NEWS FROM MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

November—December 2016

Managing Marin's wildlands

A tale of two plans

Marin County Fire

MCOSD collaborates with Marin County Fire and local fire agencies to reduce fuels, maintain hundreds of acres of fuel breaks, and maintain fire roads for safe passage for firefighting equipment and evacuation in the event of fire.

by Nona Dennis

October marked the release of two long-awaited plans to manage vegetation on the lands of Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD, or District) and the Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD, or County).

MMWD's watershed and the County's open space preserves have much in common: they are wild and remote, and at the same time "urban" in context; they host many of the same plant communities and wildlife habitats; decades of fire suppression have fostered build-up of fire-prone vegetation; both must maintain hundreds of acres of fuel breaks, while endeavoring to hold back the spread of invasive weeds; both are dealing with the continuing scourge of Sudden Oak Death and emerging effects of climate change; four County open space preserves share boundaries with MMWD lands; and the two agencies work closely together. As a consequence, the two agencies' plans share many features.

Many neighborhoods are exposed to risk of wildfire

The plans also differ in three noteworthy ways. Unlike the contiguous expanse of MMWD land, the County's open space preserves are widely dispersed and therefore expose many neighboring communities to the risk of wildfire. To address these scat-

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What's the solution for Hwy 37?

by Susan Stompe

State Route (SR) 37 can be a refreshing drive across a watery shorebird sanctuary or a maddening stretch of traffic if it's NASCAR weekend or during a weekday commute. The highway is an essential funnel for thousands of workers entering and leaving Marin daily. For suppliers, it's a key freight connection between I-80 and Highway 101. It's also a flooding problem waiting to happen with rising sea level. SR 37 crosses thousands of acres of former wetlands being restored to the tides. Sitting in traffic, it's hard not to think about solutions that could address the variety of conditions.

Highway 37 is currently being scrutinized by the four counties it impacts—Solano, Napa, Sonoma and Marin. In 2014, government officials, staff and community interests were

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A Message from the President—On "truth"

"Truth" has been in the media a lot lately. But apart from the presidential election, truth is an interesting topic. The fact is, truths are not always self-evident, and what we each hold true has a lot to do with what we experience. Often what seems to be true from a distance can be very different close-up.

Personal truths and viewpoints in some ways can be compared to a photograph. A photograph depends on the mediation of light. A photograph depends not only on what is seen, but is cognizant of what remains unseen. It isolates and frames. It selects. It's a decision that depends on both focus and framing. And it is relevant to a moment in the continuum of time. (Substitute the word "truth" or "viewpoint" for "photograph" or "it" and you'll see what I mean.)

There is power in people telling their own stories and sharing their views with others, and for others to engage in active listening. MCL, through its public programs (and in its newsletters), actively engages in elucidating topics we've been following. We bring together speakers whose insights are based on unique perspectives and intimate knowledge of place or understanding of a topic. We've found that recent discussions, such as on Ranching in the Park or on managing invasive weeds with the tools of Integrated Pest Management, have enhanced our understanding in a way that isn't possible on the editorial pages of the *Marin IJ* or on social media. As we together engage in hearing different points of view, the narrative can become clearer.

On the other hand, some truths are born of argument. Through advocacy, MCL takes positions, presents argument, and through public process promotes what we believe to be true, while participating with others in planning for our future.

As Günter Grass said, "The job of the citizen is to keep his mouth open." Both through active advocacy and through providing opportunities for information and public discussion, MCL remains focused on its mission of preserving and protecting the natural assets we all share.

As always, MCL welcomes your participation and depends on your support. We look forward to celebrating the holidays with you at our upcoming holiday party, December 2nd.

Kate Powers

Editorial

Ranching in the Park—not by accident

By any measure, MCL's series of workshops on ranching on Point Reyes National Seashore presented this fall has been a success! The first three in the series prompted lively discussions amongst ranchers, both on and off the Seashore, and non-ranchers eager to learn about the daily lives and conditions of ranchers and to better understand the particular conditions of ranching within a national Seashore that also harbors "wilderness" and hosts two million visitors annually. (The fourth workshop, held after deadline for this Newsletter, featured the younger generation of ranchers who are carrying on the traditions of their great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents, but with 21st century interests, knowledge and aspirations.)

The success of the series is testimony to thoughtful planning by two MCL board members: Sally Gale, who understands the rigors of ranching from first-hand experience, and David Lewis, whose technical background and daily work with ranchers as Executive Director of University of California Cooperative Extension, brings broad understanding of how the land "works" and of the people who work the land. They assembled an array of knowledgeable and engaging speakers and designed a flow of relevant topics. Those who attended all of the workshops will come away with a vivid reminder of the unique endowment of resources that makes the Seashore so extraordinary, and new appreciation for the challenges and satisfactions of dairy and beef ranching in that setting.

David Lewis

A breakout group discusses the issues in the second Ranching in the Park workshop .

