Marin Conservation League NEWS

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2008

HOW BIG IS YOUR ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT?

Marin Conservation League, at its Annual Dinner on April 25, will explore this critical question, with the help of keynote speaker Dr. Mathis Wackernagel, Executive Director of Global Footprint Network.

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Wackernagel, engineer and urban and regional planner, developed the "ecological footprint" as an accounting tool for measuring human demand on nature's limited resources. In the ensuing years, the footprint has become a powerful model used to measure the consumption habits and lifestyles of individuals, neighborhoods, cities and regions, economic sectors, and nations, and to compare the resources they require with nature's ability to provide. Current estimates indicate that human demands have already exceeded the earth's finite biocapacity.

Through the efforts of the Global Footprint Network and some 75 organizational partners on five continents, the footprint model is being applied in more than 100 nations. The Marin County Community Development Agency became a participating partner several years ago when it authorized a study of the County's per capita footprint. Even with an environmentally-conscious citizenry, the study showed that Marin had one of the largest footprints in the world – 27 acres per capita, more than twice that of many European countries, and many times the footprints of developing nations!

Dr. Wackernagel will explore this innovative tool: What are the basic elements of the ecological footprint model? How can Marinites account for their excessive burden on the earth's biological capacity? How are other nations confronting their "ecological debt"? What can we as individuals do to reduce our footprint?

Join members and friends of MCL in what promises to be a thought-provoking evening!

When: Friday, April 25; 6:00 – 9:00

Where: Mill Valley Community Center

Price: $60 per person

For reservations and further information, call Marin Conservation League, 415-485-6257 or visit our website at www. marinconservationleague.org.

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Prize for the "Lightest Footprint":

To determinr your footprint, go to: www.myfootprint.org and take an easy test to determine your ecological footprint and bring a copy to the Annual Dinner.

The person who "treads the lightest" will win a night's stay at the Point Reyes Seashore Lodge in Olema.

Good luck!

See you on April 25th at the Annual Dinner.

Local Governments To Vote on Marin Clean Energy

About half of the electricity we use in our homes and businesses is created by burning natural gas. Eighty-five percent of our natural gas comes from outside California, and our electric utility, PG&E, is planning to build more gas-fired generation. Because natural gas prices are not only volatile, but also are projected to rise substantially in the foreseeable future, we can expect this to result in increasing costs of electric energy for all of us. The new natural gas supplies needed for a growing California are expected to come from other countries, delivered through new PG&E partnerships for an LNG terminal and pipeline planned for Southern Oregon. As a result of these factors, Marin communities will face becoming evermore dependent on expensive, volatile and environmentally damaging sources of power.

The "Community Choice Aggregation" law (see the October-November 2007 MCL Newsletter) offers Marin communities a way to establish more local control to green our power with renewable energy supplies, and stabilize prices, yet leave the delivery of our electricity with PG&E.

The business plan for a proposed Countywide joint power authority-Marin Clean Energy would allow any home and business to obtain 100 percent of its power from renewable sources such as solar, wind, geothermal and biomass. Those electing to go with this "deep green" option will pay a small premium of 5 to 10 percent. Those not wishing to pay any premium – but would still like to be greener than PG&E – can choose the "light green" option, which would still receive more than 50% renewable power within five years. Marin County consumers will also have the choice of sticking with the current PG&E power supply, which currently consists of only 12 percent renewable energy and is only expected to be 20% renewable in five years.

The Marin Clean Energy business plan is based on multiple feasibility studies and independent review. The draft business plan was developed by a local government task force with input from stakeholder and technical advisory committees. Each City Council and the County Board of Supervisors – will be studying the business plan over the next several months and may vote on it this Fall. The County Board of Supervisors will be holding a study session on Marin Clean Energy April 22nd. The MCL board will discuss possible endorsement of the plan at its May board meeting.

For more information, go to www.marincleanenergy.info

Fund Raiser for New Trail Head at the Baltimore Canyon "Joplin Property" in Full Swing

Marin Conservation League's efforts to raise funds for the acquisition of a portion of the old Janis Joplin property for a new trailhead are in full swing. When completed, this purchase will establish an important new trailhead on West Baltimore Avenue in Larkspur and will allow Marin County residents access to the Baltimore Canyon Preserve, Blithedale Ridge and Mt. Tamalpais. It will provide an important link between the built environment and open space for all to enjoy.

The new trailhead will allow hikers to enter this beautiful open space area (which includes Dawn Falls), as well as allow the County access to maintain the trails, which has been very difficult for them in the past. To purchase this land, we are seeking to raise about $360,000. Every penny that we raise will go to the purchase of the land--no fees of any kind. And all donations are tax deductible.

