

Measure A funds at work

Something for everyone



Elise Suronen, Marin Resource Conservation District

Measure A provided partial funding for a watershed restoration project at Straus Ranch. The Marin RCD, along with students from Point Blue's Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed Program (STRAW) installed fencing, erosion control fabric and a hedgerow consisting of 55 native plants. Additional funding was provided by the landowner, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, MALT and the EPA.

by Nona Dennis

Two years have passed since the Marin community approved Measure A, the quarter-cent sales tax to **Protect Marin Parks, Open Space, and Farmland**. Now after its first full year in operation, Measure A tax revenues have been at work throughout the County, funding programs and projects in accordance with the formula that was laid out in the measure: 65 percent to be used by Marin County Parks to restore natural resources and maintain county parks and open space preserves and protect natural lands; 20 percent as matching funds to save family farms and ranches

through purchase of easements; and 15 percent to be used by cities, towns, and special districts to enhance and manage local parks and related programs.

One of the first administrative actions taken by the County was to appoint a seven-person Measure A Community Oversight Committee to oversee an annual audit and the reporting required by the measure's Expenditure Plan. In 2014, the Committee first met to review the FY 2013-14 budget and then again to fulfill their fiduciary responsibility—to review the near-final audit and expenditure reports for the

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Gross Field runway extension reaches decision point

by Susan Stompe

After six years of tracking the environmental review process for the proposed runway extension at Gross Field, MCL can report that Marin County's general aviation airport is facing the final decision on implementing the Master Plan adopted in 1997. (See also [MCL Newsletter Jan.-Feb. 2014](#)). On February 25, the Board of Supervisors will consider plans to extend the runway from 3300 feet to 4400 feet. The County's Final Environmental Impact Report was certified last February. The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Final Environmental Impact Statement was filed in July.

Since June, 2014, the County Aviation Commission has conducted a workshop and two commission meetings to provide opportunities for people to voice their concerns or questions about the extension. The workshop on July 17 generated some discussion about the project, but unfortunately no MCL representative was able to attend. The September meeting of the Commission had almost no discussion of the issues.

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A Message from the President



As I write this, I am enjoying the dramatic turn in the weather, especially compared with the dry December we experienced a year ago, and

I am looking forward to a wet New Year! The weather may change, but the busy schedule of being an active member of MCL does not. In one December week, with and without the rain, the following activities were taking place: On a Tuesday morning some 25 MCL members and guests visited the Lafranchi Ranch and the family's Nicasio Ranch Cheese Co. processing and sales facilities, to learn about the history of the family ranch—owned since 1919, and one of the first ranches to join MALT

—and see the 400-cow dairy operation and large compost processing facility operated by the Lunny family on the ranch grounds. (See story [page 12.](#)) That same day, MCL representatives testified at the Board of Supervisors' final hearing on the County Housing Element, protesting the housing numbers (including State density bonus) designated for the St. Vincent/Silveira Ranch site. That same week, MCL had submitted comments to Marin County Parks on the Road and Trail Management Plan for an upcoming meeting of the Board of Supervisors. The previous Friday, the Climate Action Working Group had met to hear a presentation on energy efficiency (EE) programs by Marin Clean Energy, followed by a discussion of the group's review of new developments in EE. Then on Friday December 12th, we had the opportunity to celebrate with many members and friends at MCL's festive annual Holiday gathering.

Not limited to that full week—or any week—is the task of writing letters of comment. This writing goes on much of the time, in particular letters to a full range of public agencies—a big task of the Committee Chairs. Copies of letters that reflect MCL policy are a must-read for members, decision-makers, and the general public on our web site, marinconservationleague.org.

As we begin the New Year, the MCL Board thanks you for your continued support and urges you to renew your membership today if you have not done so already! I continue to find satisfaction in being your President and hope you are receiving the leadership you expect from the MCL Board. I ask for a special shout-out for our Operations Manager Dru Parker and her assistant Shannon Doherty for their essential support of the organization. We wish you all a good 2015!

Jon Elan

Editorial

Huffman on the home front

If federal government seems remote and unresponsive to most of us here at home, then think again—**Congressman Jared Huffman** is only a phone call away! Why is this so important right now?

Marin County is blessed with two magnificent national parks within its borders. From the Headlands and Muir Woods National Monument in Golden Gate National Recreation Area to the tip of Tomales Point in Point Reyes National Seashore, federal parklands dominate our coastal geography and, along with the other public lands that make up almost half of Marin, frame much of our identity as a county. Moreover, they are immensely popular, attracting millions of visitors from around the world every year. In very different ways, they are also woven into the fabric of our local communities, evoking

pride on the one hand and distress—at worst, distrust—on the other. Automobiles clog southern Marin roadways on weekends and in peak seasons, trapping local residents in their driveways. In quite another mode, the ranching community of West Marin literally straddles the boundary separating park and non-park, leading to community tensions on several levels.

