



## September-October 2015

A busy summer has rolled right into a busy fall. Among the host of topics and hot issues being discussed at the civic center, debated in the community, and generating plenty of comment online: [Medical Marijuana Dispensaries](#), the extremely tight (and expensive) [housing market](#), Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT or Laura's Law), [chemical herbicides in county parks and open space](#), and the ongoing challenge of [traffic, traffic traffic](#)—to name a few.

In this e-newsletter, I'll provide information and updates on those last two items: herbicides and traffic. Per the other issues noted above, more to come in future editions, and in the meantime, links to sites with additional info.

Also, a reminder to all, even with recent rain, the county is still at high risk for fire and we are entering winter storm (and flooding) season. As such, I want to urge all residents to give some thought/prepare for disasters. Visit [Ready Marin](#) to help with general disaster planning and [FIRESafe Marin](#) for information particular to keeping your home safe from fire. The County's [Winter is Coming brochure](#) includes tips for prepping your home for winter rains, a checklist, information about County services, and more. The brochure also lists local Public Works Contacts for information regarding sandbag stations sites in your area or visit the [Office of Emergency Services website](#) when storms are impending.

As always, please never hesitate to contact me with your own opinion, comments, questions, and concerns on these or any other issues. Email [krice@marincounty.org](mailto:krice@marincounty.org) or call 415-473-7825. You can also connect with me by "liking" my Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/D2KatieRice](http://www.facebook.com/D2KatieRice) and twitter at [@SupervisorRice](https://twitter.com/SupervisorRice).

### **In This Issue:**

Integrated Pest Management and Marin County Parks and Open Space  
Full-Court Press to Open Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane

## **Integrated Pest Management and Marin Co. Parks and Open Space**

Marin County has a long history of conservation and environmental stewardship. Through public perseverance, land-use policy and active preservation, we have protected nearly 85% of our open space and agricultural lands from development, and created thousands of acres of public parks and preserves irreplaceable in terms of their recreational and natural resource value. However, as we are all well aware, there are challenges to maintaining and managing open space lands. The biggest challenge by far, is not conflicts between bikers and hikers, but the challenge posed by invasive non-native plants that threaten native species and the unique biodiversity and natural ecosystems of which they are comprised.

Last spring, the World Health Organization (WHO) reclassified the herbicide ingredient Glyphosate (in products such as Round-up) as a “probable carcinogen.” The reclassification raised concern about use of products containing glyphosate in our parks and open space preserves to combat invasive non-natives. In response, a sub-committee of the Board of Supervisors (myself and Supervisor Kate Sears) went to work with staff and outside experts to review the use of chemical herbicides within the broader context of County park and open space land management. The goal of the review was to ensure that the precautionary principle, sound science and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) best practices are being rigorously applied; and to assess the ability of land managers to completely eliminate or at least further restrict use of glyphosate-based herbicides while continuing to meet goals of responsible and accountable resource management, environmental protections, and public safety.

What we learned during our review and shared at a Board of Supervisors public workshop on October 6, is that through its proactive IPM program, Marin County Parks has been able to eliminate the use of glyphosate and other chemical herbicides in maintaining our regional parks, recreation fields, playgrounds and bike-paths, and other park facilities. These areas are “pesticide free zones.” Where our land managers and resource experts need to continue to incorporate pesticides as part of a broader IPM approach to control invasive non-natives, falls generally into three “critical use” areas: 1) maintenance of fire-fuel reduction and fuel break projects in our wild-land, urban interface areas; 2) controlling the spread of invasive non-native plants that threaten endangered, rare and protected habitat; and, 3) preventing the spread of invasives (like barbed-goat grass) into agricultural lands. For all three of these “critical use” categories, chemical herbicides are only used when alternative, less toxic methods of control

(hand/mechanical pulling, goat grazing, burning, mulching, organic herbicides, etc.) have not been effective, or are not feasible.

As was made clear, both through presentation and public testimony, as much as we would like to completely eliminate the use of chemical herbicides in our open space lands, we cannot do so now without compromising our responsibility as stewards of the natural environment. Indeed, stewarding the 16,000 acres of Marin County Open Space District preserves (and the multiple and complex native ecosystems that exist within them) poses challenges that require a broader set of tools than those necessary and effective in heavily used, easily accessible, landscaped areas like parks, picnic grounds, and rec fields. Hence, at the workshop, the Board reiterated its support of the County IPM policy and program and parks and open space management practices. Both policy and practice push all concerned to continually work to reduce and ultimately eliminate use of toxins. Zero use is the goal!

Additionally and importantly, the Board voiced its support to make investments in public outreach and education towards reducing chemical herbicide use in the private sector. As an institution, the County has been a leader not only in Marin, but Bay Area-wide, in reducing chemical use and adopting alternative, non-toxic, pest management practices. There is an opportunity to share our knowledge and expertise with other public agencies and the private sector towards raising awareness of alternative, non-toxic weed management techniques, and reducing use of chemical herbicides throughout the community.

To view the workshop, including presentations and public comments, watch the afternoon session of [October 6 Board meeting](#). For more information and to review the IPM Ordinance and Policy, visit the [County's IPM website](#).