If you are interested in supporting this acquisition, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Marin Conservation League, 1623A Fifth Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901. Make checks payable to MCL/Baltimore Canyon Access. For more information, call the League office at 415-485-6257.

Thank you for your generosity in this matter.

Program Implementation Priorities for the Countywide Plan

Marin Conservation League has joined forces with the Sierra Club-Marin Group, and Marin Audubon Society to follow the measures for implementing the new Marin Countywide Plan. Together, we have reviewed the many implementation programs listed in the Plan and are actively recommending the following as our highest near-term program priorities:

Streamside Protection

Several programs relate to this essential policy issue. We are urging that some should be completed sooner than the "medium term" 4 to 7 years, indicated in the plan. We are pleased to note that the study now being done with SPAWN in the San Geronimo Valley is likely to produce useful information on which to base streamside protections countywide.

City-County Cooperation

The formation of the City-County Planning Committee is listed as a long-term program. We understand the budgetary and political problems involved in setting up this entity and have suggested instead that a coordinated inter-jurisdictional approach would work if based on sharing practical information and experience, and possibly model ordinances. Here too, the SPAWN watershed study may prove to be a good model for interjurisdictional cooperation on issues of common interest.

Baylands Corridor Expansion

It is not clear ifrom the Plan how the study of the possible expansion of the Baylands Corridor will be done. The Plan commits to looking at Bothin Marsh, and the environmental groups will be asking again for consideration of the baylands north of Gnoss Field for possible inclusion. MCL will push for this study.

Wetlands Definition

MCL is pleased that program BIO-3.h, a study of the wetlands definition, is a high-priority, short-term program. MCL has offered to help provide useful information for this study.

Maximum House Size

Although the Plan establishes a maximum house size in agricultural areas, the environmental groups would like to see maximum standards established elsewhere in the County. We realize that this is a policy question to be addressed in the forthcoming Community Plan updates, and intend to work with the County in developing a comprehensive approach to this issue.

Sustainable Water Supply

In the Plan, the programs that would establish requirements for no net water increase for new developments are shown as medium or long-term. We believe these programs deserve immediate attention. We intend to work closely with the County, the Marin Municipal Water District and the North Marin Water District in developing these offset programs as quickly as possible.

MCL Opposes CDFA Aerial Spraying Plans for the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM)

On March 20th, MCL wrote to the California Dept. of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) opposing the proposed aerial spraying to control the LBAM. Our objections were that:

- The true extent and dimensions of this assumed problem are unknown and not described. We are told this is a serious and immediate threat without justification. No EIR has been done.
- The entire ingredients of the spray to be used are unknown and not disclosed. The potential toxicity and their short to long-term impacts on the environment and to public health have not been described or analyzed.
- We do not know the comparative effectiveness of the proposed aerial spraying vis a vis other less draconian control measures.
- We question the likelihood that complete eradication of the LBAM is feasible. It appears that the LBAM has become well established in the past several years. While this may call for some level of long-term control measures, we should focus on the least toxic control measures that can be undertaken effectively.
- We do not have good information about the potential for the unintended consequences of indiscriminate broadcast aerial spraying on the environment and community at large.

Our Letter was copied to our state and federal legisltors as well as to Governor Schwartzenegger. It is MCL's position that it is essential that a comprehensive Environmental Impact Study and Assessment including alternatives be completed first before any Aerial Spraying Program be initiated , if at all.

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

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Marin Conservation League NEWS

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Leave a Legacy

Have you considered leaving an environmental legacy? There are at least two simple ways to do it:

- Include a gift to the Marin Conservation League in your will or revocable trust.
- Designate MCL as one of the beneficiaries of your IRA or retirement plan.

Funds received from these sources are placed in MCL's Legacy of the Land Endowment Fund (unless the donor specifies otherwise). The Fund is invested for the future; its income is used to support MCL's ongoing advocacy work. For more information on these options, call the MCL office at 415-485-6257.

Save these dates on your calendar:

April 9 -19, 2008 – AAA 's Battery Roundup.
Marin Conservation League urges you to support the 2007Great Battery Roundup sponsored by the AAA Outdoor Corps. The Roundup is annual effort to collect and recycle old car, boat and motorcycle batteries which are a hazard.
For more information about where to take your batteries visit:
http://www.batteryroundup.com.

April 25, 2008 – MCL's Annual Dinner
MCL's Annual Dinner will be held in the evening at the Mill Valley Community Center. Our featured speaker will be Mathis Wackernagel, Executive Director of the Global Footprint Network. For more information, call the MCL office at 415-485- 6257 or visit our website at www. marinconservationleague.org.