Novato Watershed Program Underway

I want to take this opportunity to update you on an important project the county has been working on: the Novato Watershed Program.

Initiated in 2008, the county created a partnership with the City of Novato, North Marin Water District and Novato Sanitary District to develop a Novato Watershed Program to address flooding, water quality, water conservation and habitat restoration throughout the 44-square-mile watershed.

The effort will result in providing a system-wide analysis of flood protection options and to develop: hydrology and hydraulic models for Novato Creek; storm drain model for Nave Gardens; historical ecology of the baylands; and conceptual project alternatives.

County Watershed Program staff has been working to complete the Novato Watershed Hydraulics Study and Alternatives Analysis with input from the Technical Working Group and our partner agencies. Much of the existing conditions modeling has been completed, and the Existing Conditions Report is expected by the end of June.

Work has begun to develop and organize the conceptual project alternatives and it is anticipated that staff will review this information with the Technical Working Group and our partner agencies this summer. We are planning for a community meeting this winter to present the considered alternatives to the public and obtain feedback. I will be sure to get the word out about this meeting when the date is finalized for those interested in participating.

In January, Watershed Program staff submitted a pre-proposal for $4.5 million in grant funds through the State of California’s Integrated Regional Water Management Plan’s (IRWMP) Bay Area Regional Shoreline Resilience Program. The proposed project would restore approximately 80 acres of former tidal marsh on lower Novato Creek next to Deer Island and would demonstrate the viability of multi-objective benefits by combining urban flood protection for downtown Novato with shoreline and habitat adaptation to sea level rise.

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Restaurant Records Now Smartphone Ready

Marin County’s Environmental Health Department has launched a new mobile website for smartphones – so Marin County restaurant-goers can access information about the health inspection track record of a restaurant on their smartphone.

Evaluations of food facilities include the knowledge level of an operator, employee health and hygiene, food-handling practices and facility sanitation. Other data available includes dates of inspections, inspector comments and a list of code violations. The risk to consumers increases as the number of the facility’s violations increases. Violations are designated as major critical, minor critical or noncritical.

Mobile users on www.marinfoodinspection.org can search by business name to see a restaurant’s track record. On the main website, users can type in a business name, a street name, a city, a ZIP code or any combination of that information to search for results. The site will automatically display a mobilized version if the user is on a mobile device and also provide a link to see the full desktop version.
Novato Watershed Program (continued from page 1)

The project would also include a plan to manage dredge sediments locally to reduce dredge sediment management and disposal costs. The proposed project is cutting edge from the standpoint of considering measures that would re-use dredged sediment from Novato Creek to create eco-tone levees and new tidal marsh habitat.

The grant award schedule and the amount of funding are still unclear because of the ongoing drought. The state has shifted its funding priorities to drought relief that could postpone implementation of the Shoreline Resiliency projects along with all non-drought related projects. We expect to receive notification of the proposal status in early 2015. Regardless of whether the proposal is funded this time, the submittal process has created a lot of interest and support for the Novato Watershed Program amongst local, state and federal resource agencies.

Flood Control District staff, with input from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has prepared a draft Pacheco Pond Water Management Plan to address water quality, mosquito abatement, wildlife use and other issues for the 120-acre pond. The plan aims to mitigate the summer stench that often emanates from the pond by introducing tidal waters to the pond during the dry season. Staff anticipates that DFW staff will provide the county with written support of the water management plan this month or next.

I am proud of what the county and our partner agencies have been able to accomplish thus far with this important program. These efforts are noteworthy because they merge flood protection, pollution prevention and water conservation needs with creek enhancement objectives such as habitat restoration, erosion control, and fish passage along Novato Creek and its tributaries.

This collaborative effort will put the county and our partnering agencies in a strong position to garner state and federal grants, which will be used to identify and prioritize projects to benefit Novato Creek and its tributaries and to guide county and city project implementations.

To stay up to date on these efforts, to review the plans and documents, and to learn more about the Novato Watershed program, visit marinwatersheds.org.