Enter Rep. Huffman and his local ear-to-the-ground aide **Jenny Callaway!** Each of the parks is dealing with critical decisions that will shape its future. GGNRA is seeking solutions to modulate Muir Woods visitor numbers and relieve chronic traffic congestion and destructive parking outside the Monument. Point Reyes Seashore is evaluating alternative ways to sustain ranching under new 20-year leases and manage an errant herd of elk. These are totally different situations,



Wanden Treanor has Congressman Huffman's ear at the MCL 2014 Annual Dinner and Meeting.

yet Huffman is involved in both; if not always physically present, he is informed, and, thanks to Callaway in his Marin office, actively engaged in working to bridge the gap between local needs and national park obligations. It's too early to predict outcomes in either case, but Huffman's blend of local allegiance, keen understanding of the park service's many challenges, and his ability to bring people to the table is promising.

-Nona Dennis, Editor

Status Updates

TLC launches website and 5 year vision

In the nine months since adopting a Memorandum of Understanding on March 21, 2014, the four participating agencies and non-profit partner that make up Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC) have adopted a logo, launched a website (onetam.org), and developed a five-year strategic vision. MCL reported last March on the new TLC, which was formed by Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), Mt. Tamalpais State Park, Golden Gate National Recreation Area including Muir Woods, and Marin County Open Space District, in collaboration with Golden Gate Parks Conservancy serving as non-profit fiscal agent ([MCL Newsletter March-April 2014](#)). The area of focus, shown in the map above, begins at the top of Mt. Tam and radiates out to encompass 46,000 acres. The four agency partners who are responsible for different parts of the mountain have been confronting many of the same management and conservation challenges within these broad boundaries for many years, such as invasive species, sudden oak death, heavy recreation demand, and protection and restoration of streams and wetlands. It made good sense to find a way to work together and share knowledge and resources. The TLC makes this possible.

MCL has tracked the collaborative closely as it has evolved from an earlier proposal by MMWD to form its own non-profit "Friends of the Watershed" to become a multi-agency cooperative structure. The TLC is not a new governmental entity, nor does it make policy or assume any power independent of its members. All projects taken on by the collaborative will have originated within the agencies themselves, but they will benefit from the shared knowledge of the other cooperating members and from the philanthropic experience and capacity of the Parks Conservancy. As Marilee Eckert, Chief Executive Officer, Conservation Corps North Bay was quoted in a new One Tam brochure: "Forming the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative makes so much sense. A

joint plan and approach to managing Mt. Tam will be more efficient and will protect the biological diversity of this vital natural



Map courtesy Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Tamalpais Lands Collaborative area of focus

resource."

Pt. Reyes Nat'l Seashore ranch planning continues

MCL first reported on free-roaming elk in the pastoral zone of Pt. Reyes National Park Service following a joint meeting of the Land Use, Agricultural Land Use, and Parks and Open Space Committees in January, 2014. [[MCL Newsletter March-April 2014](#)] The purpose of the meeting was to hear park service responses to ranchers' concerns over elk damage to ranch properties and competition with domestic livestock for scarce forage and water, exacerbated by prolonged drought conditions. Superintendent Cicely Muldoon announced that the Seashore would initiate a Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan (RCMP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) process to address the extension of ranch leases to 20 years, as authorized by former Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar in November 2012. She said that the Ranch Plan would also address management of the elk herd. The two-year process fulfills requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Following Park staff meetings with a variety of groups and agencies interested in the future of the ranches, scoping for the EA opened in March and yielded some

3,100 public comments. Not surprising, elk management was identified as a major issue, although many factors must

be considered in planning for long-term management of the currently operating ranches that occupy 28,000 acres managed by the Seashore staff.

In mid-November, Superintendent Muldoon and Park staff again met with MCL joint

committees to review the planning process to date. It was also an opportunity for members of the ranching and environmental communities to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the breadth of issues raised in public comments. As part of an extraordinary outreach effort, Park staff reported that 50 meetings had been held with park ranchers and 25 other meetings with agency and public stakeholders and interest groups, including the MCL meeting.

Public workshops held

Successive public workshops on November 20 and 21 in Pt. Reyes Station attracted a full house. The meetings began with Park staff presentations followed by lively discussions in small breakout groups with moderators and recorders selected by the participants. Materials for those meetings, including slide presentations, are available on the Seashore's website, nps.gov/pore.

The first meeting focused on ranching practices, such as activities intended to enhance the quality and quantity of forage on ranchlands, soil and nutrient management (e.g., composting), weed control, and silage. Participants also discussed ways to diversify and provide "value-added" opportunities for the dairies and ranches, such as farm visits and home stay programs, crop rotation, shifts in livestock, and on-site processing and

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Status Updates

Ranch Plan *from page 3*

product sales. The groups also considered ranch ownership succession, including the possibility of "rolling leases" or options for continuing ranching when no family member is there to take over.