Workshop #1 was a lesson in the history of Point Reyes National Seashore, from early concepts as a "park" in the

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Ranching *from page 2*

late 1920s, to congressional authorization in 1962 and land purchases in the 1970s that wouldn't have been possible without the ranchers' concurrence, and through decades of shifting national priorities and evolving park management, to the present day. Nature writer John Hart, National Park Service (NPS) historian Paul Sadin, and Professor Laura Watt laid the groundwork for the park's progression from recreational focus to emphasis on conserving natural and historic resources "as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." (1916 Organic Act)

Throughout decades of changing laws, policies, and park personnel, several generations of ranchers continued to ranch and farm land in the pastoral area. At Workshop #2, two of them—beef rancher Ted McIsaac and dairyman Bob McClure, both 4th generation ranchers on park land—described some of the daily, seasonal, and annual demands of a "24/7/365" occupation, for example, feeding, milking, calving, and culling herds; seeding and harvesting silage, and, most important, managing pasture. "The days are not routine," McIsaac told the audience. He added that the rancher's occupation is not raising cattle or cows, but managing pastures, harvesting grass, and improving habitat. To maintain nutritious grasses, for example, McClure rotates his cows among 30 different paddocks.

Other speakers underscored the significance of questions facing today's ranchers: "What's ahead, and how can I survive? What new technologies, new market trends, or regulations are coming along to force me into a new direction?" Somehow ranch families on the Seashore have been able to carry on their traditions with park personnel, and modify their practices as the times and laws and standards have demanded and economics have permitted. The rancher has to love the work and the way of life to offset the low margin of profit. McIsaac and McClure agreed that neighbors are an important part of that way of life; they help each other, and they create community.

Longtime College of Marin professor Joe Mueller brought the perspective of an ecologist to Workshop #3. "Ecological" days and seasons on Point Reyes are defined not by human activity but by physical forces: tides define the days, and winds and currents define the seasons, dictate the climate and, along with geologic forces, shape the land.

Together, these physical conditions explain the extraordinary biological diversity on a Peninsula that is moving inexorably northwest at the rate of 2.5 inches a year from its origins in Baja California. 900 species of vascular plants, 61 of them endemic to the peninsula and 50 listed as rare, threatened, or endangered; and 280 bird species! These riches are due in large part to the maritime environment, temperate climate, fog, complex geology, and topographic variability of Pt. Reyes. Frank Dean, former NPS superintendent, noted that Point Reyes National Seashore is among the top ten NPS park units in numbers of rare, threatened, and endangered species: "Point Reyes is a special case, a special place!"

The ranchers on Point Reyes understand, and in fact benefit from, these conditions, and as a consequence they expect to protect resources and meet the high standards of the park. They are also subject to strict federal and state regulations that protect water quality, for example, in confined animal facilities, like dairies, and on grazing lands. At Workshop #3, Nancy Scolari, Director of Marin Resource Conservation District, discussed how the RCD has assisted ranchers for decades in meeting standards and complex regulations through restoration of their lands and waterways, to the benefit of both ranchers and the environment.

The stated objective of the MCL workshops was to educate and enable informed comment on the Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan that the NPS is preparing to support extending ranch leases on the Seashore up to 20 years. It will take time to digest the high content level of the series and determine whether the workshops met this objective; the video recording of the speakers will be helpful when it becomes available. If there was an informal objective, however, it was to mingle and exchange views—ranchers and non-ranchers—and to learn more about ranching and the Point Reyes National Seashore. On that score, the workshops exceeded expectations! *—Nona Dennis, Editor*

Status Update

County Road and Trail Management Plan

Marin County Parks continues to implement the Road and Trail Management Plan. The plan for designating roads and trails in Region 3 open space preserves has received public comment and will soon be released. Region 4, including Mt. Burdell and Rush Creek Preserves, among others, is next on the list.

A public meeting was held recently in Fairfax to present a proposal by Friends of Corte Madera Creek and Marin County Bicycle Coalition to bridge San Anselmo Creek in Cascade Canyon Open Space Preserve. The project will eliminate the need for mountain bikes to ford the creek, thereby disrupting salmonid spawning habitat when the creek is flowing. The crossing, shown below, will continue to serve as access for emergency vehicles only. The project also calls for decommissioning the failing High Water Trail.

Dru Parker

Highway 37 *from page 1*

engaged by the Road Ecology Center of UC Davis in a series of stakeholder meetings to study the issues. Caltrans stated early on they have little to no funding for a project and would have to rely heavily on the counties' Congestion Management Agencies (CMAs). The engineering firm AECOM was contracted to model future inundation and conduct risk assessments. The study concluded that there is no adequate alternative alignment, and without major construction, there is no safe long-term life for the roadway as it exists today. Three elevated roadway designs were proposed by AECOM. One was a roadway on an improved levee; the other two were elevated causeways which would allow water to flow underneath.