Stafford Lake Bike Park Moving Forward!

As a result of a very successful public-private partnership effort, the Stafford Lake Bike Park has the funds needed to move forward with Phase 1 of construction. Sponsorships and donations now total $592,850, more than $100,000 over the $480,000 Phase 1 construction estimate. On April 29, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the construction plan, and the bidding is open through May 29.

The County, as well as the community, is really excited about this project—and with tremendous volunteer support, we are targeting a late-summer opening date.

The full-spectrum bike park will enable riders of all ages to learn and improve bicycling skills in a positive, healthy and family-friendly environment. It is slated to include a single-track loop trail, gravity-fed flow trails with jumps and berms, several pump tracks, north shore-style elevated trails, a dual slalom course and much more. The total cost of the park, following a second phase later on, is estimated at $850,000.

A huge thank you is due to Julia Violich, Mark Weir and Al Baumann of the Friends of Stafford Lake Bike Park, who were critical in securing community donations and sponsorships to move this project forward.

The bike park will be built not only by certified contractors and trail builder subcontractors, but also by volunteers—hundreds of which have already signed up to help!

Learn more about how to help the project and follow the project’s progress at www.staffordlakebikepark.com.
Support the Novato Theater—Join me on May 18!

PURPOSEFUL PRODUCTIONS, INC. & NOVATO THEATER FILM CLUB PRESENT
A TRIPLE FEATURE OF DOCUMENTARY SHORTS


TREK WINERY 1026 MACHIN AVENUE NOVATO

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Questions? info@novatotheater.net or 415 539 7155
In March of 2013 I authored a resolution recognizing the importance of education and asked the Marin Board of Supervisors to include education as a fourth “E” to our established three E’s for sustainability: economy, environment and equity.

It was a wonderful day when our board voted unanimously to advocate for early childhood, K-12 and higher education and promote quality, accessible and affordable education for all.

Over a year ago MarinKids made a presentation to the board highlighting the disparities in academic and health outcomes among Marin’s children. I recall asking them, “You’ve shared the problem with us, what do you plan to do about it?”

They continued their work and came back to us on March 11, 2014 with an update on the progress they’ve made to date and a plan to address the critical needs of children in Marin. First, I think it is important to share some astounding statistics you may be unaware of:

- One out of every four children in Marin does not attend preschool
- Despite new federal healthcare programs, there are 500 to 1,000 low-income children in Marin without access to health insurance
- More than 800 families are waitlisted for childcare in Marin
- Nearly 60 percent of elementary and middle schools students are unsupervised after school
- 24 percent of children in Marin live at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level – defined as an annual income of $47,000 for a family of four
- Preschool cost is approximately $9,700 a year and full day child care cost is approximately $12,000

Addressing these inequities will be beneficial for many reasons:

- Preschool builds skills, boosts academic achievement and makes children more likely to graduate, saving our local economy about $11,400 per child
- Access to quality healthcare supports regular school attendance and reduces emergency room overcrowding
- Access to quality childcare provides a nurturing environment for brain development while allowing parents to stay in the workforce
- Students with access to afterschool programs are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, join gangs and drop out of school

MarinKids joined with First 5 Marin, Marin Child Care Council, Marin Child Care Commission, Community Action Marin, Youth Leadership Institute and Parent Voices to explore the potential for a dedicated funding stream to support these essential programs for Marin’s children.

In 2012, Parent Voices led an informal survey of almost 2,000 community members and found that 86 percent of voters would support a children’s fund to address the aforementioned needs and 74 percent would be willing to pay for it. In the summer of 2013, MarinKids conducted a professional survey of likely voters and found there was a positive response for supporting a tax measure to support these needs.

From these efforts a broad based coalition has formed, Marin Strong Start, made up of leaders from education, healthcare, business, local government, childcare and civic organizations in Marin. They are all on board to support Marin’s children.

