

Traffic by any other name

by Nona Dennis

Drivers measure traffic delay by how much traffic is ahead and how slow or fast it is moving. The frustration caused by slow-and-go traffic is compounded by the driver's concern: "Will I be late?"

"Delay," loosely defined, is the difference between an ideal travel time and the actual time it takes to reach a destination. Typically, traffic delay is measured by the level of service (LOS)—that is, the number and maneuverability of vehicles filling the capacity at a signalized intersection or along a road segment at a given time, usually peak morning and evening hours. At LOS **A** we are traveling smoothly at speed limit and enjoying a high level of comfort. In contrast, at LOS **E** (unstable flow) or **F** (traffic jam), a drivers' level of comfort becomes poor. For example, what is the evening commute LOS for Sir Francis Drake Blvd. in Greenbrae, for the intersection of Mission and Irwin in San Rafael, or for Tiburon Blvd. when schools open in the morning? (LOS standards in Marin can range from **D** to **F**.)

Level of service standards have been embedded in local community planning for many years—in general plans, zoning codes, congestion management plans, etc. A decline in LOS as a consequence of adding new traffic from a proposed development project has long been identified as a significant impact under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). That impact alone can trigger preparation of an EIR and, by requiring mitigation, work as leverage to fund

Continued on page 10

The Story of Horse Hill

You can lead a horse to water—if there is any

Currently, twelve horses graze Mill Valley's Horse Hill, which offers expansive views of San Francisco, Mt. Tam and the Bay Region.



Robert Eichstaedt

While publicity continues to swirl around managing Marin County Parks' popular pathway along the Mill Valley waterfront, the twelve horses that currently graze on a nearby hillside known as Horse Hill are oblivious to the local attention. After all, they or their predecessors have grazed that hillside since the local dairying business ended in the 1940s. If the horses are not immediately visible to the thousands of commuters who pass by daily on Highway 101, they may be on the northern side of the hill, seeking shade on a hot day.

Horse Hill is not a stand-alone preserve. It occupies the south-facing portion of the 87-acre [Alto Bowl Open Space Preserve](#), which was acquired by Marin County Open Space District (now Marin County Parks) in 1993. One of the smaller of the County's 34

Open Space Preserves, Alto Bowl OSP offers trail connections to other preserves and public lands in Southern Marin: Camino Alto and Blithedale Ridge Preserves, providing access to all of Mt. Tam; and the Marin Headlands and the coast. The top of Horse Hill affords expansive views of Mt. Tamalpais, Tiburon Peninsula and the San

Continued on page 8

IN THIS ISSUE—

President's message—[page 2](#)

Actions and Status Updates—[page 3](#)

Events—[page 6](#)

Business member profile—[page 8](#)

Invasives on rangelands—[page 9](#)

Holiday party—[page 12](#)

A Message from the President



Welcome to MCL's November-December *Newsletter*. As you will see from this issue, this is a busy time of year! Our continuing Walks into Conservation History (Horse Hill on November 8),

and events show-casing Marin agriculture ("Fibershed" on October 19)—not to mention our busy committee meeting schedules—reflect the ever-growing demands on MCL. Our recent Business-Environment Breakfast covering the pros and cons of the hotly-contested Proposition 1 Water Bond was sold-out. We held our annual Leaders Circle Lunch at the Pacheco Winery in Novato in lovely Indian-summer weather. It was a rare opportunity to introduce MCL Leaders Circle members, who may have passed by

the vineyard many times on 101, to the oldest continuous-family-owned piece of land in the State, and to sample the family-produced wines!

MCL will soon celebrate its 81st year, and as generations of members know, MCL's work has benefited thousands of Marin County residents in the past and will continue to do so into our future. This track record is only possible because of the support of members like you. It's also that time of year when we ask for your continued support – you will soon receive a reminder notice to renew for 2015. Minimum dues remain the same at a modest \$35, although we always appreciate additional support. Your membership is a vote of confidence that ensures MCL's independent point of view and assures the larger Marin community that our positions are supported. Our committees continue to prepare letters on many significant issues, all of which can

be reviewed on MCL's [website](#). We strive to represent the views of our members. We are particularly grateful for the views of members who can participate in MCL committees or attend our events.

I don't know about you, but everywhere I look I see a new important issue—or a returning issue—coming up on our radar in the coming months. It could be as diverse as housing proposed to replace a favorite movie theater, or elk roaming in the pastoral zone of Pt. Reyes National Seashore. A strong MCL keeps us "at the table" on these and many more issues. Please renew your membership and retain your voice on the critical issues affecting Marin County.

Interested in the issues? Come to an Issues Committee Meeting!

Issues Committee members study projects and proposals and recommend actions to the MCL Board of Directors. Committee meetings are open to the public... but only MCL members can vote on actions. Join us and see first-hand how MCL influences local policy and decisions! Visit marinconservationleague.org/about-us/issues-committees for more information.