The Park's wildlife biologist, David Press, provided background for the discussions at the second meeting, "Tule Elk Affecting Park Ranches." The herd referred to as the DRanch Herd has grown from 75 to 96. Recently, some 30 elk from the Limantour Herd have been crossing over Sir Francis Drake

out of the pastoral zone, although Press advised that "they (the elk) will find a way around a fence."

Commitment to ranching

Comments about the workshops were generally favorable. The discussion, attendees felt, was a good way to bring disparate community interests together in a collaborative mode. At each of the workshops, Sup't Muldoon reiterated that the NPS is committed to continuing historic ranching and dairy farming in the pastoral zone of the Seashore, as

year. With recent rains, the immediate problem of competition for forage and water by the elk has subsided, but damage to ranches continues. MCL therefore urges the Seashore to continue taking whatever interim steps are possible to reduce elk-caused damage to the ranches as the planning process moves forward.

—Nona Dennis and Judy Teichman

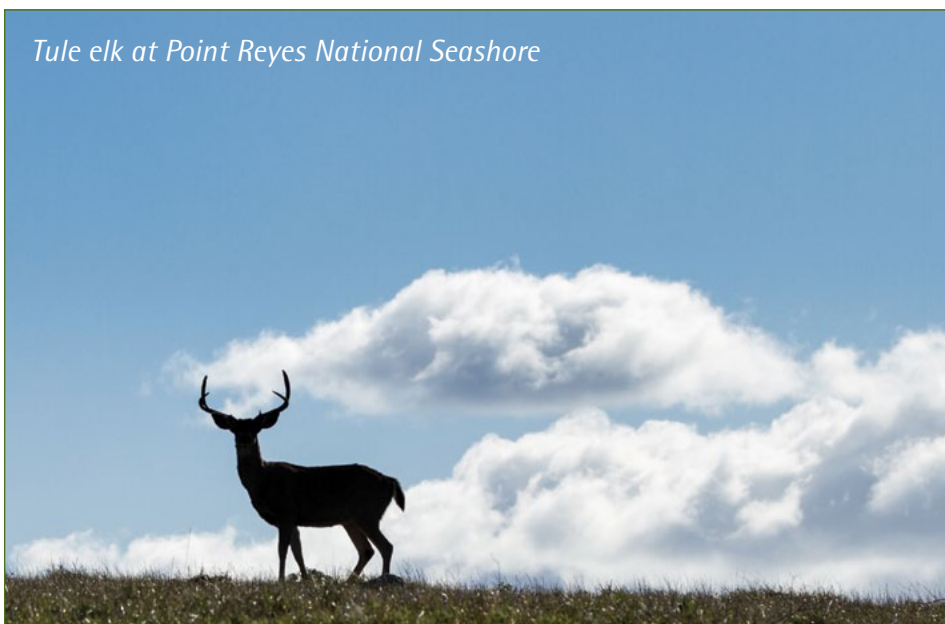
Home stretch for Road and Trail Management Plan

The County's Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) cleared its final hurdle with its approval by the Board of Supervisors (sitting as the Board of the Marin County Open Space District) on December 16. It was a minor hurdle to jump, because most of the dust had settled among critics. MCL has been a major player during the four-year planning process, and like most others, was ready to say "It's done"—with one important exception: the absence in the document of any explicit best practices for the design of safe trails for shared use by hikers, dogs, bikers, and equestrians. (See also [MCL Newsletter Nov.-Dec. 2013](#).)

Approval of the RTMP is a major step forward in setting policy and providing a framework to guide decisions for managing the County's 34 open space preserves for the next 15 years. It is not a plan that shows how those preserves will look in 15 years, but rather a "starting point," with a detailed inventory of the current environmental and physical condition of roads and trails and a process for evaluating future project proposals. Decisions made annually to improve or construct new trails, or decommission redundant trails, will have to demonstrate a net environmental benefit based on scoring two dozen physical and biological criteria and other factors. No new trail will be installed unless impacts are reduced elsewhere.

The policies, standards and best

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©Frank Schulenburg, Flickr

and ranging as far north as the H Ranch. The Park is conducting testing for John's Disease (a chronic contagious bacterial disease that affects the small intestine of ruminants such as cattle and elk) and researching alternatives and management techniques with experts in ungulate management. The EA will evaluate tools for elk management such as contraception and fertility control, translocation within or outside the park, lethal removal, fencing, and habitat enhancement in areas adjacent to ranchlands, in terms of their safety to both humans and animals, and their effectiveness, sustainability, and conformance with law and policy. There was strong group support for fencing elk

authorized in the Seashore's enabling legislation. Both Representative Jared Huffman, who was represented at both meetings, and Supervisor Kinsey, who was represented at the first meeting and personally attended the second meeting, have stated their belief that free roaming elk are not compatible with ranching in the pastoral zone. Removing elk entirely from the pastoral zone is one alternative that will be examined in the EA. How to protect natural and cultural resources in the pastoral zone, as required by NEPA, is also a challenge of the plan process and EA.

