

## **MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE**

**Climate Action Working Group: June 17, 2016**

**Tamalpais Conference Room, 175 N. Redwood Blvd., San Rafael**

Present: Doug Wilson, Mary Morgan, Rick Fraites, Kate Powers, Pat Nelson, Norma Fragoso, Steve Crooks, Judy Tecihman, Bob Miller, Bill Carney. Guest speaker: Dana Armanino.

Doug called the meeting to order at 9:03.

### **Brief Introductions**

#### **Adoption of the Agenda**

Agenda adopted M/S/P. Judy/Bill/P.

#### **Approval of May minutes**

Judy raised a question about a position on methane digesters attributed to her. She will send a correction via email. Mary asked about the meaning of the term “additionality.” Dana explained this term of art. The May minutes will be revised to incorporate Dana’s clarification.

#### **Discussion 9:15: County Climate Action Plan**

Guest speaker Dana Armanino, Senior Sustainability Planner with the County’s Community Development Agency, outlined the role that the county can perform in implementing the Climate Action Plan and interacting with citizen groups. These efforts are dependent on staffing and funding. Ninety percent of the funding for Dana’s position is covered by energy grants, so she works mostly on energy projects, including some work on long-term energy efficiency. She managed the development of the Climate Action Plan (CAC). There is not currently a position dedicated to overseeing the implementation of the CAC. Functions related to implementation are dispersed. An oversight role was formerly filled by Dawn Weisz, who managed energy and sustainability initiatives for the County of Marin, and is now CEO of Marin Clean Energy. Sustainability positions in general are covered by grants. Omar Pena recently left his planner position with the county—a setback for climate efforts. The County is now in the hiring process to fill his position. They are trying to reduce the grant portion of this position. The other portion of the position is working with Supervisor Damon Connolly.

The situation, and work on the climate plan, is ever-evolving.

Q, Doug: Does the grant funding for staffing come through PG&E? A: Dana: All funding comes from ratepayer funds. The fiscal administrative portion is PG&E. The County works with PG&E on the Energy Watch partnership. BayREN (Bay Area Regional Energy

Network) is managed by ABAG with CPUC approval. Funding is allocated to third-party contractors.

Q, Doug: Who is the County contact point for climate issues? How might we encourage the County to staff up/budget up? A: Dana is a temporary point of contact. Dana would love to know how to partner on carbon sequestration issues. She made a request to the Carbon Institute, with a question re funding, and never got answers. The County needs information re the appropriate budget “ask.” Dana would okay MCL to facilitate getting answers. She needs a starting point re the scope of the “ask.”

Judy and Bob Miller are working on an economic study, to the extent that this can be done, on the cost/benefit of carbon sequestration, especially on Marin ranchlands. There is a limited body of evidence. Relevant factors include dollars per metric ton, the cost of sequestration and how it compares with other options available. Also to be considered are the motivations of current economic actors—market-driven motives indicate we are swimming with the current. There is a lack of carbon trade money. There are co-benefits that come with carbon sequestration; what are co-benefits? The project entails talking with ranchers and ag advisors.

Dana: Could a model be used to lower the cost per ton? Bob: Yes, in the longer view. As players moves into activities, the easier ways exhausted and they must move to more costly measures. Oil companies are using \$40/ton as a planning figure. The effort requires a research and development period.

Dana: What about annual offsets? Bob: In any year, you purchase an offset for the year. Judy: One cost is monitoring to make sure uses haven’t changed. Bob: You are purchasing a permanent reduction. Judy: The players need transaction experience. Dana: One issue is, can we find a grant? Demonstrate the science, then the transaction. She needs a discrete “ask.”

Doug: Huffman bill 5316, the Healthy Soils and Rangeland Solutions Act, asks Congress to fund test cases under a carbon sequestration pilot program. Dana: A letter of support could help to move this along. Doug: Funding is very unlikely. Look at alternative ways. Judy: Advocate within the Ranch Management Plan for the seashore. One application was submitted; the Park Service said it was premature. This could be a model for carbon-negative land use. They could build incentives into leases. The County could participate.

Steve: Payments are annual but only derive results when you do monitoring. Monitoring can be expensive. The Feds might be the people to talk to. They have documents on ecosystem services. The White House has a goal for mid century. The Department of Interior is interested. Might there be a demonstration project? Rick: Can an individual park make a determination without it being part of a uniform policy? Can they negotiate incentives in lease, or do they have to go up the chain? Judy: They would take this into account in setting lease rates.

Mary: Have any ranches gotten money? Are there barriers? Rick: There have been projects to fence out cattle. Judy: There have been RCD (Rural Community Development) grants restoration projects. Short-term leases are a factor.

Doug: Lots of people are looking for partners. There is not a project to enable collection of the data we want. Focus on the state level? Judy: For an average size farm, the cost is up to \$1 million. Doug: There is a clear need. Bob: There are missing players. The Marin Carbon Project has lots of fish to fry. They are moving in direction of determining what they need. Question re Climate Action Plan is, with many things touched up, how to keep track of all? What is the County capacity to help in getting fed grants? This is a Herculean task even if there is a paid person.