AGRICULTURAL LAND USE COMMITTEE monitors, reviews and comments to public agencies and decision-makers on land use planning issues pertaining to agriculture in Marin County. Meets quarterly at 9:00 AM in West Marin. *Co-Chairs: Sally Gale & Judy Teichman.*

LAND USE and TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE monitors, reviews and comments to public agencies and decision-makers on land use planning issues of countywide significance. Meets the first Wednesday of each month at 9:00 AM in the MCL conference rooms. *Chair: Susan Stompe.*

PARKS and OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE advocates for parks and public open space in Marin by participating in planning processes that involve the federal, state and county lands in Marin. Meets the second Thursday of each month at 3:00 PM at the MCL conference rooms. *Chair: Nona Dennis.*

CLIMATE ACTION WORKING GROUP focuses on cooperative efforts between agencies to combat the effects of climate change on a countywide basis. Meets on the fourth Friday of the month at 9:00 AM in the MCL conference rooms. *Co-chairs: Doug Wilson & Pamela Reaves.*

NORTH MARIN UNIT tracks issues and projects in the Novato area and makes recommendations to the appropriate Issues Committee. Meeting dates and locations vary. *Chair: Susan Stompe.*

WATER and WATERSHEDS PROGRAM SERIES consists of informational sessions with guest speakers on a variety of water-related topics. Meets the last Thursday of each month from 4:00 to 5:30 PM at the San Rafael Corporate Center. *Co-Chairs: Priscilla Bull & Ann Thomas.*

INVASIVE PLANT SUBCOMMITTEE supports the work of the Parks and Open Space Committee and focuses on non-native, invasive species and their effects on county ecosystems. Meets the third Wednesday of the month at 3:00 PM in the MCL conference rooms. *Chair: Paul Minault.*



MCL Actions & Status Updates

Whither the Water Bond?

By the time you read this Newsletter, California votes will have been counted on Proposition 1, the \$7.5 billion Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014, the "Water Bond." Polls were showing a slight edge in favor, but the fate of the proposition was not decided on October 3 when MCL hosted a lively and informative debate for a sold-out crowd of 80 at its Business-Environment Breakfast debate at McInnis Park Clubhouse.

Cynthia Koehler, Executive Director of [waternow](#) and former State Water Legislative Director at the [Environmental Defense Fund](#) and MMWD Director, set the stage as moderator, providing background to the proposed bond, which had its origins in 2009 as a politically unacceptable \$11 billion proposal.

The presenters are traditional "partners" in their long commitment to protecting the Delta resources, but on the bond they have diverged on what might be called "practical politics." Doug Obegi, staff attorney, Water Program, with the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) (NRDC), supported the bond, even while admitting it is "less than perfect." Compromises were necessary to gain bi-partisan legislative support,

he said, but the bond contains many positive features that further watershed management, local projects to reduce reliance on the Delta, including water reuse and stormwater capture, improved groundwater management, ecosystem restoration, and safe drinking water clean-up and protections.

Barbara Barrigan-Parilla, a long-time Delta advocate representing [No on Prop 1 Campaign](#), countered by saying that the proposition's \$2.7 billion assigned to surface and groundwater storage—one-third of the total—would return California back to an era of big dams. The proposition must be considered in the context of continuing stress on the Delta and the over-allocation of the State's limited water to satisfy industrial agriculture in the Westlands and urban demand in Southern California. Obegi and Barrigan-Parilla both oppose the twin-tunnel diversion project proposed by the Bay Delta Conservation Plan.

Whatever the outcome of Proposition 1, the sides to the current debate have garnered attention. Environmental interests have been split in their support or opposition. Several, including [Planning and Conservation League](#) (PCL), to whom MCL often looks for legislative leadership, determined to remain neutral. On the positive side, PCL noted, bond funds

would restore watersheds throughout the state to help replenish groundwater levels, protect fish and wildlife, and improve water quality in California's rivers, lakes and streams. Funds also would help ensure that clean, safe drinking water is available to disadvantaged communities facing acute water shortages.

On the negative side—emphasized also by Barrigan-Parilla—the bond devotes a disproportionate amount to wasteful, environmentally destructive surface storage projects, including three large dams. If Proposition 1 passes, PCL will work to

direct the storage funding towards more economically feasible and environmentally practical projects, especially groundwater storage, or, if it fails, work with the Legislature to develop a better water bond. Passed or failed, the water bond has more work ahead!

—Nona Dennis

Parks Forward Commission

Park proponents throughout the state are watching with great interest as California State Parks enters the next phase of long-term planning with the finalizing of the [Parks Forward Commission's](#) report on November 20. In 2013 the independent Commission was charged with analyzing the structure and operations of the State Parks Department and recommending specific improvements. The overriding conclusions in its report were that the Department is debilitated by outdated organizational structures, technologies and business tools; that it fails to reward excellence and innovation; and that it does not provide park experiences that serve all Californians.

