

FINAL

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Agricultural Land Use Committee

April 22, 2016

Sally Gale chaired the meeting at the Marin County Farm Bureau Board Room in Pt. Reyes Station. Present for some or the entire meeting:

Gordon Bennett	Dan Brown	George Clyde
Sam Dolcini	Sally Gale	Burr Heneman
Scott Johnson	Leslie Lee	David Lewis
Dewey Livingston	Ted McIsaac	Ralph Mihan
Bob Miller	Paul Minault	Vicki Nichols
Stephan Parnay	Pamela Reaves	Dennis Rodoni
Frederick Smith	Judy Teichman	Susan Van Der Wall
Gordon White		

Sally Gale called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Due to technical equipment needs, the agenda was revised as reflected in the minutes.

1. Updates:

- Comprehensive Ranch management Plan and EA, Elk and Johne's Disease: Judy Teichman reported that because of a lawsuit filed in February challenging the Point Reyes National Seashore [PRNS] Ranch Management planning process, Seashore Outreach Coordinator Melanie Gunn was unable to give a report on the status of the Ranch Management Plan and EA. However, Judy reported that Superintendent Cicely Muldoon has confirmed publicly that the planning process continues. Judy also provided copies of an excerpt from the San Francisco Bay Area National Parks March 2016 Natural Resources and Science Monthly Update on the annual tule elk census and detection of Johne's Disease in two elk in the D Ranch herd through testing of fecal material and subsequent testing of the tissue of several elk. [See: www.sfnps.org/blog 3/31/16]
- MCL Board Action Since January 22 meeting: Judy distributed copies of MCL expressions of support for the Ranch Management planning process published as a Marin Voice piece in the Marin IJ on February 25 and a slightly revised version published in the Point Reyes Light on March 3, 2016. She said MCL President Kate Powers reported that she had received several positive responses to these pieces. Judy also distributed an article on ranch management planning that will be published in the May/June MCL Newsletter.

2. Proposed Park Ranch Management Plan Workshop Series: Sally announced a plan to organize a series of public workshops on issues pertinent to the Ranch Management Plan. David Lewis will join her in this MCL effort to increase understanding of the elements in a Ranch Management Plan. Possible subjects mentioned by Sally include lease terms,

alternatives for succession planning, agricultural diversification, and environmental conservation. Comments and additional suggestions for workshop topics include:

- Clarify the terms of the leases, such as who is responsible for maintenance of structures and fences, water quality and pasture health, and what are the terms of subsidies/payments/discounts given to the ranchers.
- Correct public misperceptions, such as the benefits from and reason for manure spreading by manure truck and other practices the public might see as detrimental, such as why holding pens are not grassy and why the public is not allowed into the core area of the ranching operations (but are allowed to hike where there are no bulls or new mother cows). Why does the public see the ranchers enjoying themselves on their ATVs?
- Describe the terms of the leases and explain the differences in lease agreements from ranch to ranch going back to when they were established. What is a life estate and why do some have them and not others?
- Clarify the administrative structure of the PNRS and the GGNRA.
- Describe the original legislation and testimony before congress and the compromises that were made and how it came to be that the ranches were considered an integral part of the Park.
- Discuss mechanisms to enable public input and involvement, such as an advisory commission. Do we want to bring this back? Why and why not?
- Describe the way the park is operated, administered and the laws under which it operates.
- Spend some time describing the economics of ranching and dairying, in the Park and outside of the Park. Compare and contrast.
- Describe actions taken by the Park and the landowners to improve the land/ water/ habitat/environment on ranches and to protect endangered species on Parkland that is also ranchland.

In closing the discussion, Sally urged people to email additional suggestions to MCL with a note asking that the email be forwarded to her.

3. Presentation: “Barn Preservation at Point Reyes:” Gordon White, Chief, Integrated Resource Management, PRNS, described the background for barn preservation on ranches managed by the Seashore and introduced speaker Dan Brown, retired NPS Historic Preservation Specialist. Key points:

- There are four levels of treatment for work on historic properties under the Secretary of the Interior’s standards for historic preservation. Dan and his crew were responsible for the “preservation” level of treatment used for historic buildings in the Seashore. It involves taking measures to “sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property.” The other levels of treatment used for PRNS buildings is “rehabilitation,” which is “the act or process of apply measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property,” such as the Red Barn at Bear Valley.