In early 2016, a SR 37 Policy Committee (ad hoc) was formed with representatives from the four counties. Marin's representatives are Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Judy Arnold and Mill Valley Councilmember Stephanie Moulton-Peters. Executive Directors of the four county CMAs also attend. The Policy Committee is considering ways to alleviate traffic, provide safe passage as the water level of San Pablo Bay continues to rise, and locate possible funding strategies.

In Spring, 2016, United Bridge Partners (UBP) was introduced to the committee by former Supervisor Gary Giacomini. UBP submitted an unsolicited proposal to construct an elevated toll road/causeway from Highway 121 at Sears Point to Mare Island in Vallejo, parallel to and south of the existing Highway 37. The roadway would carry two lanes of eastbound traffic and a bicycle/pedestrian path. The existing Highway 37 would remove the concrete dividers and carry all westbound traffic. Tolls would enable UBP to pay off the billions needed to build and maintain the structure. The question of ownership of the right-of-way would be a subject of negotiation.

Because the Policy Committee was created under a MOU, it has no authority. At its most recent meeting, the committee voted to explore creating a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), which would give them the authority to contract with UBP. Exclusion of Marin and Napa Counties is being considered in that neither owns property in the proposed segment. That would leave Sonoma and Solano as the only counties to participate in a future JPA.

Dru Parker

Traffic on Hwy 37. A private proposal calls for constructing a two-lane toll road/causeway, with bike/pedestrian path, over wetlands. The causeway would carry eastbound traffic to the south of the existing highway, which would carry westbound traffic. Tolls would pay for constructing and maintaining the structure.

The public needs to know

All this ignores important issues, in particular a lack of public awareness, particularly in Marin. The proposed project has had no environmental review, nor has the committee considered alternatives to the possibility of ceding a public right-of-way across state tidelands to private ownership. With the exception of Supervisors Arnold and Kinsey (in his last months in office), Marin County Supervisors seem generally uninformed on the proposal, although impacts on Marin could be considerable. For example, the proposal leaves unresolved the future flooding of segments of Hwy 37 between U.S.101 and Sears Point, which lie at a lower elevation than the segment from Sears Point to Vallejo.

Members of MCL's Land Use and Transportation Committee were told about the SR 37 Policy Committee's discussions at a meeting in June and expressed particular concern over the private toll road aspect of the proposal. MCL believes the project, which could impact Marin in numerous ways, needs a full public airing.

Dru Parker

Highway 37 is a key freight connection between Highway 101 and Interstate 80.

Seniors on the move

Shannon Doherty

Fall was in the air when MCL led the penultimate Senior Walk for 2016 in Indian Valley Open Space Preserve. In the background are the ballfields of College of Marin Indian Valley Campus. The Senior Walks are made possible by funds from County Parks Department Community Grant Program under Measure A. The Walks feature stories from Marin's conservation history and include transportation to the trailhead and light snacks. The final 2016 Walk was October 27th at Deer Island preserve. Four Walks will take place in spring of 2017, destinations to be announced.

Leaders Circle at restored Meadowsweet Dairy

MCL's **Leaders Circle** gathered on October 8th for luncheon in the handsomely restored Meadowsweet Dairy in Corte Madera. Lunch was served in the spacious reconstructed barn, which serves as work room and display gallery for an impressive collection of repurposed drift wood —relics from a long-gone era of logging in Marin that have been naturally sculpted by decades of ocean and sand. On hand to relate the story of Corte Madera's early days and dairying in Ross Valley was Jana Haehl (standing in photo), Corte Madera's historian and former President and board member of Marin Conservation League.

For more information about MCL's Leaders Circle, please contact Shannon Doherty at mcl@marinconservationleague.org or call 415-485-6257.