The report contains the following recommendations, which would transform state park management and operations, change how individual state parks are run, protect natural and cultural resources, and serve all Californians and other visitors:

- A transformation team will develop and implement a new organizational structure and business model within two years to address needed improvements.
- State Parks must create new partnerships and remove hurdles that hinder relationships with agencies, non-profits and private companies so as to enhance programming and services to visitors.
- A non-profit California Parks Conservancy should be established to provide major support for Department programs.
- In order for park visitors to reflect the state's demographics, access must be expanded to serve California's underserved communities and urban populations and engage younger generations. The workforce, too, must reflect the state's demographics.

An aerial view of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.



©Daniel Parks, Creative Commons

Continued on page 4

MCL Actions & Status Updates

Parks Forward *from page 3*

- Establish stable and diversified funding including more entrepreneurial and revenue-generating strategies coupled with increased efficiency and accountability throughout the department.

The report identifies a timeline and the responsibilities for implementation of its recommendations. The full report can be accessed at parksforward.com.

Marin Conservation League has followed the Parks Forward Commission since its formation and has provided input at its public meetings. MCL's Parks and Open Space Committee continues to have some concerns: How will the public continue to be involved as recommendations are considered for implementation? In "meeting future outdoor recreational needs of the state," will natural and cultural resources be sacrificed? Will the expansion of overnight options create demand for more personnel and put greater stress on popular parks?

A major issue is whether all State Park Rangers must continue to be sworn peace officers. While neither the National Park Service nor the East Bay Regional Parks has this requirement, the status quo is supported by the California State Parks Peace Officer Association. The higher labor cost for hiring and training of peace officers means that there are far fewer Park Rangers than are needed. MCL has taken the position that

State Parks should institute a management-track, non-peace officer ranger employment category and will continue to track this unresolved issue.

—Susan Stompe

Non-natives step up watershed invasion

Several years ago, MMWD began a comprehensive update of its 1995 Vegetation Management Plan (VMP). In 2008, invasive broom covered about 900 acres of the watershed and was advancing at the rate of about 30 acres a year. Three years later, in 2011, the watershed contained about 1,000 acres of invasive plants (MCL *Newsletter* Jan.-Feb. 2011). MCL has followed the planning process where possible, including a field trip to heavily infested areas of the watershed to compare effectiveness and costs of various methods of eradication.

In fall 2012, the District re-named its VMP update the "Wildfire Protection and Habitat Improvement Plan" (WPHIP) to more accurately reflect the plan's main goals: to reduce fire hazard and protect habitat and biodiversity. The District also initiated environmental review of the Plan. Janet Klein, MMWD's Resource Management Program Director, again met with MCL's Water and Watershed Committee to outline its goals and the main alternatives to be examined in the EIR. The Plan, she explained, defines five vegetation management zones on the watershed, each reflecting degrees of disturbance, extent of weed infestation, and management needs. About 90 percent of the watershed is designated as Zone 1, consisting of high-quality habitat that is relatively free of human disturbance and weeds. Other zones are more infested with weeds. She reported that weeds covered 1,200 acres of the watershed and were still spreading at the rate of 30 acres a year (MCL *Newsletter* Nov.-Dec. 2012).

Recently, Klein returned

to a meeting of the MCL Water and Watershed Committee and her news was not good! With continuing spread of broom, plus better mapping techniques, the District reports that 1,400 acres of the watershed are now infested with broom, and the rate of spread has increased to 50 acres a year, a rate that is predicted to continue until at least year 2026. "The more you have," she said, "the more it expands."

To reflect the updated conditions, the Draft EIR, initiated two years ago, has had to revise its priorities and develop more targeted strategies for treatment of different zones. For example, the most disturbed, weed-infested areas in Zone 5, dubbed "Broomlandia," may be sacrificed as too costly to treat, while Zone 2, which coincides with many fuel breaks, may respond to aggressive manual treatment. Zones with weeds mixed in among valuable habitats may be the subject of "early detection, rapid response" approaches to limit spread.

Although the District continues to refine its toolbox for attacking weeds, and makes extensive use of volunteers to assist in the effort, broom is not the only weed that infests the watershed. Klein listed numerous other invasive species that the District should eradicate, such as pampas grass, cape ivy, thistle species, fennel, etc., not to mention a resurgence of eucalyptus and acacia species, and hawthorn. The needed work far exceeds current budget, she said.

The Draft WPHIP and Draft EIR are expected to be released for public review in early spring 2015. Among other analyses, the Draft EIR will identify the impacts of various control methods and compare the cost of various alternatives. Previous analyses by the District have shown that an alternative that includes strategic use of herbicide costs roughly one third the cost of alternatives that do not. MCL is waiting to review the Draft WPHIP and EIR before taking a position on any alternatives.

MMWD Kicks off EIR for Water Storage Plan

MMWD engineers have been working for several years on plans to replace aging

Continued on page 5



MMWD Resource Management Program Director Janet Klein and a student at St. Rita's School.

