



Marin Audubon Society

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March 2, 2015

VIA EMAIL

Marin County Planning Commission
Black Point/Green Point Community Plan Advisory Committee
c/o Kristen Drumm
Marin County Community Development Agency
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

RE: Comments on Draft Black Point – Green Point Community

Dear Planning Commission/Advisory Committee Members:

Thank you for considering Marin Audubon Society's comments on the Draft Black Point Community Plan as discussed below:

The discussion on page 10 Recognizes that the Baylands Corridor, although established along most shorelines of San Pablo/San Francisco's Bays was not extended in the Black Point Area, but that the CWP includes a program to study extending the corridor. We recommend that the Plan at least support and encourage that such a study be given priority for study because of the ecological important of the Black Point/Green Point Areas.

Chapter 3 NATURAL RESORUCES

The description of our property on page 23 needs some revision:

- Marin Audubon Society did purchase 84 acres in 2000 and we still own that property
- The 19-acre property that we purchased later was subsequently donated to the Marin County Open Space District after we implemented a marsh enhancement project.
- A 60-acre property contiguous with the 84 acre parcel was donated to MAS in 2003.

Marin Audubon now owns and manages 144 acres in the Olive and Atherton area.

We also own three parcels around Norton Pond, including the Pond itself, and five parcels in the Grandview Swale or gridiron portion of Black Point. As noted, we have requested that our properties be designated as Open Space

Page 25, The discussion of wildlife only lists shorebirds. Shorebirds forage along the Petaluma River at low tides, but to be more comprehensive the list should also mention waterfowl. Species that are seen on our property when it is flooded include American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Snowy and Great Egret. Our properties area also important for raptors including White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel and Turkey Vulture.

The discussion recognizes the importance of the planning area for wildlife. We suggest that the plan specifically point out that front and back yards in the various neighborhoods are particularly important because Black Point retains much native woodland vegetation and also includes the Petaluma River waterfront. Green Point, in particular, has many larger lots with natural vegetation. Such habitats are important for songbirds, woodpeckers, ground dwelling species and mammals. We suggest that people be encouraged to view their property as wildlife habitat.

Including Tips for Living with Wildlife is positive step toward that goal, but we have some comments on specific points:

- What is the purpose of the tip to minimize runoff into streams? Water entering streams is generally a good thing. Is the intent of this point to discourage impervious surfaces? If so it should say that. The intent needs to be clarified.
- Cutting/removing natural vegetation manages fire risk but it is likely to not benefit wildlife. Many species of birds and other wildlife depend on shrubs and underbrush for cover, nesting, foraging etc. Many bird species are ground dwelling, feeding, nesting and seeking cover in low shrubby or thicket vegetation. A wildlife friendly back yard might remove brush near houses, but would leave some elsewhere.
- Pets should be kept on a leash or confined outdoors at all times. Letting pets run loose is a risk for the pet and wildlife as well. Many thousands of birds die each year because of free-roaming cats. Ground dwelling birds that sleep on or near the ground are particularly vulnerable as are rodents that provide food for species higher on the food chain. Many wildlife species are nocturnal, skunk, raccoon, owls that can harm or kill pets, or vice versa.
- Rodenticides should not be used at all because of the high risk of secondary poisoning. Perhaps an explanation of the adverse impacts associated with rodenticides could be included along with a list of alternatives to their use.

We suggest the following: :

- Add to NR-1 - encouraging residents to establish a “Wildlife Friendly Backyards.”
- Expand NR- 2 to suggest who would develop and spread the public education program for living with wildlife.

Chapter 4 ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Page 40, In the Flooding discussion first paragraph, Richardson Bay should be San Pablo Bay. The Planning area drains into the Petaluma River and San Pablo Bay - Richardson Bay is in Southern Marin, Mill Valley, Belvedere and Tiburon

We suggest a discussion on the importance and management of MAS’s 144-acre diked historic tidelands (along with Sanitary District property) as a flood basin, i.e. runoff and rainwater pond on our property until it is drained off by Marin County Flood Control pumps on Novato Creek. This minimizes flood potential on access roads Atherton and Olive Avenues. The importance of these lands and how they are managed will increase as sea level rises.

