

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: May 20, 2016

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

Present: Doug Wilson, Pam Reaves, Roger Roberts, Paulina Osipova, Tamra Peters, Bill Carney, Bob Spofford, Rick Fraitas, Ed Mainland, Pat Nelson, Bob Miller, Belle Cole, Judy Teichman, Kate Powers, Tom Flynn.

Doug called the meeting to order at 9:05

The Agenda was approved by consensus.

Minutes: Tamra offered a correction of the last sentence of the minutes referencing the “last section of the Resilient Neighborhoods program.” Doug had a question re Chris Jones’s reference to “mechanical trees.” Roger explained the technology. Minutes approved as corrected. M/S/P. Tamra/Bob S./P

9:10 **Discussion 1:** How do we address and organize our large array of concrete projects without losing sight of the big picture? The topics we are juggling include adaptation (preparation for sea level rise); mitigation (reducing GHG emissions where most effective), carbon sequestration (carbon farming, forestation and prevention of deforestation). Sequestration involves tradeoffs and issues of fund allocation. We’ve been in communication w people in West Marin, who indicate that it is difficult to integrate the sequestration discussion with GHG reduction if we don’t have a common metric. We can’t get to zero emissions just by reducing GHGs. We need to incorporate carbon sequestration.

Project Proposal

Roger Roberts proposed a new project to promote and facilitate contributions to offset programs. His idea is to create a nonprofit to collect money for offsets dedicated to projects in Marin or the North Bay. We should study this, maybe form a subcommittee. We want an immediate local effect.

Comments:

Judy: There was an article in the Chronicle about Kaiser going carbon neutral. Could this be a possible source of funding? There is a film, “Carbon Cowboys,” about carbon sequestration in Arizona. This is oversimplified, but it is the only film

Ed: Consider MCE’s Deep Green program. Half of the revenue goes to local projects. We should encourage people to describe this. “Arcadia” is a scam that the Sierra Club mistakenly signed on to. New “additionality” in RECs (Renewable Energy Certificates) should be promoted. [“Additionality” means that a project or activity provides new renewable energy capacity that

would not have existed in a business-as-usual situation.] We need to be careful about disillusioning people.

Tamra: Resilient Neighborhoods recommends Terra Path. Most participants in Resilient Neighborhoods would love a program with local effect. Find organizations doing mitigation.

Bob M.: If used for sequestration, we need to think about how that would work. Marin Carbon Institute must think about structures for receiving funds. Get their input. Use a type of crowd sourcing? Work with other orgs? Roger: There is an efficiency issue. Not more than 20% overhead.

Tamra: Resilient Neighborhoods addresses carbon pounds/price tag; that part of the system is already set up.

Judy: Consider MALT, Sonoma Land Trust, funds to help them build capacity.

Bob M.: There is a bandwidth issue re capacity to use funds. Patience may be needed.

Bill C. The sequestration side is important, intuitively direct. It is equivalent to GHG produced, in addition to local appeal and accountability. We should consider carbon farming, but also sequestration via forests and wetlands. In San Rafael, there is no active urban forestry program due to lack of funding. This is in addition to wildlands.

Bob S.: There is an issue re quality of metrics (there are none): an issue of proof that money is accomplishing anything. Solar roof v. blue sky.

Bob M.: Before metrics, we need an adequate body of evidence to analyze. There are only a couple of farms so far engaged in carbon farming. It is a new technology—what is needed are funds to develop evidence about new technologies. We need to develop promising new technologies.

Tamra: What about directing food scraps to compost to W. Marin carbon farming? Complete the loop. (At Marin Sanitary, they sell compost (source: Kim Sheibly).

Methane digesters at dairies are a good source for compost, but methane digesters are very expensive. Public funds are available to help offset the cost, and there's a possibility that a single methane digester could serve several close together dairies, e.g., a radius of 5 miles. There's an example of a cluster in Tillamook OR. Digesters also produce electricity. Bob M.: the economic metrics on methane digesters are fuzzy.

Roger: There may be validity even if there is a subsidy. Qualify the plan if done via nonprofit. Investigate this.

Bob S: You manage what you can measure.

Doug: Where do we stand on metrics? Who is working on this?

Judy: We have definitive studies on how much carbon can pull out of air. What we don't know is how much it costs. Bob S.: Get the word out. Bob M.: It will take time to get this info.