MMWD

MCL Actions & Status Updates

Draft WPHIP *from page 4*

storage facilities that serve as critical links in the District's inter-watershed transfer system of treated water. Two years ago, they outlined the key elements of the project at a meeting of MCL's Water and Watershed Committee (See MCL [Newsletter Jan.-Feb. 2013](#).) At that point, engineers had narrowed down alternatives to two preferred sites, the first above "Five Corners" and Deer Park Road near Bald Hill, and the second above Phoenix Lake, off Worn Springs Road. Near Bald Hill, a 4-million gallon cement tank would replace the Pine Mt. Tunnel, which was constructed about 100 years ago to transmit water from

project features have been further refined. The project now calls for reusing much of the soil excavated to reduce the tanks' visibility to fill and revegetate the nearby abandoned Bullfrog Quarry. The overall project will begin in 2016 and take some four years to complete. The public was given the opportunity to comment on the scope of the EIR at the September meeting at Marin Art and Garden Center. Those who spoke expressed concern over the massive size of the tanks, loss of vegetation, noise and hazards of extended construction traffic, such as cement trucks and transport of excavated soil, over popular recreation roads and through urban areas, and the

challenged in court by plastic bag interests because of the County's failure to conduct an EIR comparing impacts of plastic bags with those of paper bags, so implementation was put off.

Meanwhile in 2009, Fairfax voters approved a plastic bag ban initiative. San Rafael's then-Director of Community Development Bob Brown convened a broadly representative Single-Use Plastics Advisory Committee in 2011, which met over a six-month period (MCL [Newsletter Nov.-Dec. 2011](#)) and recommended that an ordinance similar to the one adopted by the County be adopted by all Marin County jurisdictions. But the County's unresolved legal challenge inhibited other Marin communities from enacting their own ordinances. It took another two years for the County to receive a favorable court opinion and begin implementing the ordinance in unincorporated Marin in January 2013. Other cities and towns in the County slowly began to follow suit.

The successful SB 270 legislation, authored by Los Angeles Sens. Padilla and de Leon, was co-authored by Assemblymember Marc Levine. The bill will prohibit grocery stores and large pharmacies from using plastic bags after July 1, 2015, and expand the ban to include convenience stores by 2016. The bill's passage was marked by compromise. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union gave their support only after the bill was amended to allow grocers to charge at least ten cents for reusable bags. For the plastics industry, the bill provides \$2 million in loans and grants to help manufacturers retrain its workers and adapt to producing reusable bags. At the signing of the bill, Levine remarked: "Once again, California is leading the nation in environmental protection."



*Assembly Member
Marc Levine
co-authored
SB 270.*



The 1-million gallon Ross Reservoir, built in 1927, would be replaced under the new Plan.

Dru Parker

Alpine Lake to the Ross Valley and San Rafael. Since 1970 the tunnel has been used to store three million gallons of treated water. Due to its deteriorating condition and potential water quality problems, the Tunnel is under orders to be replaced. Two 2-million gallon tanks would replace the one-million-gallon "Ross Reservoir," which was constructed in 1927 and is threatened by slope failure as well as out-dated engineering standards. With the three new tanks, the storage capacity for treated water would be roughly double current storage. A group from MCL by toured the sites with district engineers and came away impressed by the massive scope of the project and the engineering challenges.

On September 29, this year, the District officially initiated a lengthy Environmental Impact Report and permitting process for the project. In the last two years, the

visibility of tanks and retaining walls in the forested landscape. MCL submitted scoping comments on these and other issues, and will be tracking progress of the environmental review in the coming months. Further information is available from MMWD at marinwater.org.

SB 270—the ban is in the bag

Considering how long it has taken for Marin County communities to ban plastic bags from grocery stores, one would expect a major celebration following Governor Brown's signing of SB 270 into law on September 30. The idea of banning plastic grocery bags was soundly rejected by California lawmakers several times in the mid-2000s. In Marin, it took five years for then-Supervisor Charles McGlashan to get the approval of the entire Board of Supervisors in early 2011. That decision was

Events

Coming up Saturday, November 8, 9:30 AM– 12:30 PM

Walk into (Conservation) History: Horse Hill

On November 8th, MCL continues its series of Walks into (Conservation) History at a treasured site everyone has seen but not many have visited—[Horse Hill and the Alto Bowl Open Space Preserve](#) in Mill Valley.

Protected from development in the 1980s by a grassroots community effort, Horse Hill is home to fourteen horses that brighten the commute for thousands of Hwy. 101 travelers each day. Join us for a leisurely walk with 300' elevation gain and discover the history of this spectacular land. Wear layers and sturdy hiking shoes and bring your water, snacks and camera.

Directions: Meet in the [Scott Valley](#)



Robert Eichstaedt

[Tennis Club](#) overflow lot at **50 Underhill Rd.** From Hwy 101: take E Blithedale exit west towards Mill Valley. Turn right at Camino Alto, right at Azalea, right at Vasco, which turns into Underhill. Continue on Underhill for 0.4 miles, turn right at stop sign at Scott Valley Tennis Club entrance. Please park in lower lot only. Carpooling strongly encouraged.

Free, and open to the public—but please RSVP to 415-485-6257 or ONLINE at marinconservationleague.org/events. Family-friendly!