New Director Profile

Ralph Mihan, San Rafael

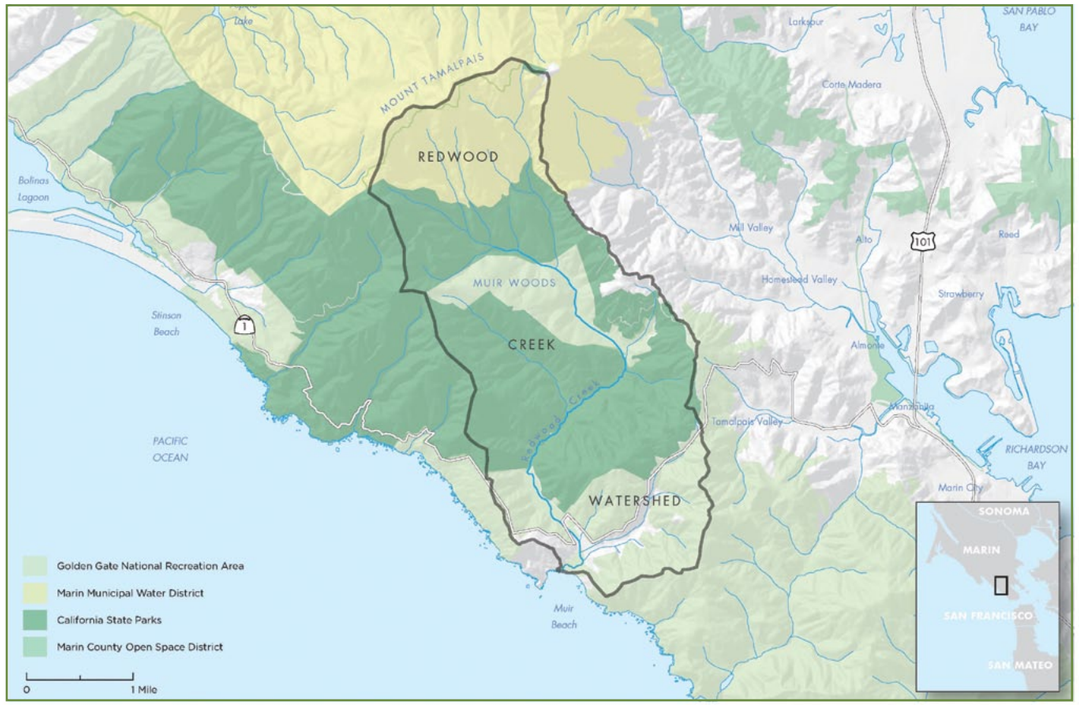
Ralph is a life-long resident of Marin County. Having grown up in San Anselmo, he has hiked and enjoyed Marin, Federal, State, County and local open space and neighborhood parks since early childhood. He has resided in west San Rafael for the last 47 years.

Ralph retired after a 37-year career as regional legal counsel for the Western Region of the National Park Service (62 National Parks) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (32 wildlife refuges). During his professional career he was involved in the acquisition of over 1 million acres of land and all aspects of the management of those lands for preservation and appropriate public recreational use.

He is involved in many Marin organizations, including as founding Director of the Marin Open Space Trust (MOST). He serves on the San Rafael Park and Recreation Commission (since 1982), and the Boards of Directors of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council and the Point Reyes National Seashore Association, and is active in other conservation and recreation entities.

Shannon Doherty

Restoring a watershed, project by project



Courtesy Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

The Redwood Creek Watershed.

If you have visited Muir Woods National Monument recently you may have seen a bronze model of the Redwood Creek Watershed in the entry plaza. You can pour water into Fern Creek near the 2,572-foot East Peak of Mt. Tamalpais and watch it flow down through the redwoods on its way to Muir Beach. It's a good way to view Muir Woods in its context.

At only nine square miles, the Redwood Creek watershed is not the largest watershed in Marin County (Lagunitas Creek watershed is ten times larger), but it looms large in ecological and cultural significance (See map above). From the top of Mt. Tam to sea level, it embraces a mosaic of woodlands, forests, chaparral, grasslands, coastal scrub, and wetlands, as well as the stately redwoods. It offers habitat for the imperiled coho salmon and steelhead, red-legged frog, northern spotted owl, and many rare plant species. Second to Lagunitas Creek, it may be the most studied watershed in Marin County. It is definitely one of the most visited.

Threats to the watershed

Ninety-five percent of the watershed is owned and managed as parkland by Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), Mt. Tamalpais State Park, and Golden Gate National Recreation Area, including Muir Woods. The remainder is divided among Green Gulch Farm and the residential enclaves of Muir Beach and Muir Woods Park. The State owns SR 1, and the County owns Muir Woods Road.

Up to a million visitors come annually in cars, vans, and shuttle buses to visit the Monument. Others on foot or horseback or bikes come to recreate on miles of roads and trails. And therein lies a problem: the watershed is a victim of its own popularity, to the detriment of fish and wildlife. Decades of ranching, flower cultivation, road construction, and other human activities have also left their marks: sediment-producing roads and trails, confined and realigned creeks, and impaired water quality, among others. Due to these and many other factors, the coho salmon population in Redwood Creek is struggling to survive.

Projects toward a Vision

In 2003, the land agencies partnered with local residents and created a Vision to restore health to the ecosystem. Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy joined as a non-profit partner to help raise funds. Some projects were underway, such as NPS' removal of levees from Redwood Creek along the former Banducci flower farm and installation of "engineered log jams" to enhance salmonid habitat.

Much collaborative work has been ac-

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Watershed *from page 6*

complished since 2003 or is currently underway or planned to restore natural hydraulic functions and geomorphic structure to the creek and floodplain, enhance fish habitat, improve water quality, combat invasions of non-native plant and animal species, remedy sediment sources in the upper watershed, and revegetate with native plants.

The centerpiece is the 46-acre **Wetland and Creek Restoration at Big Lagoon** at Muir Beach, begun in 2009 and (almost) completed in 2014. The **Coho Jumpstart Project** is endeavoring to bolster the coho population by transporting juveniles to a Sonoma hatchery for safe rearing and reintroducing them to the creek as adults. **Green Gulch Ranch** recently reconstructed 0.3 miles of its creek and restored 1.5 miles of riparian habitat.