MCL will continue to study the issues and comment on the EA and Ranch Plan when drafts are made public later this

Status Updates

RTMP *from page 4*

management practices in Chapters 4 and 6 of the Plan appropriately give great emphasis to the long-term sustainability of the system and to protection of sensitive species and habitats, such as wetlands and streams. The RTMP also contains policies that restrict inappropriate uses of the preserves (bike racing, for example) and authorize the Parks Department to designate trails for certain user groups as necessary, or limit use to one-way, or separate users in time or space to minimize conflict.

MCL requested that the RTMP include design parameters for shared use trails.

The RTMP acknowledges that "conflict" among different user groups is a major management concern, whether it involves hikers, dog-walkers, equestrians, or mountain bikers, and that safety is critical to the security and peace of mind of all visitors to the County's open spaces. At the same time, the RTMP makes it clear that bike usage will increase in response to strong demand for greater access to narrow trails. Because most narrow trails in the preserves were not constructed for safe multiple use, that possibility will require heightened safety measures, including considerable redesign. The Plan calls for adherence to speed regulations and other rules, but relies heavily on voluntary cooperation as a means to minimize conflict among different user groups. The Department's intent to enforce regulations is mentioned only once as a policy, a pledge that should be strengthened in MCL's view.

The only mention of a need for safe design in the Plan is contained in two policies drawn from the Countywide Plan, TRL-2.3—*Plan and maintain trails to protect the safety of trail users*; and TRL-2.e—*Design trails so that their surfaces, grades, cross gradients, sight distances, width, curve radii, vegetation clearance, and other specifications are consistent with anticipated uses*. But the RTMP contains no other specific references to basic parameters of safe design for multi-

use trails.

MCL commented on earlier drafts that the RTMP should include parameters for shared use—designs or layouts that account for differences in rates of speed, the primary source of conflict, and provide sufficient tread or bench width or turnouts for safe passing as well as ample line-of-sight. To protect slow moving users, trails can be designed to manage bike speed by maintaining moderate gradients (e.g., less than 15%) and, where necessary, incorporating features to control bike speed, such as sinuous trail layout or installation of pinch or choke points or other "natural" obstacles. These design parameters could easily have been added to Chapter 6 (Standards and Best Management Practices) in the RTMP as a menu of "best practices" without controversy, since all users would benefit.

The RTMP was approved by the Supervisors with minor tweaks, but none concerning safety. If the RTMP is indeed a "living document," as Parks staff claim it will be, then MCL will continue to push to correct this and other deficiencies as the Plan is "tested" in the field. MCL also will monitor annual project decisions closely to ensure that natural resources are protected and that safety and peace of mind for slow moving hikers, walkers, and equestrians are not compromised, even as use patterns change.

Sky Ranch acquired by County Open Space

Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) announced late last year that their fund raising for the purchase of 16-acre Sky Ranch had met its \$1.2 million goal. The property, which straddles San Anselmo and Fairfax, affords sweeping views of the Corte Madera Creek watershed and the Bay



Image courtesy Marin County Parks

The Sky Ranch property, outlined in blue, straddles the towns of San Anselmo and Fairfax and is adjacent to the Bald Hill Open Space Preserve.

Region beyond. It will be turned over to Marin County Open Space District in early 2015. The property has been operated as a private equestrian facility for 60 years. It became available on the death of owner Robert Cary. Because current zoning could allow residential development of the property, acquisition was the only way to secure it for permanent public access.

The Ranch is adjacent to the County's 30-acre Bald Hill Preserve and it will extend access to Bald Hill Ridgeline and to hundreds of roads and trails on MMWD, GGNRA, other County Open Space lands. Nine horses currently boarding at the Ranch will be evicted to allow restoration work to bring the neglected facilities and degraded land up to open space standards. The equestrian community in Marin is hoping that the Ranch can be reopened in the future to operate in a manner similar to Horse Hill in Mill Valley, where 12 to 14 horses are pastured.

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Events

Horses steal the show at Walk into History



Tim Rosenfeld

On Nov. 8th, 34 MCL members and friends gathered at Horse Hill Open Space Preserve for MCL's November 8 Walk into (Conservation) History #16. MCL director Nona Dennis, former Mill Valley Mayor Dick Spotswood and local activists Janis Bosenko and Suzy and David Cumming told the history of how this spectacular land was protected from development by a true community grassroots effort in the late 1980s. The group was joined by the resident dozen horses who found the hikers' backpack snacks irresistible.

Watch your email for the announcement of the next *Walk*, at Novato's Rush Creek in March!