### **Full Court Press to Open Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane**

With traffic backing up regularly from all points connecting 101 to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, so the pressure on Cal Trans to hurry up the opening of the long-dormant third lane (eastbound) on the part of local officials (myself included) and many others including our representatives in Sacramento.

Among those efforts, Assemblymember Marc Levine and Senator Mike McGuire co-authored AB 9, an urgency measure to temporarily restore the third eastbound lane on an emergency basis (ensuring public safety through speed control and signage) while allowing Caltrans to complete the required planning and environmental review process associated with making the physical/structural improvements; and AB 157 which allows design work on lane configuration and various retaining wall and approach

improvements to be made concurrently with legally required environmental review. AB 9 did not make it out of the legislature, but AB 157 did, and was signed into law by the Governor in September. The legislation should shave 12-18 months off project timeline which would get construction started as early as next year, and a third lane open in 2017.

A third lane on the bridge, however, will not resolve all the issues or impacts per regional traffic going between Marin and the east bay. As such, I will continue to push for the many improvements necessary to address the local constriction points that create back-ups getting to the bridge. Working with my Ross Valley colleagues on the Transportation Authority of Marin board, we have successfully advocated to prioritize a direct northbound 101/580 connector in San Rafael. This direct, freeway to freeway connection, is critically necessary to solving the central Marin traffic jam, but also a major project that will be years in the making. In the interim, there are improvements that need to be made to improve traffic flow both at the Bellam connection in San Rafael and on East Sir Francis Drake.

Additionally, I am focusing and have successfully advocated for resources towards local improvements for our our east/west corridors (think Sir Francis Drake and the Miracle Mile) to improve traffic flow, transit accessibility, as well as safety and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists. For more information on these and other traffic and transportation issues, visit my [website](#).

### **Marin Transit: Reducing School Related Traffic Congestion**

School related traffic comprises anywhere from 20-40% of traffic within various communities throughout Marin. It is an obvious target for efforts geared towards reducing local surface street traffic—hence Safe Routes to Schools, TAM's crossing guards program, etc. These programs have been successful, significantly increasing the numbers of students carpooling, biking, walking and riding transit to school, but as school populations have increased so too traffic, and thus efforts to do more. Here's the latest on two Marin Transit initiated projects aimed at same, which just rolled out this fall:

**Express Bus Service** between San Rafael Transit Center to College of Marin. This route ([route 122](#)) has more frequent service during student commute hours and also eliminates several stops along the way, shaving about 10 minutes off run time. The express bus comes on line at same time as newly instituted student bus passes are available to all COM students. Marin Transit and the College are working together to make transit an attractive option for students and reducing traffic in SFD corridor. Additionally, Marin Transit is looking at what other local bus routes might be converted

to express bus and /or have express bus service added to them towards increasing transit ridership.

**Yellow School Bus Pilot.** Marin Transit, in partnership with Ross Valley School District administration and families, Towns of San Anselmo and Fairfax, is piloting a Yellow School Bus program this year for students attending White Hill Middle School in Fairfax. So far, so good: over 500 of White Hill's 800 students are taking the bus to and/or from school, literally removing close to 2000 car trips a day off crowded Sir Francis Drake. Current ridership represents an increase over the number of kids who used transit service to White Hill in past years, formerly provided by Golden Gate Transit.

Looking forward, Marin Transit is closely monitoring the yellow bus pilot as part of the recently completed countywide student transportation study by Marin Transit (in coordination with the Transportation Authority of Marin, the Marin County Office of Education, and the Safe Routes to School program). The study is aimed at increasing "best fit"/green trip" transportation solutions for public schools throughout the county. Yellow Bus Service being one tool of many that will play a role in reducing school-related traffic congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and getting kids to school safely, happily, and on time.

### **SFD Corridor (Ross to 101) Improvement Project: Nov 18 Workshop**

The County in conjunction with partner agencies/organizations/community is in the middle of community outreach and design of a multi-faceted project aimed at improving traffic flow and safety for all modes of travel through the Sir Francis Drake Corridor from Ross through to 101. On November 18, 7pm at the College of Marin, the County Department of Public Works will hold a second community workshop to present initial concepts developed towards addressing various traffic and safety issues in the corridor. At the workshop, alternative design solutions informed by analysis of existing and forecast traffic conditions, state of the art traffic modeling, and community input will be shared with the community for discussion, comment, and further input.

The November workshop will help inform further refinement of alternatives and specific element design. A third workshop will be held in early 2016 to present that work product and to seek input from the community on a final preferred design, at which time environmental analysis will be initiated.

For more information on the Sir Francis Drake Corridor Project, please visit the [County project website](#) and subscribe for updates.

**Contact Info:**

Supervisor Katie Rice  
415-473-7825  
[krice@marincounty.org](mailto:krice@marincounty.org)

**District 2 Aides:**

Sandy Laird  
415-473-6159  
[slaird@marincounty.org](mailto:slaird@marincounty.org)

Nancy Vernon  
415-473-7351  
[nvernon@marincounty.org](mailto:nvernon@marincounty.org)