The work is far from done, however. More projects continue to come forward along Redwood Creek, sponsored by the various partners. Several are summarized here. (See also nps.gov/goga Search: "Redwood Creek Watershed")

New and ongoing projects

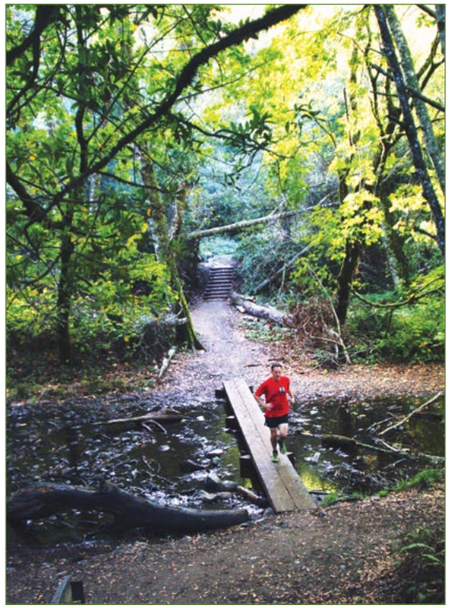
On September 20, 2016, the NPS proposed its **Muir Woods Salmon Enhancement and Bridge Replacement Project** to enhance salmon habitat, especially for juveniles, inside the Monument. The project calls for removing boulders installed 80 years ago to stabilize banks and placing large woody debris in the stream. These two actions will help to restore a more natural floodplain and improve habitat structures, such as deep pools, undercut banks, and tangles of brush as refuge for young fish.

The project also plans to replace four narrow, aging pedestrian bridges that currently span the creek with longer, higher, wider, and more durable bridges.

Plans to improve entry areas outside Muir Woods began in 2013 and returned recently as the **Muir Woods Sustainable Access Plan.** This project will upgrade parking lots, better manage drainage, and improve pedestrian walkways. It will also replace the "temporary" Dipsea Trail bridge with a permanent one.

To address the crowds, traffic congestion, and parking on Muir Wood Road, the NPS signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** in 2014 with the County to gradually eliminate most roadside parking and protect the creek from polluted storm runoff. The MOU is linked to a **Muir Woods Reservation System**, intended to reduce peak visitation numbers and spread out parking and visitor demand over non-peak periods. Conditions of the MOU are being implemented, and the reservation system is projected to start up in late 2017.

NPS and State Parks proposed the **Redwood Creek Trail Re-alignment and Dias Ridge Trail Extension** project in late 2014. The project will realign the popular 2.1-mile Redwood Creek Trail out of the floodplain, replace three bridges, and extend the Dias Ridge Trail for safer passage. Funding for the project is not yet secured.



Dru Parker

A runner crosses the Dipsea Trail "bridge" across Redwood Creek In Muir Woods.

By far the largest project in the queue is the multi-year **Muir Woods Road Rehabilitation Project**, which will rehabilitate and widen 2.48 miles of Muir Woods Road through Franks Valley and repair or replace some 36 culverts, long associated with polluted runoff into the creek. As project sponsor, Marin County has received $5.2 million in FLAP funds (Federal Lands Access Program) and will provide 11.47% in matching funds. The Federal Highway Administration will manage design and construction. The project will get underway November 9, 2016, with a public meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Mill Valley Community Center. In a "complimentary" project, the County is designing the **Muir Woods Road Bridge Replacement Project** to replace the 70-year-old bridge just west of Muir Woods entrance. The County is hoping that construction can be tied in with the "FLAP" project.

Taken together, these projects are like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle: each should help to reduce impacts from visitors and infrastructure and restore health to the Redwood Creek watershed ecosystem.

Dru Parker

The Muir Woods Road Rehabilitation Project will repair broken asphalt and replace old culverts through Franks Valley.

Tipping point for climate: Election 2016

Election 2016 may have been decided by the time you read this issue of the MCL *Newsletter*. Or the election may be so imminent that limited opportunity remains to influence its outcome. At this writing, the differences between the presidential candidates on climate policy are stark: one candidate continues to label climate change a hoax and a scam and pledges to reverse U.S. commitments to the 2015 Paris Agreement and other Obama policies; the other sees climate as an urgent threat and pledges to make it an executive priority. Indeed, according to Josh Fryday, Novato Councilmember, who moderated a September 19 educational forum on climate at Dominican University, "this may be one of the most important elections in the planet's lifetime!"

That was just one call to action imparted by the three speakers at the forum, including Congressman Jared Huffman, to several hundred people who gathered to consider the implications of Election 2016 on the future of the U.S. climate agenda. MCL joined Organizing for Action and Sustainable San Rafael and a dozen other organizations in co-sponsoring the forum, the third in a series under the rubric "Lead on Climate." The immediate purpose of the gathering was to mobilize voters to influence the outcome of the election. But the broader purpose was to consider how to move public opinion over the longer term—how to make climate a matter of relevance and priority to those who, although not "deniers," do not view climate as an imminent threat.