Holiday Party keeps guests warm and dry

113 MCL members and their guests attended the annual holiday party on December 12th and contributed a full barrel of food and cash to the Marin Food Bank. Many thanks to Nicasio Valley Cheese Co. for its generous donation and to all the MCL directors and staff for the food, decorations and good time had by all!



Clockwise from top right: Periann Wood, Susan Kirsch, Kay Gillis, Gail Grasso; C.J. and Donna Carillo; Mischon Martin, Jon Elam; Bruce and Supervisor Judy Arnold.

Events

Holiday party *from page 6*



Top: Peggy Burnett, Joanne Lee; Bottom: Peggy Bannan, Bob Johnston. Photos by Jana Haehl. For more photos, see our [Facebook page](#).

Business-Environment Breakfast, Thurs., February 26

Dr. Susan Kegley: Effects of pesticides on bees

On Thursday, February 26 (not Friday, as reported in the print version of this Newsletter) from 7:30 to 9:00 AM, please join MCL at our February breakfast meeting when **Dr. Susan Kegley**, Principal and CEO, Pesticide Research Institute, shares valuable information about her firm's work on "*Gardeners' Beware*," a study alerting nurseries and gardeners to the devastating effect of systemic pesticides on bee populations. She'll also share her research with a community of beekeepers over a longer period of time to track their bee colonies' health. You'll learn what you can do to protect pollinators in your own garden and community.

Don't miss this important talk from Dr. Kegley, a leader in risk assessment of pesticides. See her website: pesticideresearch.com for additional information.

The talk will take place at McInnis Park Golf Clubhouse, 350 Smith Ranch Road, San Rafael at 7:30 AM. The fee is \$15 for MCL members and \$20 for the general public. A full breakfast buffet is included. Pre-registration is required. Call MCL at



*Thursday, February 26
7:30 - 9:00 a.m.*

*McInnis Park Golf
Clubhouse, San Rafael*

Pre-registration required

415-485-6257 to pay by phone; or register online at Eventbrite (surcharge will apply); or mail your payment using the form below.

REGISTRATION FORM BUSINESS—ENVIRONMENT BREAKFAST: PESTICIDES AND BEES, FEB. 26, 2015

Name(s) _____

Title/Org. _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

MCL member \$15 Non-member \$20 Total Due \$ _____

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

card # _____

exp. date _____ name on card _____

cardsec.code _____ signature _____

Ticket price includes full breakfast buffet.

Pre-registration required by February 23rd.

Make checks payable to MCL or pay total due by credit card. Mail form to: MCL, 175 N. Redwood Dr., Ste. 135, San Rafael, CA 94903, or call 415-485-6257 or register online at

mckegleybreakfast.eventbrite.com

Refunds given only if the event is canceled.

Marin Carbon Project and the future of carbon farming: A conversation with Jeffrey Creque

By Judy Teichman

The Marin Conservation League has been privileged to offer members and the public the “inside scoop” on the [Marin Carbon Project \(MCP\)](#), beginning two years ago with MCL’s Business-Environment Breakfast featuring University of California Ecosystem Ecologist Dr. Whendee Silver, science advisor to the Project, and two informative programs this past year at the Wick-Rathmann Nicasio Native Grass Ranch, where it all began (MCL Newsletters: [Nov-Dec 2013](#), and [May-June](#) and [Sept.-Oct 2014](#)).

MCP co-founder, agroecologist Jeffrey Creque, Ph.D., has spent his entire career focused on the study and development of ecologically benign, or in this instance,



ecologically beneficial, agricultural systems. Currently he serves as a Director of the recently formed Carbon Cycle Institute (CCI), providing senior leadership on carbon farming and land management. We sat down together recently and Jeff shared his experience with the MCP, where it is today, and future plans for the Project.

JT: Please tell us how and when the Marin Carbon Project came to be.

JC: The MCP is a collaborative of agricultural institutions and practitioners in Marin that came together in 2007 around the question of how agriculture might be engaged as a climate change solution. Understanding the beneficial role of carbon in agriculture (all the carbon in plants comes out of the air), and the beneficial role of carbon in soil ecology and plant-soil relationships, we felt there was enormous potential to support agriculture while having a beneficial impact on the climate. In simple terms, carbon farming involves implementing practices that are known to improve the rate at which CO₂ is removed from the atmosphere and converted to plant material and/or soil organic matter.

The initial research effort, which involved applying ½ inch of composted organic green waste over grazed grassland, was carried out under the direction of Dr. Whendee Silver at UC Berkeley. We sought her help because we needed to be able to reliably measure the impacts of our work—no small challenge.

JT: When and why did you go full-time with the Project?

JC: I was engaged with the project as a volunteer from 2007 through 2013. As the demands of the work increased, we saw a

need for a formal entity that could provide financial and technical support for the MCP, which has no fiscal structure. CCI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and provides that structure. Grants and significant foundation support have allowed a small group of us to work full time on the project since late 2013.