Leaders Circle Luncheon a feast for the fall

Perfect weather and delightful wine were enjoyed by MCL's Leaders Circle members on Saturday, October 11, at the historic [Pacheco Ranch Winery](#) in Ignacio. Guests enjoyed lunch by Comforts and complimentary tasting of the winery's Cabernet Sauvignon and discovered the rich history of the property, as related by Herb Rowland, a direct descendent of Ignacio Pacheco.

Many thanks to Vicki Nichols, Susan Stompe, Stu Smith, and Herb and Debbie Rowland and their family for making this annual event so special.

Clockwise from top right: Dee and Roger Roberts, Bob Cuneo; Kathy Cuneo; the gathering under the oak tree; Linda Novy, Kathy Lowrey



Group photo by Shannon Doherty; others by Judy Teichman

MCL Business Member Profile

Bellam Self Storage and Boxes

by Linda Novy

One look at the [Bellam Self Storage and Boxes](#) website and you know this company is in to the right stuff. They are Green Business Certified from the County of Marin (2006), 100% solar powered (2006), and have been chosen Best of Marin five years in a row. They are big supporters of San Rafael Clean and have been Business Members of the Marin Conservation League since 2006. Andree Jansheski, the owner of the company, is bubbling over with suggestions for “green” best management practices. In fact, you might call her an advocate and helpful coach that assists other businesses and homeowners green-up their own environmental practices.

Andree related that she meets lots of small business owners through her storage business and at the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce. When others tell her, “Oh, I can’t do that” – that is, become a green business, Andree’s response to that is to hand them one or all of her **7 Shades of Green** tip sheets that are headlined: “Everyone can chose a shade of green” and go on to list helpful suggestions on how to get there. She believes that even if we can’t all be a certified green business, we can all be a brighter green in our day to day practices. She especially advocates for home businesses to strive for energy conservation, recycling, pollution prevention, emission reductions, and other sustainable approaches.

Andree and her staff practice what she advocates for others. At Bellam Self Storage they don’t use bottled water, but have a filtered water

Jack and Andree Jansheski on the roof of their solar-powered storage facility at 24 Bellam Blvd. in San Rafael.



station, and encourage their customers to fill up there. All paper is used – not just for note pads, but shredded and used for packing materials. They purchase brown, unbleached paper towels, energy efficient light bulbs, and have a Shades of Green station at their building that has loads of information to help their customers become greener. Andree said that when people move out of their homes or have estate sales, many times they ask her what can they do with everything, tempted to throw things out? She provides them with a list of qualified non-profits who can channel furniture and other household goods to those in need. Andree goes on to say: “If it was used yesterday, it can be used tomorrow.”

She’s very proud of her company’s involvement with the San Rafael Streets Team and pays 1 cent per cigarette butt that is picked up. The collected butts are sent to Terra Cycle where they are made into pallets. San Rafael Street’s Team has already picked up 700,000 butts in San Rafael in less

than a year. Andree quips: “No, ifs, ands, or butts!” She is passionate about picking up litter, and does her own litter walks wearing a vest, gloves, and bucket generating applause from some, and curiosity from others. She encourages everyone to patrol their property and beyond to pick up any litter.

Andree supports the Marin Conservation League too, because the MCL’s mission and advocacy work align with her environmental goals. Andree and her team at Bellam Self Storage and Boxes are more than just a business; they are important environmental advocates that really walk the talk.

For more information about Marin Conservation League’s Business Members, visit marinconservationleague.org/resources/business-members. To join as a Business Member, call 415-485-6257. Business Members receive their own page on the MCL website as well as other benefits.

Horse Hill *from* page 1

Francisco Bay region beyond.

Saved from Development

It is easy to take Marin's parklands and open spaces for granted, as if they have always been there for our pleasure. But each has a story to tell, often beginning with vigilant neighbors determined to save the lands next door from development. Such was the case with Horse Hill.

The Horse Hill story could begin with the Coast Miwok, who camped on the Hill while gathering shellfish and tubers from nearby wetlands—or with the decades of dairy ranching in Scott Valley. For practical purposes, conserving Horse Hill from development began in 1961 and extended over almost three decades, sustained by neighborhood leadership and thousands of contributors, working with local officials, to acquire the land for the public.

Jim Welte related part of the story on Patch several years ago: Throughout the 1960s, 70s, and into the 90s the Hill was known as Howe's Hill, for Jim Howe, who managed 18 horses there. Howe, now deceased, was a long-time employee of Mill Valley Market, and spent much of his life caring for the equine inhabitants of the Hill. But at that time the Hill was privately

owned and zoned for development. Efforts to preserve 34-plus acres of Horse Hill started in 1961, when local resident Aline McClain fought a proposal to build 1,200 homes on the land. (In the process, she also prompted recall of two County Supervisors, shifting the Board's balance to an environmental majority at a critical time in Marin's history.) The standoff between developers and neighbors in Alto-Sutton Manor ebbed and flowed over the years. In December 1988, the Mill Valley City Council, led by Mayor Dick Spotswood, made preservation of Horse Hill a priority, and the city filed an eminent domain lawsuit against the absentee landowners.