The subtitle of the forum was "Tipping points," and the metaphor was useful. Michael Wara, Professor of Law at Stanford and a former climate scientist, reminded the audience that we generally can't reverse an approaching tipping point in a changing climate; decisions made 10 or 100 years ago will have consequences in the lives of our children, as ice-sheets disappear, storms and flooding intensify, and forests continue to decline from unclear causes of disease and drought until one day they are gone. When did we pass that tipping point? Wara assured the audience that "tipping points" also can be positive. As renewable energy technologies continue to drop in price, solar energy can now compete on a level playing field with other energy sources. Further, even conservative

"There is no 'No Action' alternative when it comes to climate!"—Rep. Jared Huffman

Republicans are now willing to talk about, if not support, carbon fees. He pointed out that California has just passed SB 32 with its ambitious goals for reducing carbon emissions. (See box, below.) This sends signals across the country that Republican support of climate policy may be coming a little closer—may be reaching that tipping point toward bipartisan consensus.

Kate Gordon, Vice Chair of climate and sustainable urbanization at the Paulson Institute, believes that there are no real climate deniers. Most people, she said, do agree on climate change, if not on the causes, but they don't see it as important in their lives. The key is not to try to persuade them that climate is important, but to start with their priorities, whether their concerns are national security, the economy, health care or other. Invariably there will be a connection with the effects of a changing climate. However, since the effects of climate change are felt locally, the conversation in Fresno will differ from that in the Bay Area, where the risk of flooding from a rising sea level is tangible.

In his remarks, Jared Huffman posed contrasting climate policy scenarios under each of the presidential candidates. Republicans, he said, are the "last bastion of climate denial on the Earth. Even Vladimir Putin accepts climate as the greatest threat to the world." Whatever the political outcome, he said that we must not go from denial to despair. Brilliant innovators

Continued on page 9

SB 32—In case you missed it

In the event you were on vacation or otherwise occupied, you may have missed that Governor Brown signed SB 32 into law on September 1, noting that "What we're doing here is farsighted, as well as far-reaching. California is doing something that no other state has done."

The legislation calls for the state to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The State is currently on track to meet the earlier goal of reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, set ten years ago by the landmark California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32). The new target adds urgency to the state's commitment to meet a longer-term climate stabilization goal of 80 percent reduction in emissions by 2050, originally set in 2005 by Governor Schwarzenegger.

Achieving the new target for 2030 and the 2050 goal will be not easy. The required cuts in emissions will affect nearly all aspects of life in the state — where people live, how they get to work (e.g., putting more clean cars on the roads), how their food is produced (e.g., capturing agricultural methane), and where their electricity comes from (making renewables competitive). As climate specialist Jeff Caton, PE, Environmental Science Associates (ESA) recently observed: "Within 13 years, Californians must come to grips with what it really means to be a 'low carbon economy!'"

Vision for San Rafael's downtown station area

by Kate Powers

A SMART test train pulls into the downtown San Rafael station.

Dru Parker

According to Mayor Gary Phillips, how San Rafael's downtown station area will look and function will be San Rafael's greatest challenge over the next several years. In September, Mayor Phillips joined the Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods, led by interim president Amy Likover, and a panel of stakeholders, including County Supervisors Damon Connolly and Katie Rice, San Rafael staff, representatives of local neighborhood associations and leaders of local nonprofits, including MCL, in answering the question,"What vision does each of you have to guide the very real decisions now being made in the Downtown Station Area—the future of the new transit center, the old train depot, commercial crossroads, and creeks and pathways in the area?"

Some visions of the station area were broad in scope and pictured a world-class gateway. Others harkened back to Marin's rich history when railroads connected other city centers to San Rafael's train station, and envisioned the historic station as hub for many modes of transportation. Alternatively, as in the early 1900's when San Rafael's baths were a popular destination, greater use of San Rafael's waterways was proposed.

A desire for greater watershed-based planning along the transportation corridor was expressed. This could include improving creek confluence, filtration of storm runoff and flood management, and restoring areas of the creek under Highway 101 and near Mahon Creek with native plantings to provide buffers, natural greenways, and act as urban refuges for wildlife.

Other proposed greenery included connected walkways bordered by drainage swales planted with trees and low shrubs, especially along a converted West Tamalpais multi-use path that would connect to the North-South Greenway, reach south to 2nd Street, and eventually connect to the Cal Park Hill tunnel. These connecting walkways would not only be enjoyable, but could also boost economic vitality in surrounding areas.