JT: What is the focus of your work at this time?

JC: After several years of research, we are now working to implement what we've learned in order to realize the significant climate benefits we now understand are possible. Over the past year, the MCP has been working on “carbon farm plans” for three Marin agricultural operations. The process is similar to Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation planning on farms, but places carbon capture at the center of the plans. Undergirding the plans is the understanding that all ecosystem processes depend upon carbon, as embodied solar energy. Increasing terrestrial carbon capture not only helps mitigate global warming by taking carbon out of the atmosphere; it also supports the productivity, resilience and ecological integrity of agricultural systems and the landscapes they are part of.

These three demonstration plans will be implemented over a ten-year period. The MCP is proposing another twenty Marin carbon farm plans for completion over the next three years. We've also had strong expressions of interest from several Resource Conservation Districts beyond Marin. Our near term goal is to extend the concept statewide.

JT: What are the costs and challenges to implementing Carbon Farm plans?

JC: Development of a Carbon Farm Plan costs around \$5,000 to \$10,000, depending on the project. Costs of implementation might run anywhere from tens of thousands to several million dollars. Costs will vary, as will sources of funding. For example, a mitigation grant from the SMART Train will support STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed) to implement over 3,000 feet of riparian restoration on one of our demonstration farms. Other funding

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Creque *from page 8*

has come from the Wildlife Conservation Board, the State Coastal Conservancy, and the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program ("EQIP").

JT: Are there prospective sources for compost that will reduce the costs?

JC: Actually, I don't see the cost of compost coming down. If anything, it may go up as more people understand what compost can do and demand grows. California currently buries some 15 million tons of organics in landfills each year, and a similar amount of manure is stored in anaerobic lagoons on California dairies and livestock facilities. This and other organic waste materials in California total about 30 million tons annually. This buried material is producing methane. It should, instead, be processed aerobically and recycled as compost for soil improvement. Research is now underway to evaluate the composting process for its capacity to destroy pharmaceuticals and other compounds of emerging concern in biosolids from sewage treatment plants. This work will be featured during an international conference of mayors the City of San Francisco is hosting in 2015. Converting organic wastes, including human waste, to usable compost provides a triple environmental benefit in avoided methane emissions, improved soil quality, and enhanced carbon sequestration capacity.

JT: What are the more promising sources of funding for implementation of carbon farm plans?

JC: Currently, the most promising sources of funding could come from offsets required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to mitigate greenhouse gases associated with development projects. The value of these offsets is set by the counties themselves. Values have ranged from \$40 to \$250 per ton of carbon dioxide, or more, depending on the project.

JT: Could carbon farm plans be developed for the ranches in the Point Reyes National Seashore that could reconcile National Park Service (NPS) natural resource protection goals with the goal of maintaining viable

agricultural operations?

JC: Yes. The challenge would be the cost of developing the plans, finding sources of funding for implementation, and building a collaborative framework among the NPS, the Seashore Ranchers and the NRCS and Resource Conservation District (RCD). The NPS could offer the ranchers an offset against rent for implementing a Carbon Farm Plan, under a "stewardship contract." With the new longer-term leases, Seashore ranchers may be eligible for grants to enable them to implement carbon farm plans, or there might be a nexus with the carbon market that could support plan **development and implementation.**

JT: What are potential benefits for the ranchers who implement carbon farm plans?

JC: There are immediate benefits in the form of improved production, improved soil water holding capacity, improved soil fertility, improved water quality, improved wildlife habitat and improved resilience to climate change.

The market for on-farm carbon credits is not fully developed, but is emerging. Our Protocol for the sale of carbon credits from soil sequestration achieved through application of compost to grazed grassland was approved by the American Carbon Registry in October, and by the California Association of Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) as of December 10, 2014. Colorado State University is quantifying the carbon sequestration potential of our three demonstration Carbon Farms and has just developed a user-friendly tool to quantify the amount of carbon sequestered by 35 NRCS on-farm conservation practices. If the price of carbon goes where it needs to in order to make a real difference for the climate, farmers and RCDs writing and implementing these plans will be in a good position to receive financial support for that critically important work.

(Judy Teichman is a member of the MCL Board of Directors)

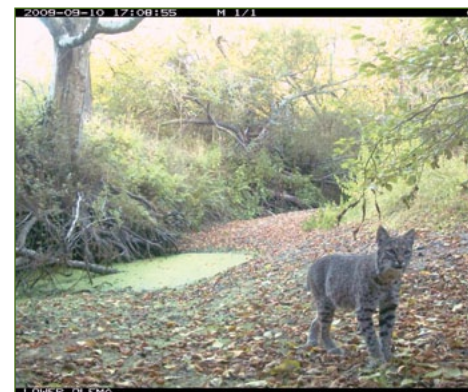
Status Updates *from page 5*

Madera Park nears fundraising goal

MCL continues to assist Marin Baylands Advocates and Marin Audubon Society as they seek grants and donations to fund the acquisition of the 5.2-acre Madera Park parcel at the Eastern end of Industrial Way, adjacent to the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. MCL members have contributed over \$14,000 to date and we expect pledges to almost double that amount in 2015. At this date, more than half of the acquisition goal of \$1.075 million has been reached. This partially filled site, when restored, will "close a critical gap" in the natural tidal wetlands in the Reserve.