At trial, the jury set the price of the land at \$2.4 million. The city set aside \$1 million from Prop. 70, a huge open space preservation bond issue passed by voters in 1988, and the County offered \$.8 million from the same source. The Save Horse Hill committee was able to generate tremendous community interest in raising funds. Many local residents with children who loved seeing the horsies on the hill contributed to the campaign, which raised more than \$500,000 to complete the acquisition. In 1990, Mill Valley bought the land and donated it to the Marin County Open Space District, which permanently preserved it as open space.

The Horses of Horse Hill

It was only natural that horses would then remain on Horse Hill. Thanks to a 1993 arrangement between Marin County Parks and Alto Bowl Horseowners Association (ABHA), fourteen horses are able to graze on 55 acres—continuing the decades-long use on the property. ABHA is responsible for costs and management of the herd and all equestrian facilities—shelters, corrals, hitch rails, manure bunker, fences and other horse-related improvements. ABHA volunteers also work with County Parks, school groups, and others in waging an ongoing battle against French broom and other invasive, exotic plants and restoring the preserve's habitats. According to Robert Eichstaedt, President of the ABHA, people and dogs are welcomed on Horse Hill with little interference from the horses. "The horses simply ask that the dogs stay with their human companions, either on leash or by voice control."

The "manure bunker," visible from Highway 101, is especially popular with local organic gardeners and is available to anyone with a shovel and bucket or truck July through January. Water for the horses is a current issue, however. Because two historic natural springs on the hill have dried up, ABHA now pays a neighbor to use his water. The group currently is engaged in a "[Buy A Horse A Drink](#)" campaign to raise funds for a pipeline to bring in municipal water.

On **November 8**, Marin Conservation League will lead a **Walk into the Conservation History on the Alto Bowl Open Space Preserve and Horse Hill** (See [page 6](#) for details). Since its 75th Anniversary in 2009, MCL has been leading quarterly 'Conservation Walks' into Marin's federal and state parklands and County open space—lands that became public only through the extraordinary efforts of ordinary people: neighbors passing petitions, raising funds, gaining the support of their electeds, and sometimes even going to court.

Source: Clipping files,
Lucretia Hanson Little History Room,
Mill Valley Public Library

A Horse Hill resident wonders where that pesky mountain has disappeared to.



Robert Eichstaedt

Invasive weeds threaten pastures and rangeland

This article continues the MCL Newsletter's recent coverage of non-native plants that have invaded Marin, threatening both the biological diversity and the economy of the county. Invasive, non-native plants have been a problem in Marin for many decades, but they have become especially challenging on agricultural land in recent years. Although annual grass species and herbs largely replaced native grasses more than two hundred years ago, Marin's grasslands support a treasure of native plants and wildlife. In recent years, agricultural producers in Marin are seeing their pastures and grassy hillsides being overtaken especially by noxious members of the sunflower family *Asteraceae*—purple starthistle (*Centaurea calcitrapa*) and woolly distaff thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*). These species are in addition to the familiar French broom (*Genista monspessulana*) and, to a lesser extent, Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) that are common invaders of both woodlands and grasslands throughout much of the Bay Area.

Most of Marin's coastal grasslands are owned by ranchers and are used for grazing dairy and beef livestock. Although the loss of this habitat to aggressive weeds is a concern for all, the responsibility for control or removal has been left to private landowners, at a cost that can run into the tens of thousands yearly and take many work-hours away from regular ranching operations. Especially troubling is the rate at which thistles spread if left untreated and the difficulty of removing them when the plants cover steep hillsides. One rancher has estimated that woolly distaff thistle is increasing seven-fold per year.

The MCL Agricultural Land Use Committee took up this topic at its meeting on July 25 in Pt. Reyes Station. Attendees heard a presentation by Guy Kyser, University of California Davis Plant Sciences Department Weed Specialist, on

approaches to controlling three thistle species in rangeland. The focus of Mr. Kyser's presentation was on the biology of thistles, woolly distaff thistle in particular, and the efficacy of biological, mechanical, and chemical controls. The discussion ranged widely over methods of control and the particular challenges faced by organic ranchers when selecting control methods that are both consistent with organic regulations and effective over the long term.



Parque Nacional de las Tablas de Daimiel (Spain) /Creative Commons

Woolly distaff thistle

Woolly distaff thistle (pictured above in its native Spain) is indigenous to the Mediterranean region and thus is well suited to Marin's similar climate and soils. It is an aggressive pest that degrades

A single plant can produce 18,000 seeds, which can remain viable for up to two decades.

rangelands by displacing forage plants and making access for livestock difficult. The painful combination of leaves with spiny

margins and spiny flower heads can injure the mouths and feet of grazing animals. This winter annual germinates over several months and the following summer produces seed that can be spread by wind, animals, and vehicles. Woolly distaff thistle is not as wide-spread throughout California as other noxious thistles, such as yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) and purple star-thistle, but a single plant can produce 18,000 seeds, and those seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to two decades.