Concerns about the relocation of the Bettini Transit Center were raised and included the caution that the more than 9,000 people who currently use the Transit Center daily should not face new obstacles nor have their wait times increased. Some panelists expressed the hope that San Rafael will embrace its "citiness" as an urban core—that the city will realize its Priority Development Area potential and develop more affordable housing. It was suggested that trolleys or shuttle buses run between the Miracle Mile and the downtown station area. An alternate suggestion would relocate the Bettini Center to Larkspur to be near the Ferry and Larkspur SMART station. Smaller satellite bus stations around San Rafael could then be dispersed in order to relieve the congested downtown.

Supervisor Rice cautioned that traffic solutions in the station area will impact Marin's East-West flow elsewhere. She emphasized the need for good analysis and traffic studies that map out the scope of study and use realistic traffic projections.

The greatest need expressed was for safety of streets and intersections.

The greatest need expressed by all, besides general traffic calming, was safety of San Rafael's streets and intersections – for kids traveling to school, for seniors, and for other pedestrians and bicyclists who share the streets and sidewalks connecting San Rafael neighborhoods and other destinations. Marin County Bicycle Coalition's, Jim Elias, stated it best: "When we invest in safety, we get systems that are beautiful and that work."

The public will soon have an opportunity to comment on bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout San Rafael as its Department of Public Works and its Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee begin an update to the Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan. The Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods intends to follow-up by encouraging local decision-makers to imagine the downtown station area with the visions shared.

Tipping point *from page 8*

are at work, among them Paul Hawken's "Project Drawdown," a growing coalition that describes when and how humanity can reach climate drawdown—the "tipping point" at which greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere begin to decline on a year-to-year basis. Through mapping and modeling, one hundred existing technological, ecological, and social solutions can continue to scale up over the next three decades to reach that drawdown. Huffman concluded the evening by reminding the audience that "there is no "No Action" alternative when it comes to climate!

Two plans *from page 1*

tered and diverse conditions, the County's Plan incorporates a full suite of available IPM tools, including the option of herbicides, to manage invasive weeds, based on the best available science; in contrast, the MMWD plan eliminates herbicides, based on board policy as a supplier of water. Finally, to be effective given this limitation, MMWD's plan is primarily a 5-year work plan and budget to meet realistic goals, whereas the County's plan is a broad-based, far-reaching decision document for planning future projects. The implications of these differences are significant.

A firefighter works to ensure an Oct. 11 grass fire at Old St. Hilary's is completely contained.

Craig Solin, Marin County Open Space District

History of Plans

It has taken eight or more years of data gathering, review of current science and state-of-the-art practice and tools, and public engagement for the two plans to reach this stage. MCOSD initiated its plan in 2008. Staff and consultants surveyed the trends and current practices of a dozen land management agencies around the Bay Area. They inventoried sensitive plant resources on 16,000 acres in 34 open space preserves that range widely in size, and laid out a framework for managing them.

After the preliminary draft "Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan" (VBMP) was rejected in 2013 by fire agencies critical of approaches to managing fuel breaks, MCOSD staff revised the Plan and prepared a Draft Tiered Program Environmental Impact Report (Draft TPEIR) in 2015. About the same time, a sign posted on Ring Mountain Open Space Preserve stating the intent to treat invasive weeds with glyphosate was met with public outcry. Thus, voluminous comments on the Draft EIR focused largely on herbicide use.

Staff responded to comments and a year later released the 640-page Final EIR on October 5, 2016. At this writing, the Plan had not yet been approved by the Board of Supervisors, sitting as MCOSD Board of Directors, pending further work on the Final EIR

MMWD followed a somewhat different trajectory. The District manages an 18,900 acre watershed on Mt. Tam. To update its 1995 Vegetation Management Plan, the District held public workshops in 2008 that examined the effectiveness of many vegetation management tools, including herbicides. (Note that the District had suspended use of herbicides in 2005, pending further study.)

By 2013, the District had produced a draft 15-year plan to minimize fire hazard and maximize ecological health on its watershed, while fulfilling its basic mission of furnishing reliable high quality water at reasonable cost to 180,000 Marin residents. The inclusion of an herbicide alternative was met by protest, and work on the EIR was suspended.

In recent months, with little public notice, the MMWD Board voted to abandon herbicides from further consideration. The "Biodiversity, Fire, and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP), issued on September 15, spells out a detailed 5-year work plan and estimated costs to fulfill three basic goals: minimize risk from wildfire, preserve and enhance existing significant biological resources, and provide an adaptive framework for review and revision in response to changing conditions and new knowledge. Fourteen approaches and 27 management actions are detailed in the Plan to achieve these goals. Herbicide use is not included as an option. Environmental review of the plan will begin this November and take up to a year.

How do the plans compare?

The plans are similar in many ways. Both identify biological resources and ecosystem functions that are threatened by non-native weeds. Both plans identify and map sensitive resources such as rare plants, and they map vegetation in zones reflecting degrees of sensitivity and disturbance, and implied management needs. Both agencies count forest health and climate change as emerging management challenges. Both agencies are exposed to surrounding neighborhoods and must juggle resources and strategies to protect natural values while ensuring public safety.