Dana: It is a big document, but many measures are already in process and grants are coming through in the areas of transportation, energy, zero waste, for example. We need a tracker and a dissemination point. We are working on a solar ordinance that cities can sign on to.

Bob: Re Appendix C, adding up the figures 70% of planned reductions are state-related and would be happening anyway; 30% are market- or mandate-driven, responding to local codes. What is the County's biggest point of leverage?

Dana: The County has most sway on unincorporated areas' building codes. This concerns new construction/substantial remodels. Transportation is more challenging. Some requirements apply only to large new developments, which we don't have. Marin Transit reports ridership is up. County hopes to support, work with Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM).

Bill: Is it possible to impose a county increment to the gas tax? Dana: There is a way to apply some tax, not on gas tax. Sales tax is TAM question. Taxes have to go to a vote.

Doug: About 10-12 years ago, there was a measure to enable imposition of additional gas tax—looking to put it on ballot region-wide, use the funds for local streets/roads. Bill: This would constitute a carbon tax.

Bob: The estimate of Marin's contribution is very low. What is Marin's potential role? Re adopting some form of carbon tax, Marin could be a model for others. How would this be calculated and applied? Address the problem head on. Doug: This would require staff to monitor. The Air Board has staff for monitoring. It is more difficult to apply across the board to consumers. Rather than a gas tax, call it a carbon tax. Bill: Huffman has proposed this nationally.

Judy: Ranchers have an interest in increased forage. What Strauss has done, has paid for itself. Dana: Pay to do it or have low- or zero-cost loans. Judy: Ranchers will find a way to qualify for incentives.

Doug: There is a potential source of funding from cap and trade. This is the best shot. It would need to be structured so we can make the "ask."

Dana: Does MCL meet with the Ag Commission?

Mary: Talk to venture capitalists.

Judy: Our economic study will help. People are comforted by data, which is still scarce. We hope to work with the Marin Carbon Project.

Bill: There is potential for sequestration in ranchland. We should also factor in wetlands and other wildlands and urban forest in the eastern part of county. We are facing loss of forest to sudden oak death. Dana: There is a measure in the CAP land conservation section to acquire non ranchland forest land. There is not a specific wetlands measure. In the energy section, there is a provision for shade tree planting. Bill: Are there metrics to be integrated? Dana: We did not calculate carbon benefits for land conservation. Bill: There is some potential for a model demonstration in West Marin.

Bob: On the science side, there is data. We do not have comparable economic data. See Whendee Silver's numbers. [Editorial note: Professor of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management at UC Berkeley. See <http://news.berkeley.edu/2015/09/29/to-the-rescue-berkeley-names-faculty-climate-action-champion/>]

Steve: In Africa, work is done on a community scale. This is more efficient in bringing in funding. The problem there is that they can't police, provide policing, legal structure. To get a response, you don't talk about carbon financing, you talk about threats to natural resources. Talk about increased production, carbon sequestration a concomitant benefit. Use this approach in marketing, packaging to ranchers and policy makers.

Rick: Could it be brought down to level of individual neighborhoods—for example, neighborhoods with lots of open land. Bill: Resilient Neighborhoods has a specific action re planting trees, also home composting before going on to bins. There is a start there. There is a logical connection w Marin Sanitary for compost use by ranchers. Is there an influence there for them to discount? Judy: There is not enough compost. It costs money. Transportation is an issue.

Kate: Is there any overlap with Sea Level Rise studies? Dana: After the 2014 draft, there was then a need to do a vulnerability assessment etc. Jack Liebstrer is "on it." They have overtaken the county on this issue. Bill: Is there a role for a citizens committee? Dana: This is ever-evolving. The Pena position has opened up and the County is going out to hire for the position. The County is reworking the position to reduce the amount based on energy. There will be more time to coordinate with the community.

Mary: There is a real benefit to translating to "people language" and to focus on what individuals can do. This is the way to make the Climate Action Plan real and personal, and relevant to individual values. This would promote greater understanding of high density transportation-oriented development and prevent the discussion from going around in circles. People don't like

implications of transportation. Identify your best point of leverage. Look at Resilient Neighborhoods, which is based on small, individual groups. This shows how to translate into something with a bigger ripple.

Kate: Consider compost. Look at the landscape with view to incorporate things in the Climate Action Plan. Incorporate things like watering, transportation alternatives into daily life. Personally “own it” and understand. Produce grassroots pressure.

Mary: There is little awareness of the Climate Action Plan in West Marin. It doesn’t relate to their lives. The Fairfax plan is real and vibrant, closer to peoples’ lives.

Steve: Part of the challenge is determining what does future look like. What do we need to do to get there? Is it incremental change or a paradigm change. We need to explain this to public. Can we set vision for what is really required, and can we get public to buy in?

Doug: We should require large houses to be platinum certified.

Mary: Many people who live on Bay in East Marin take notice of Bay Wave and C-Smart. Is there a way to do same with the Climate Action Plan? Combine principle and applications, real-life implications.