Open Space wildlife cameras

MCL has criticized County Parks Department's resource-related documents as lacking in data on native wildlife species in the open space preserves. Plants in the preserves are well documented; habitats



An NPS wildlife camera captured this image of a bobcat in Olema in 2009.

of endangered and threatened species also are well known. But not much is known about the diverse populations of the native animals that inhabit the preserves, nor have the resources been available to collect such information. Traditional methods of collecting data on wildlife (boots on the ground) are costly.

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MCL Business Member Profile

ATCO Pest Control—Innovator in managing pests

by Linda Novy

ATCO Pest Control, a business member of MCL since 2011, is a leading innovator in environmentally thoughtful pest management. When asked why they joined MCL, Richard Estrada, ATCO's President, said that as a business owner, he has limited time to track important issues in Marin. He wanted to join up with an organization that monitors and takes action on Marin County's environmental issues. He added that he counts on MCL to do this!

And we're counting on ATCO to lead the way in integrated pest management (IPM) techniques that protect our environment. Here are a few examples of how they do that. To support their goal of protecting water quality in Marin County, ATCO has a unique approach for ant management for all new customers. Instead of using synthetic pesticides sprayed around the exterior perimeter of a house, they monitor for ant paths, and strategically place bait stations using bait with an active ingredient that is a naturally occurring mineral that doesn't harm water quality. Another example of environmental stewardship is the



Estella and Richard Estrada receiving the IPM Innovator Award from the Department of Pesticide Regulation

company's decision to move away from rodenticides; they prefer trapping. When clients request bait, ATCO offers a new product that reduces the likelihood of secondary poisoning. And, an exciting new service they offer is beehive extraction performed by one of their technicians, a beekeeper! To protect bees from Colony Collapse Disorder, ATCO doesn't use systemic insecticides such as neonicotinoids on flowering trees and shrubs. Their innovation also shows up in their fleet management as demonstrated by downsizing some of their trucks to hybrid electric vehicles that can be used when an IPM service call can be

efficiently handled without a truck.

These are only a few of their innovative approaches that have earned them the prestigious "IPM Innovator" award from the Department of Pesticide Regulation. Another point of pride is that ATCO provides pest management services to the County of Marin. In the larger arena of the San Francisco Bay Area, ATCO was the second pest control company to receive the Eco-Wise Certification, offered by the highly respected Bio Integral Resource Center. This certification recognizes pest control practitioners who apply common sense IPM techniques to effectively control pests without using harmful pesticides.

A company this passionate about what they do is going places, and ATCO is doing just that. They were scheduled to move to new quarters in the Bel Marin Keys area this past December to accommodate their growing enterprise. Check out their web site, atcopestcontrol.com, and watch the IPM Innovator video: you'll find yourself becoming more eco-literate about pest management! Thanks to the ATCO team for doing its part to protect Marin's environment.

Cameras *from page 9*

Now a solution that promises to overcome some of the difficulties of traditional wildlife monitoring has emerged. The Wildlife Picture Index Project (WPI) utilizes motion-activated cameras positioned along a grid at regular intervals and captures images of wildlife. The technology has been adopted by four public agencies in Marin—Marin County Parks, MMWD, State Parks, and National Park Service. After an initial pilot period of three to four months, the partnership will begin collecting wildlife

data across their respective boundaries. In the future the system could be employed by "citizen scientists" to offer valuable ground assistance to agency staff. For further information, see marinparks.org.

State Parks Forward Commission to wrap up

Over the past two years the Parks Forward Commission has been a moving target. Prompted by a series of warning signs that the State's 279 parks, reserves, historic sites, and recreation areas are in chronic financial

straits, the Commission was appointed in 2012 to conduct a thorough review of the system by reaching out to the public for input. MCL has sent several letters to the Commission and reported to our members, most recently in the [November–December 2014 Newsletter](#). The Commission's report is due early this year, followed by a final meeting on February 6 in Sacramento. We are eager to hear about much needed enhancements for managing and funding our rich state park legacy, but we also have concerns about possible losses. We will keep readers informed.

Measure A *from page 1*

year and the next fiscal year's preliminary draft budget.