Page 46, Sea Level Rise

The plan depends on the work of the Novato Flood Protection and Watershed Program to address sea level; rise. The community should consider recommending that the Watershed

Program prioritize the assessment of sea level rise impacts and possible adaptation measures in the Black Point/Green Point planning area. If local community does not advocate their own interest, assessment of this area may be low on the list.

Such an assessment would need to look at potential infrastructure impacts. For example, culverts, tide gates and pumps will be inundated and need to be moved protected, or raised.

Chapter 5 LAND USE

There are some inconsistencies regarding zoning: the discussion of AG1 and AG3 on page 51 indicates that the bay plain marsh areas south of Atherton Avenue are zoned AG1 and AG3. This would include MAS properties which, as stated earlier, we have requested be rezoned to OS. Map 13 also shows these properties as AG1. The last sentence on page 52, however, states that the approximately 164 acres of bay plain (the lands owned by MAS) along with some other properties are “designated as Open Space”.

It is unclear whether MAS properties at Norton Pond and the gridiron are included in this description. Zoning map 14 on page 55 shows our properties as ARP 60 – these should be changed to OA. The last paragraph on page 56 appears to accurately describe our requested changes.

Page 59, Home Size - Marin Audubon supports Community Marin’s recommendation that house size be limited to 3,500 square feet plus another 500 square feet for accessory buildings. View Community Marin document on MAS and other websites for a discussion of the impacts of oversized houses on pages 21 and 22.

Chapter 6 TRANSPORTATION

Page 82, Policy TR-2 we are concerned about the impacts of road improvements at the end of Norton Avenues on MAS properties around Norton Pond and Norton Pond itself.

The discussion and policies promoting expansion of bike and pedestrian facilities should recognize that expansion of these facilities could have adverse direct and indirect impacts on natural resources and wildlife commit to addressing these impacts during environmental review.

Chapter 8 PARKS AND RECREATION

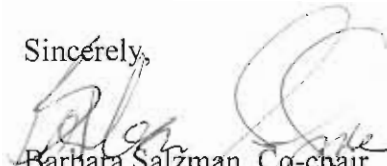
Page 94, The heading of the center column “**Balance Shoreline Protection and Access to the Waters Edge**” The discussion addresses Gallinas Creek, Novato Creek and the Petaluma River noting that there are endangered species in all of these habitats. The discussion addresses protection of these resource areas and does not include anything that supports “balancing” access and shoreline protection. We suggest dropping “Balancing” from the title. We also note that the US Fish and Wildlife Services “*Recovery Plan for Tidal Marsh Ecosystems....*” identifies the public access as adversely impacting the endangered Ridgway’s Rails. Also, why Gallinas Creek is included is unclear as it is not in or near the planning area. Under Petaluma River; reference to Audubon Society should be changed to Marin Audubon Society. We are a separately incorporate4d organization.

Finally, we would like to have the Simmons Slough Wildlife Corridor, the title we use for our properties at Olive and Atherton Avenues, added to the list of open space resources on pages 96

through 98. Marin Audubon acquired the properties along Simmons Slough specifically to protect and enhance wetland habitat for resident and migratory birds and other wildlife. The on-site wetlands are used by great blue herons, great and snowy egrets, American Widgeon, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Canvasback and other migratory species. During summer months when the 4 seasonal wetlands are dry, they are important foraging habitat for raptors including red-tailed hawk and white-shouldered kite. The properties will not be developed because Marin Audubon Society's mission is to "conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife..."; and both properties are encumbered with NRCS easements guaranteeing that they be managed for wetland habitats. The 84-acre property has an additional encumbrance as a result of Coastal Conservancy funding. Our properties form the upper reach of the Simmons Slough tributary of Novato Creek, with downstream properties owned by the Sanitary District and county Flood Control. Only one parcel still in private ownership is further upstream.


Thank you again for considering our input.

Sincerely,



Barbara Salzman, Co-chair
Conservation Committee

Questions:



Phil Peterson, Co-chair
Conservation Committee