- Gordon W. pointed out that in a working landscape, such as the pastoral zone in the Seashore, managing the natural resources is integral to preserving the historical, built fabric of the park.
- Historic preservation work is labor intensive and requires high skill level.
- Gordon W. pointed out that funds for preservation are limited, and that because of financial and staff limitations most projects have to be phased.
- Unforeseen conditions are often discovered in working on historic buildings To avoid costly change orders, PRNS staff do the repair work on barns using contractors for more routine jobs, e.g., replacing a roof. When the preservation work is completed, the rancher/lessee is responsible for ongoing maintenance of the barn.
- Wind is the enemy of big barns at the Seashore. Although there are instances where it has been permitted, PRNS generally does not allow the ranchers to install metal roofs because they are not historically accurate.
- Not every national park has an historic preservation crew. Dan gives former PRNS superintendent Don Neubacher credit for having established the historic preservation crew at the PRNS.

Using slides, Dan reviewed the challenges and nature of the work done on several barns in the Seashore: C Ranch, Spaletta Dairy Old Milking Barn; D Ranch, Horick Dairy Horse Barn and Old Milking Barn; I Ranch, McClure Dairy Old Milking Barn; M Ranch, Grossi Ranch Old Milking Barn and Horse Barn; and the “Old Milking Barn” on the Waldo Giacomini Ranch in Point Reyes Station. Dan closed showing February 2016 wind damage to the barn on D Ranch. Winds were clocked at 105 mph at the Lighthouse on the day that the wind blew in the northeastern section of the barn. It was the one section that was not restored earlier.

Dan’s presentation concluded with a question from historian Dewey Livingston: “[h]ave you worked on other types of buildings in the Seashore and would you come back and talk about them sometime?” Dan said he would be happy to return and talk about his work on a variety of historic structures in the Seashore.

4. Report on April 22, 2016, Draft of a Noxious Weed Ordinance by Stefan Parnay, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner, Marin County. Stefan explained the reasons for updating the ordinance now. They include the fact that the current ordinance was last updated in 1959 and the need to ensure there is an effective process in place to manage invasive weeds long-term, especially on agricultural lands. Stefan explained that the County Department of Agriculture has a responsibility to promote and protect agriculture, and the process of addressing noxious weed issues starts education and outreach and transitions into a progressive enforcement process intended to effectively manage noxious weeds within the County. Key points:

- The ordinance will apply to all lands in Marin County, other than the federal lands, where land managers work collaboratively with the County on weed control. The department will work closely with park official to address noxious weed issues on federal lands.

- The ordinance will spell out a clear process that the Agricultural Commissioner must follow prior to any proposed enforcement action on agricultural land.
- A violation of the ordinance will occur when a landowner (1) “knowingly [permits] noxious or deleterious weeds to exist, grow or mature upon land at levels determined by the agricultural commissioner to adversely impact agriculture and/or the ecology,” and (2) the landowner fails to “actively manage infestation(s) as determined by the agricultural commissioner.”
- Enforcement actions are intended to lead to landowner accountability through the use of binding performance agreements, which stipulate what actions the landowner must perform to ensure that the noxious weeds in question are effectively managed taking site-specific conditions into account.
- The draft ordinance recommends that landowners actively managing noxious weeds “maintain a record of the best land management practices used,” including dates, methods employed and any other information that “helps to demonstrate the land management activity.”
- The ordinance *only* affects those landowners (or land managers) who are not actively managing invasive weeds on their land.
- The department wants to pursue development of a 10-year weed management plan. With or without a 10-year plan, the department would like to have the currently inactive Landowner Advisory Committee, which was created three years ago, assist in development of a long-term weed management strategy and implementation of the proposed ordinance.
- The draft ordinance is a work in progress with no current target date for submittal to the Board of Supervisors.

Marin County Farm Bureau President Sam Dolcini commented that he would like to see more emphasis on incentives than penalties in the ordinance. He would also like to see other land management agencies in the county cooperate with efforts to control the spread of noxious weeds since wind, birds and other animals, including humans, carry seeds across property lines.

5. Point Reyes Village Association Leadership Circle May 4 Forum for Candidates for the Board of Supervisors from District Four: Mark Switzer from the Leadership Council reported:

- The Leadership Circle has been in contact with all 10 West Marin villages to encourage them to identify the issues particular to their locale.
- Members of the public are invited to submit written questions for the candidates. The Forum will be moderated by Samantha Kimmey, reporter for the Point Reyes Light, and Kate Eberle, Community Affairs, at KWMR. The eight candidates will be given some questions in advance of the Forum. Other questions will be asked at the Forum.
- Written questions for the candidates can be mailed to Candidates Forum, c/o Mark Switzer, P.O. Box 519, Point Reyes Station 94956 or emailed to markswitzer@hotmail.com with a subject line, “Candidates Forum.”

- The Forum will be recorded and archived by KWMR and broadcast on June 1, a few days before the primary election on June 7th.
- With eight candidates, it is most likely that there will be a runoff election in November. The Leadership Circle is considering organizing a debate for the candidates remaining in the race after the June primary.

6. Meeting Adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Next Meetings: **July 22**
 October 28