The FY 2013-14 report of Measure A-funded activity was heartening on several levels! Out of a total of \$14,457,591 in sales tax received from April 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014, \$10,000,000 was budgeted for the three primary program areas. The Parks Department was able to add five rangers to improve visitor safety and provide assistance in the open space preserves, as well as about a half-dozen resource specialists to enhance park planning and natural resource management. Master plans for popular park facilities like Stafford Lake, McNears Beach, and Paradise Beach were initiated, and numerous deferred maintenance projects were begun, including such mundane actions as replacing aging equipment and installing dog waste stations at trailheads. The County also awarded six grants to the Breathe/Respira Community Grant Program to fund activities that enhance opportunities for all segments of the community to enjoy outdoor activities. No Measure A funds were used directly by the County for land acquisition this past year, although the Town of Fairfax contributed its Measure A allocation toward purchase of Sky Ranch (see page 5). Unused funds for land acquisition will carry over to future opportunities.

Meanwhile, representatives from Marin's eleven cities and towns and eight special districts met and agreed on an allocation formula for their share of funds for local park and playground renovations, open space vegetation management, and other local projects. The first disbursements for these were in January 2014 and will occur twice yearly. These jurisdictions are soliciting input from residents for projects to submit for Measure A grant awards.

The first matching grant under Measure A's farm protection program, \$537,000, was awarded to Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) to purchase an easement over the 623-acre Thacher ranch. This was MALT's 73rd purchase since its founding in

Gross Field *from page 1*

In October, the Commission voted to authorize a "Visioning" report to the Board of Supervisors, with the recommendation to proceed with the plans for the airport.

The project as proposed would extend the existing runway 1100 feet northwest and extend the taxi way and the levees that protect the runway, requiring filling existing marshland. Due to aviation safety restrictions (bird strike hazard), mitigation for loss of wetlands would have to be implemented outside a five mile radius. Ninety per cent of the project will be paid by federal funds, and up to two and a half percent can be sought from state sources. Commission staff is currently preparing reports required for FAA funding. Airport management has been working on enforcing the flight patterns of visiting aircraft to lessen noise impacts on residential neighborhoods south of the airport.

MCL's concerns continue to focus on the loss of marshes and the county's inability to mitigate in the immediate vicinity. For this reason, MCL is concerned that no consideration has been given to an alternative expansion less than the full 1100 feet. The three alternatives analyzed in the EIR and EIS were: no project (no extension), 1100 feet northwest, or a combination of 240 feet southeast and 860 feet northwest. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommended analyzing a shorter extension than 1100 feet in the EIS. A shorter runway extension would reduce the loss of marshlands and still improve operational safety. However, under any extension alternative, MCL is concerned about the effects of future sea level rise on the facility. The entire airport site is below sea level and is protected by multiple levees. As sea level rises it will be increasingly difficult to keep the runway and hangers from flooding. The costs of protection and liability of the county will continually increase.



Dru Parker

McNears Beach Park has upgraded some of its facilities with Measure A funds, and a Master Plan for the park is in the works.

1980. The family-owned ranch supports both sheep and grass-fed beef operations. The property is now part of a 20-ranch, 9,800 acre contiguous block of easement-protected farmland that includes a reach of Chileno Creek and circles the town of Tomales. Measure A farm protection funds also went to the Marin Resource Conservation District to support ongoing water quality improvements on farms, such as fencing, seeding, and mulching to enhance riparian areas.

Looking ahead, County Parks will continue to budget Measure A funds for projects and services that are beyond the capacity of existing staff and financial resources. County Parks also will leverage Measure A funds as possible to obtain grants for capital projects. The department also will continue its ongoing projects, including road and trail improvements, vegetation fuel reduction, and sediment and drainage management in the open space preserves. All Measure A budget and expenditure reports are available at marinparks.org

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Board of Directors meetings are held at 7:00 PM on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at the MCL office and are open to the public.

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Issues 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 P&OS:

3rd Wed. of the month, 3:00—5:00 PM

Water & Watersheds: Last Thurs. of the month, 4:00- 5:30 PM, S.R. Corp. Center

Climate Action Working Group, Agricultural Land Use, North Marin Unit meeting are variable, check website

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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MCL says "cheese" at Nicasio Valley Cheese Co.

On Dec. 9th, MCL members and guests toured the Nicasio Valley Cheese Company, owned by the pioneering Lafranchi family. Rick Lafranchi said the ranch was one of the first to be "MALTed," preserving it as farmland forever. Proud of his heritage, Rick and his brothers and sisters traveled to the

Ticino Region in Switzerland to learn traditional ways of making cheese from relatives. They now offer eight kinds of cheese both on site at the ranch and through selected stores in Marin.

MCL members were invited to the family home outside Nicasio where they



had a great view of both the 400 cow dairy and the Lunny Composting Facility, sited on the ranch. Compost is used as bovine bedding in the loafing barns and is also spread on fields to sequester carbon and enhance soil health.

—Sally Gale

The group surveys the Lafranchi Ranch.

Doug Wilson