Participants have to not only develop plans but implement them. Can we help the Carbon Project and Carbon Institute? There are many variables.

Judy: There is a Coastal Conservancy grant for three counties, Napa, Sonoma and Marin. Wetlands may have great impact. Jeff Creque has expertise and is training others re use of data.

Pam: Point Blue is also doing carbon farming in San Mateo County. Metrics should include biodiversity impact. It's much greater than just burying carbon.

Kate: We need an ongoing effort to monitor the investment, not just an initial analysis. Pam: Can we fund a person? Doug: Can the County help out?

Judy: One under-considered benefit is the amount of water retained in soil as a result of carbon farming. There is money from multiple sources, but funders are in silos. It is helpful to bridge the silos, to get funders to understand the package.

Bill C. How do we put elements together? What are the metrics to put them together? The County Plan includes sequestration, providing a potential umbrella/framework. The Plan also addresses adaption. See the relations between them. The first thing to do is to reduce carbon. The last alternative is paying for GHG impact.

Doug: Get input from Dana Armanino. Get Dave Lewis, Nancy Scolari, Bob Miller, Jeff Creque. They can speak for themselves/obtain an ally in East Marin.

Tamra: Why do we need a nonprofit?

Pam: Recap: Metrics, funding, fund new-technology R&D.

Bob M.: There is the more general issue of the cost effectiveness of reducing emissions vs. sequestration. We should think about mini tutorials for ourselves re what can be done—what can be done and the costs of doing it. Use solutions that cost least and have the most bang for the buck. Look at the big picture. Utilize reports already in existence.

Pam: Can you give a concrete example? Bob M.: Have several people looking for speakers. Re reports, one example is the Climate Policy Institute papers.

Ed: We should also look at zero-net-energy buildings. AII has a presentation.

Bill: It is also important to look at adaptation. That has the least bang for the buck, but that is the money that will be spent first. Get a process where money spent on adaptation is matched by money spent on mitigation or sequestration.

Tom: Implementing begins with marketing. Tie in all relevant factors in a collaborative effort. Bring all resources together on local level. Take advantage of resources: USDA, NRS funding. Get physical parameters. Focus on a user group/need group. Look at Lawrence Lab and Rocky Mountain Institute, for example.

Pam: There is the Colorado method. Another group based in Vermont, a sustainable food lab.

Kate: After analysis of sectors, it is local dollars that generate local excitement.

Doug: Wrap up: Pull the strands together. Involve the County. Next step: Obtain speakers—for example, the architectural group. Bob M. will suggest speakers to Pam.

10:07 Discussion 2: Actual steps

Doug reminded us that Chris Jones focused on behavior change when he spoke to us last month. We have an outline of things to do from Chris. No. 8, competitions, is questionable. Resilient Neighborhoods successfully emphasizes cooperation. We should motivate people to think and make changes. Reach people where they are.

Tamra: There are lists on the Internet. The importance of a social group getting together is that behavior change continues. There is team building, goal setting, peer approval, celebration and acknowledgement. Promote the effort on social media. Work with people at a different level—get them to understand that what they do can make a difference. The world is watching California, due in part to legislation. The adaptation piece entails getting together w neighbors. That builds a climate movement, active citizenship. It also supports local businesses, certification. Grads become activists, help to generate more teams. The MCE competitive approach generates 200 lbs of carbon reduction per household vs. 11,000 for Resilient Neighborhoods. There are different ways of counting. The approach is simple, social and fun – Chris Jones. There was a good letter to the IJ about Resilient Neighborhoods from Marilyn Price on May 18. The Resilient Neighborhoods approach is very cost-effective. Tamra operates as a volunteer, spends \$6000/year in contributions from San Rafael. Long-term savings were found by a survey done for Dana.

Doug: The major benefit is “community.” This counters the pervasive tone of hugeness, fragmentation. It shows the effectiveness of an individual swimming upstream. There is a local base w follow-through.

Pam: For loners, there is the Environmental Forum Master Class, where you meet like-minded people. That was where Pam met Charles McGlashan, who showed her the importance of small individual actions: SF Env. Dept. pledge not to use plastic bottles. Buy local. It is important to hear the voice of someone respected to help you keep your promises to yourself.