MMWD's Mt. Tam watershed forms one contiguous expanse, thus limiting their total exposure. In contrast, the County's widely distributed preserves are "backyards" to 3,300 homes, with thousands more within 500 feet. The risk of wildfire is a huge potential liability for both, however.

Both agencies employ an "Integrated Pest Management" (IPM) approach to control weeds, using a combination of mechanical equipment to mow or mulch, manual hand-pulling, cultural manipulation such as by solarizing, and, very infrequently, prescribed fire or browsing by goats. The MCOSD, in limited situations where other tools are infeasible or ineffective, applies small amounts of conventional chemical herbicides, whereas MMWD has eliminated this option.

Weeds on MMWD lands are expanding

The impacts of MMWD's decision to eliminate herbicides on staff, budget, and long-term effectiveness have been substantial. MMWD's Natural Resource Program Manager Janet Klein recently summarized lessons learned from 10 years

Continued on page 11

Two plans *from page 10*

of Zero-use vegetation management for Marin County's Parks and Open Space Commission. Weed concentrations are expanding, she said. Broom infestations have expanded from 600 acres in 1995 to almost 1,600 acres (or 1,600 football fields, without end zones). "MMWD has not yet discovered how to control weeds without herbicides," Klein admitted; "it has simply moved the goalposts down the field."

MCL supports the County's well-considered approach in the Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan.

The District's BFFIP, therefore, is not a "How-to" manual for managing an herbicide-free landscape, but rather a realistic assessment and a "best effort" to cope using available tools strategically. MMWD's Plan lays out a set of 5-year performance measures premised on adding $400,000/year to reach the $3,000,000/yr commitment for Year 5 and annually thereafter. With this work plan and budget, Klein believes staff can control, but not eradicate, roughly 1,400 acres of weeds on Mt. Tam without herbicides.

The County's VBMP differs from the MMWD plan in another important respect. Unlike MMWD's specific 5-year work plan, the VBMP is a long-term framework for monitoring each preserve and, year-by-year and case-by-case, planning projects and determining appropriate treatments, tools and best practices. Treatments may or may not include environmentally safe use of herbicides, but the option is available. The County's long-term goal in each of the preserves is to gradually reduce, even eliminate, the need for herbicides, but this will take time. MCL supports the County's well-considered approach in the VBMP.

Marin Conservation League Business Member Profile

David J. Weinsoff, Esq.

When their San Francisco loft got crowded with their newborn son, David Weinsoff moved with his family to Fairfax in 1996, where he established his environmental law practice and his wife, Idie, went to work at the Ross Elementary School. In the two decades since, David has managed to meld his law practice with local government leadership, environmental advocacy, and non-profit volunteerism. Appointed to the Town's Planning Commission, he met then-MCL Board Member Peri Ann Wood (wife of then Fairfax Mayor and current MCL Board Member, Doug Wilson). She encouraged him to participate in MCL. His interest led to joining MCL's board, where he served from 1998 into 2005. The MCL board, then as now, was made up of environmental activists, and David felt fortunate to learn from Jean Berensmeier, Nona Dennis, Jana Haehl, Susan Stompe, and Jean Starkweather, among others. In 2005, he transitioned to MCL's legal counsel until his election to the Fairfax Town Council later that year. David continues to be a MCL Business Member and attends MCL events.

As an environmental attorney representing public interest groups in matters involving the Federal Clean Water Act, the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, the California Coastal Act, and other environmental laws, David needs to stay informed on environmental issues. He trusts MCL to monitor and report issues with the environmental perspective he shares. He considers the MCL newsletter to be a "must-read," noting that "cover-to-cover review is critical to anyone interested in environmental issues in the county." We spoke to David after his recent return from Paris, where he visited his son Jake, who left after high school to play his violin and study at the Sorbonne.

David currently serves on the Board of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin and is a third-term member of the Fairfax Council. He sees his legal work, town council service, and non-profit board participation as being interrelated, providing the opportunity to understand diverse environmental perspectives throughout our county.

David and Idie maintain a low-key environmental footprint. They installed roof-top solar panels in the 1990s, and both their commutes are local - David's home office is 30 inches from the bedroom! David has a special fondness for bees, and apprenticed with an accomplished beekeeper in early 2000. He believes that bee keeping, like bird watching, turns environmental protection into a very personal relationship. MCL is glad to have David Weinsoff as contributor to MCL, an environmental watchdog, and a Marin County resident with a passion for nature and public service.

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

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

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

Invasive Plant Subcommittee of POS:
3rd Wed. of the month, 3:00—5:00 PM

Climate Action Working Group: 3rd Fri. of the month, 9:00 AM—12:00 PM

Agricultural Land Use: meets quarterly; Water and Watersheds, North Marin Unit: Check website for times and locations

Marin Conservation League was founded in 1934 to preserve, protect and enhance Marin County's natural assets. MCL is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All contributions and memberships are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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