Control methods in common use are based on the principles of [Integrated Pest Management](#) (IPM), which involves selecting the most effective and least harmful methods that are best suited to the biology of the species and ecological conditions. Complimentary eradication methods follow both organic and non-organic approaches and can include mowing or pulling plants or weed-whacking just prior to flower formation, and, where appropriate, strategic chemical treatment with a broadleaf selective herbicide early in the growing season (February through April) when plants are small.

When herbicides must be used, weeds are first manually removed by working inward from the outside of the stand toward the primary infestation, thus reducing the area to be sprayed. Where entire stands of thistle cannot be controlled by any method, infestations need to be confined to one area so as to prevent their spread. Short-term control methods without follow-up may temporarily slow the spread but are impractical and costly.

Control on organic ranches

[Marin Organic Certified Agriculture](#) (MOCA) currently certifies 56 ranches and farms as organic, a number that will likely expand. They comprise about 30 percent of all agricultural operations in the County. Approximately 75 percent of Marin dairies—or about 36,000 acres—are certified organic, which means their options for controlling weeds are more limited, such as allowable herbicides, than their conventional counterparts. Several certified organic

Continued on page 10

Invasives *from page 9*

sites in Marin have moderate to large invasive weed infestations that continue to encroach onto pastureland, rangeland, and open space.

Current plans

Late last year, the Marin County Agricultural Commissioner and UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor proposed an invasive weed management plan to help prevent and control these weeds on the ranches. The plan is currently under review due to the costs of environmental review. It has received support from two dozen area agencies and organizations, including MCL. If authorized, it would employ IPM protocols and framework as the most effective approach for controlling noxious weeds, given the combination of organic and non-organic agricultural production systems that exist in Marin. The MCL Agricultural Land Use Committee will continue to track efforts to eradicate these weeds.

Sally Gale, Judy Teichman, and Eva Buxton contributed to this article.

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Traffic *from page 1*

local traffic improvements.

A new view of transportation

The passage in late 2013 of SB 743 may have changed forever the reliance on LOS as an indicator of local traffic conditions. SB 743 was viewed initially as a thinly disguised political attempt by Sen. Darrell Steinberg to remove the threat of litigation from environmental review of the proposed Sacramento Kings Arena, but it proved to be far broader. A new chapter added to the CEQA statute reflects the bill's intent: "Modernization of Transportation Analysis for Transit-Oriented Infill Projects." By shifting the focus of transportation analysis in EIRs from automobile delay (measured by LOS) to reduction of greenhouse gases, as measured by Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), SB 743 is the logical next step in aligning the state's transportation and land use policy with transportation-related greenhouse gas reduction goals adopted first in AB 32 (California Global Warming

and intersections as 'mitigation' for traffic impacts.

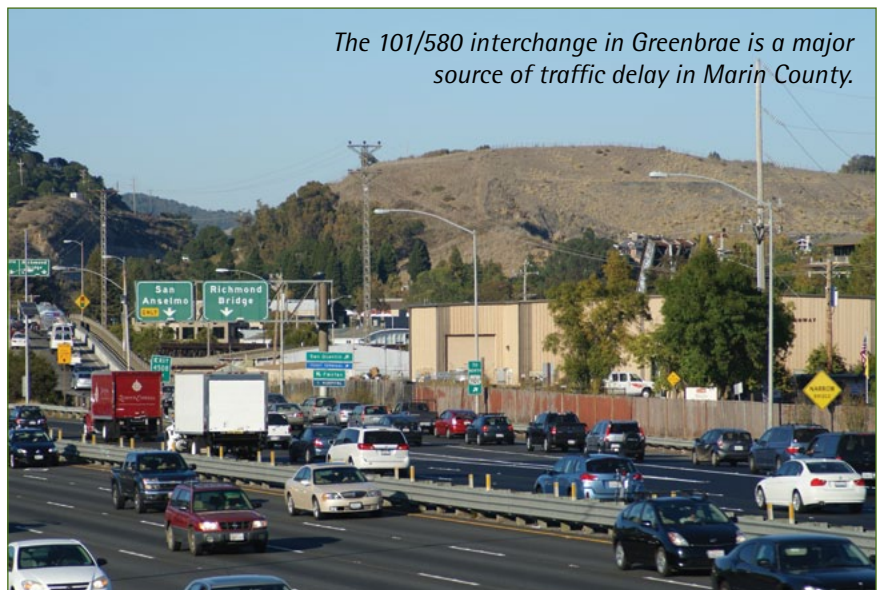
Over the past summer, the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) issued Preliminary Draft CEQA Guideline amendments, as required by SB 743. If adopted, the new guidelines will have widespread implications for how local traffic is mitigated under CEQA and the leverage local governments have over developers in mitigating traffic congestion.