Tamra: This kind of action builds voices in people’s heads. It integrates actions into community/existing structures. How to fit into emergency plans, etc., for example. A Resilient Neighborhoods Mill Valley grad group wants to use energy—how to plug them in?

Doug: It helps to confront the larger society. This promotes behavior change and works against inertia. For example, PG&E fighting against us. There is a book, *Dark Money*, about co-opting local efforts.

Pam: Consider urban infill: the proposed five-story development on Freitas near Gateway Gas. Commenters suggested this is the wrong spot, generating commuters. Bill C.: It’s a good example of a city centered corridor where we need development. It’s consistent with the County-wide plan re affordable housing, close to transportation. Bob S.: It’s close to businesses. Bill, Kate: It might present an opportunity for creek restoration. Bob M.: There must be a discussion of GHGs (now required under CEQA) due to an increase in traffic, idling engines.

Reports

Rick: Measure AA

Rick reported on tabling at Farmers' Market, preaching to choir. They collected endorsements (several hundred.) There is limited opposition (from the anti-tax people). There were a lot of out-of-town people at the Farmers' Market. Most are voting for the measure. The recent forum was effective. Posted on LeadOnClimate.org.

There is a Community Marin meeting today re a proposed Hwy 37 toll road, going in one direction, to be built by a private company, (built alongside current one built on berm; taking out berm will improve tidal flow). This is controversial: a possible focus, 2 lanes w bike lane and flyover at Sears Point. This benefits the raceway—possible back-scratching? There is a JPA between Solano County and Sonoma County for oversight. Have the wheels been greased? Is this a precursor for other areas subject to sea level rise, if MTC grabs ABAG? Toll roads are a huge money-maker.

Doug: This is the “no new taxes” movement coming home to roost. Raising gas taxes should be on our long-term agenda.

Bill: Sustainable Organizations – Candidate Forums

The Candidates Forum had a good turnout for 12 of the 13 candidates. The Forum will be posted on video on the Sustainable San Rafael website and other websites. Measure AA is an opportunity to vote on climate change. Four of the candidates present at the Forum were against AA, plus the one candidate who was not present: Haroff (Sierra club endorsed), Hirsch, Castleone, Duggan, Easton Brown. A date has been set for a Fall event: September 19; Huffman will be present.

Legislative and regulatory update

In addition to sources in the written report, Ed mentioned the following bills: SB 215 re PUC governance, includes bias/conflict provisions (Picker). AB 2339 would force municipal power agencies to get on the same page on metering w IOUs. SMUD has a lousy record on solar, is not motivated to move. SMUD has a \$20 fixed charge on consumer solar; IOUs are capped at \$10. Sierra Club endorsed this bill.

Kate mentioned AB 2087, Regional Conservation Frameworks (Levine): “By creating a framework for conservation planning that identifies wildlife and habitat conservation priorities at a landscape level, this bill will ensure that public expenditures are informed by the best conservation science as our State contends with an accelerating loss of habitats due to climate change, infrastructure development and other stressors.” This bill is supported by Nature Conservancy and Audubon California, as well as regional land trust orgs and open space agencies.

Carbon Project

Doug: There was a productive discussion in West Marin involving Judy, Bob, Pam, and Doug, who met with Nancy Scolari & new MCL board member David Lewis who is with UC Extension for Marin and Sonoma.

County of Marin climate actions – Marin BAYWAVE, Marin CAP

Doug/Pam: San Rafael Council members wonder why the McInnis Park watershed program metric differs from Baywave. Answer: The County is siloed. We have work to do with the County re their priorities on climate.

Announcements:

Re CCAs, the Center for Climate Protection (Sonoma) website indicates that more than half of eligible Californians are eligible/considering the CCA option. http://climateprotection.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Spring-Newsletter_final_web.pdf. The current opt-out figures for San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and San Mateo are less than 1%.

Pam: Check the Climate Access website, where you can sign up for webinars and online resources. <http://www.climateaccess.org/>. This site has communications re climate.

TAM opening the bike/pedestrian path over Sir Francis Drake Blvd. today at 1:00. This completes the North/South greenway.

Our next meeting is June 17, 9-11. Doug will invite Dana Armanino from the County to meet with us.

Adjourned: 11:03.