Judy: There are too many details. Dana: There is an accessibility issue. There is a plan to update page, pull out higher-level issues, and provide links. There should be a menu for “I’m a resident, what can I do?” Reduce the document to a one-pager. Dana will get on it.

Bill: The technologies are all there. We need a paradigm on a systemic level to get the vision out there to motivate people. It can be made systemic by higher levels of government.

## **Discussion 2: How effective were we in the elections?**

Doug: How can we do better in November?

Rick: In the Rodoni v. Grossi race, there is a big split in point of view. We need to find out where the candidates stand specifically on issues, and to come out with policies. There will be candidates’ forums. Talk to the League of Women Voters; they will come out to West Marin.

Doug: What kind of format is most conducive to in-depth discussion? How do we concretely address the issues? MCL could help move this forward. Rick: Does MCL ever sponsor a forum?

Doug: We can’t take a position. Lead On Climate is organizing an event in September. This will deliver the message that national elections are about climate, identify things that people in Marin can do. This event will take place on September 19<sup>th</sup>. The Sustainable organizations partnered on a sustainability forum. This forum is online now on the Sustainable San Rafael website. For the two remaining candidates in District 4, differences emerged re climate and the environment. The League of Women Voters forum is still up online. Mary noted that this forum was sparsely attended. Rick: One party is ignoring the forums. Judy: Look at down-ballot candidates.

Doug: Ask particular questions about particular issues. Don't frame the issue in platitudes.

### **Discussion 3: PCIA issue.**

Doug: Switching to Deep Green is the best thing we can do. It is only a few dollars more per month. MCE is lowering its rates due to expansion. MCE uses rates to offset and directly develop alternative energy sources.

A Community Power Coalition, a local informal citizens committee, has been formed to lobby and raise public awareness about issues affecting community choice aggregation (CCA). CPC is addressing the PCIA issue. Doug talked to Shalini [Swaroop] of MCE. There are two issues: PG&E is increasing the PCIA an additional 25% this year. And they are using the charge to punish CCAs. The CPUC conducted a workshop on the PCIA. MCL attended and raised key issues. The Administrative Law Judge's report on the workshop decided that all of MCL's comments were outside of the scope of workshop. They set the scope narrowly. On July 14, the CPUC meets again in San Francisco to receive comments from the workshop. MCE will be there. At the CPUC meeting July 14, San Diego Gas & Electric will ask permission to campaign against community choice aggregation. The CPUC will consider public input.

MCL be at the meeting as well and proposes to write letter asking to redefine the scope of the workshop in order to redefine the issues. MCE has a model letter.

Kate: What will the letter focus on? Doug: It will request that the CPUC create an appropriate venue to reconsider the fairness and effectiveness of the PCIA. PG&E spent an extravagant amount of money on opposing CCAs, which require PUC approval before embarking. SDG&E is campaign against a proposed CCA in San Diego. MCE is worried. Rick: What are the odds? Doug: Probably 4-1 that the CPUC will vote to support PG&E. But California will have a growing number of CCAs to build a coalition. They are lobbying to raise public awareness via the Community Power Coalition.

**A motion to recommend to MCL Board approval of a letter to the CPUC requesting it create an appropriate venue to reconsider fairness of PCIA fees passed. M/S/P.**

**Judy/Rick/P**

### **Reports and Announcements**

Per Bill, Tamra has formed Resilient Neighborhoods teams within County and within all jurisdictions in the County except Ross and Belvedere. She is currently forming new teams. Bill encouraged those who haven't previously participated to try it out. There is a great manual.

Rick contacted the Marin Independent Journal about doing a story on plans being considered for a Highway 37 toll road. There are red flags about building a private causeway from Sears Point to Mare Island along Highway 37.

Steve Crooks said raising Highway 37 would allow habitat connectivity opportunities under the road. Right now the road is a barrier.

Also, there need to be solutions to the flooding of Highway 37 from Sears Point west to Highway 101.

There is a State Route Highway 37 committee meeting in July.

Rick called Marc Levine's office regarding bill AB2087 to express Community Marin (CM) action group's objections to the bill. The bill charges CA Fish and Wildlife with establishment of regional conservation frameworks. MCL also wrote a letter expressing objections that the bill limits local control over mitigation.

Steve mentioned requirements for mitigation for upland species will be a long-term conflict for adaptation for sea level rise. Landowners are on the hook to maintain levees in perpetuity. In cases where upland species will be limited to grasslands or agricultural lands that will be below sea level, it's better to remove them from area, even if it's some distance away.

Mitigation banks are in general a big problem for sea level rise adaptation. There's a mitigation bank near Gness Field. The tide comes across that levy and the site already floods. The upland species habitat there is below sea level. Similarly, it's happening in the Sacramento Delta; people are putting habitat below sea level.

The CM action group will be setting up meetings with the Supervisors after the election addressing topics in the Community Marin document.

Announcement of North Bay Watershed Association meeting on July 6 on planning for climate adaptation in North Bay watersheds.

Norma announced that registration for Environmental Forum's Master Class 43 has begun.

Meeting adjourned 11:13.

Minutes: PN and KP.