Sea-change in traffic metrics

In basic terms, the proposed Guidelines shift the primary criterion for a significant impact from LOS to VMT. That is, projects that cause people to drive an increased number of trips and their distances,

Traffic delay will not be a "significant impact."

measured by VMT, will be found to have a significant environmental impact on transportation. Mitigation will be required.



Solutions Act of 2006) and reinforced in SB 375 (Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008), which also spawned the controversial Plan Bay Area. In so doing, SB 743 challenges the longstanding view that the primary goal of traffic analysis under CEQA is to identify and relieve traffic congestion, or automobile delay, by building bigger roads

To minimize VMT, the Guidelines support transportation-oriented development projects, such as mixed-use and affordable housing, that increase walking, bicycling and public transit use.

The Draft Guidelines also recommend that "induced travel" be analyzed as an impact when arterials or highways are

Continued on page 11

Traffic from page 10

widened in response to congestion and delay. Induced travel refers to the increase in traffic volume that occurs soon after a new highway is opened or a congested highway is widened. In other words, "we can't build our way out of traffic congestion" because any increase in highway capacity is quickly filled up with additional traffic. According to this argument, expanding roadways in congested areas, a typical mitigation under CEQA, should actually be examined as a possible growth-inducing impact. Aesthetics and parking also will no longer qualify as significant impacts in an EIR on infill development.

Infill brings its own congestion impacts.

The Draft Guidelines have already generated extensive comments from transportation engineers, planners, local government officials, lawyers, and consultants debating traffic models and metrics and balancing state transportation and land use policy with traditional local control over traffic. Public comments on the Draft Guidelines are due to OPR by November 21.

State goals vs. local control

From a long-term state planning standpoint, continued reliance on LOS fails to support climate initiatives to reduce greenhouse gases because it favors automobile-oriented improvements, particularly roadway expansions. LOS-based analysis undervalues improvements to alternative transportation modes like public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel, and it discourages infill development in favor of sprawl. Local communities have become dependent on LOS as a means to mitigate impacts of both ad-hoc projects and cumulative development. Under SB 743 communities will need to take a broader view to understand how efficient their networks are and how they contribute to or detract from greenhouse gas emissions on a larger scale.

The amended Guidelines will make it easier to produce residential and mixed-use development infill projects, near to



Dru Parker

The new guidelines will make it easier for the public sector to build pedestrian, bicycle, and transit projects such as the new Larkspur bike/ped overcrossing.

transit centers and corridors, and for the public sector to build pedestrian, bicycle, and transit projects. In essence, they will speed up projects and plans that assist the State in meeting the AB 32 (Climate Act) deadlines.

Not everyone sees this as a positive direction, however. Infill development brings its own congestion because not all residents will take alternative modes of transportation. They will use their cars. Fortunately, the Draft Guidelines will not eliminate the ability of cities and counties to use their police power and their general plan policies to mitigate congestion.

According to California planning and environmental commentator Bill Fulton, OPR anticipated pushback from local agencies accustomed to using CEQA to gain traffic improvements from developers. The Draft Guidelines address the impacts of traffic congestion in several ways:

- Analysis of local safety impacts (caused by congestion) is appropriate for CEQA analysis, although traffic safety until now has not been subject to CEQA analysis.
- The environmental impacts of traffic congestion—including noise and air quality—will continue to be analyzed under CEQA, but mitigation for these impacts will be required focus on resolving specific noise and air quality problems, not

on traffic congestion *per se*.

- Local general plans and ordinances will continue to give agencies leverage over developers through such means as traffic impact fee programs, but they may have less clout in imposing additional traffic and parking mitigations without a supporting traffic analysis under CEQA.

These provisions may be of particular importance in Marin County, where LOS standards of **E** and **F** are commonly exceeded, and where alternative public transit systems are very limited. For example, much of the City of San Rafael is approaching the LOS standards limit for many intersections (most have a standard of LOS **E** or even **F**). In order to encourage development that would meet San Rafael's housing and economic vitality goals, even in congested areas, City policy allows for evaluation of projects that exceed LOS standards.

Phasing in New Guidelines

The new guidelines, when adopted, will take effect immediately only for projects within a half-mile of high-quality transit corridors. They will apply to the whole state on January 1, 2016. This delay gives local governments and their consultants a reasonable time period for evaluate an array of traffic modeling options and adapt to the new transportation analysis methods.

In general, MCL supports the Preliminary Draft CEQA Guidelines implementing SB 743 because they further the goals of the State's long-range transportation planning and the reduction of vehicular greenhouse gases. They are also consistent with the climate action policies of most Marin communities. At the same time, it is essential that the Guidelines not compromise the existing powers of local governments to regulate land use and transportation projects in Marin or their ability to mitigate traffic congestion wherever possible. We would not want to see LOS disappear as an essential transportation planning tool any time soon!

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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

Water & Watersheds: Last Thurs. of the
month, 4:00– 5:30 PM, San Rafael Corp.
Center

Climate Action Working Group: 4th

Friday of the month, 9:00 am—Noon

Agricultural Land Use: meets quarterly,
check website; *North Marin Unit:* varies,
check website

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County's natural assets.

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