time (June 12, 2012) the BOS had upheld the County Planning Commission's recommendation to deny without prejudice the applicant's proposal for twelve homes plus two second units. (An earlier Planning Commission approval of seven to nine residences was deemed unacceptable by the applicant, who at one time wanted to build 28 homes.) The BOS then gave the applicant the opportunity to meet with Supervisor Susan Adams and the Santa Venetia community to consider revisions that would be agreeable to both sides. Although those meetings resulted in minor tweaks to the plan, no reduction in the number of units was proposed. CDA staff, however, continued to work on a compromise alternative that could address both community concerns and the applicant's objectives, and it was that alternative that the BOS approved. Some issues remain, such as the need to widen the buffer between homes and the on-site wetland.

MCL has tracked this project for more than four years, consistently advocating for a reduction in the number and size of homes on the 14.8-acre site, citing steep topography, flooding history, loss of mature oaks and other trees, heron rookery on the site, and the precedent-setting location of the subdivision at the rural fringe of Santa Venetia between built-up suburban neighborhoods and the open space of China Camp State Park. The local Santa Venetia community made every effort to inform itself of planning issues associated with the site and, in the end, while preferring a lower number of residences, came together to support the staff's recommendation.



*A Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias). This species has been observed nesting at the Baycreek site.*

*James Gaither, Flickr Creative Commons*

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*Board of Directors meetings are held  
the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at  
7:30 PM and are open to the public.*

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Molly Foley, Operations Administrator

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**Committee Meeting Schedule**

*Land Use and Transportation:*  
1<sup>st</sup> Wed. of the month, 9:00–1:00 AM

*Parks and Open Space:*  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs. of the month, 3:00–5:00 PM

*Water and Watersheds:* 4<sup>th</sup> Thurs. of the  
month, 4:30 - 6:30 PM

*Climate Action: 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs., odd-  
numbered months, 6:30–8:30 PM*

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

*Meetings (except for NMU) are at  
the MCL office, conference rooms vary.*

Marin Conservation League was founded in  
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County's natural assets.

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