To date, the coalition has relied on funding from: Marin Community Foundation, First 5 Marin, United Way, Marin Kids and the Marin Child Care Council. As part of their presentation to the Board of Supervisors this past March, Marin Strong Start requested financial assistance for professional services to help them develop a feasibility plan to implement these educational and health care needs for children in Marin.

I moved that we support their request and asked that they bring back their feasibility and implementation plan in June for our board’s input. This is an unprecedented approach to addressing the needs of children in Marin, and if anyone can do it, we can here in Marin.
Assemblyman Levine’s Housing Bill Clears Two Legislative Hurdles

Since 2011, I have been working with our State representatives, first Assemblyman Huffman and now Assemblyman Levine, to pass legislation to lower Marin’s default density for affordable housing.

Currently, under California housing law, Marin County (because of its close proximity to San Francisco) is considered “metropolitan” with a default density of 30 units per acre. This requires Marin County to have the same density as San Francisco. I have long believed and have been actively lobbying to change Marin County’s designation to “suburban”, requiring a default density of 20 units per acre. This would align us with counties more similar to Marin like Sonoma County and Napa County.

Assemblyman Marc Levine introduced AB 1537 to do just that – lower Marin County’s default density to 20 units per acre for the purpose of one housing cycle (8 years), at which point it will be evaluated for consideration of being continued. AB 1537 requires Marin County to report to the Legislature and the Department of Housing and Community Development on their progress.

On April 30, the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee and the Assembly Local Government Committee approved AB 1537. This bill will be heard next in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1537 is supported by the County of Marin, Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, Bridge Housing, Eden Housing, EAH Housing, and Center for Sustainable Neighborhoods. With such broad support, it has a great opportunity for Legislative success.

2014-2023 Marin County Housing Element

The County has initiated the Housing Element process for the 2014-2023 cycle. The County’s 2014-2023 Housing Element must plan for 185 homes, specifically 87 low-income, 37 moderate, and 61 market rate – this is about one-quarter of the allotment of the 773 homes included in the 2007-2014 housing update, which was certified by the California State Department of Housing and Community Development in December 2013.

The state-mandated housing allocation requires the planning for, but not construction of, the homes. It requires that the County plan for a variety of housing options for different income levels.

A draft housing element will be presented to the Marin County Planning Commission this summer, and the Board of Supervisors hearings are planned for this coming winter. The public is encouraged to share perspectives and input before and during the hearings.

For more information, visit the County website at: http://www.marincounty.org/depts/cd/divisions/planning/housing/housing-element.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

TAKE THE 2014 MARIN HOUSING SURVEY

The County of Marin wants to hear from you about housing in unincorporated Marin. Visit Open Marin to take the survey: www.marincounty.org/openmarin

ATTEND A COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Tuesday, May 6, 2014
6:00 PM to 8:30 PM
Mill Valley Community Center, Cascade Room
180 Camino Alto, Mill Valley, CA 94941

Saturday, May 10, 2014
10:00 AM to 12:30 PM
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Findlay Hall
240 Tiburon Boulevard, Tiburon, CA 94920
I had the privilege of participating in several great events since our last County Connection Newsletter published. I thought I would share a few photo highlights with you here…

Above: Having a great time at the Novato Chamber’s Installation Dinner.

Above: My husband, Bruce Arnold, performed at the March 11 Board of Supervisors’ meeting.

Above: Celebrating with Gail Theller on her retirement as Community Action Marin’s Executive Director.

Above: Having a great time at the Novato Chamber’s Installation Dinner.

Above: Congratulations to a very deserving Susan Stompe, the 2013 Novato Citizen of the Year!

Above: Reading to the preschool students in the Head Start class at Hamilton Elementary School.
The Spring newsletter from County Parks & Open Space is now available— and is chock full of FREE activities to take full advantage of Marin’s natural wonders during the season. Learn about the projects we’re working on as well as the free programs we offer including Community Volunteer Days, Naturalist Outings, and Ranger Events. You’re sure to discover something for you and your family to enjoy. Visit: http://www.marincountyparks.org/depts/pk/main/~/media/Files/Departments/PK/Main/Newsletter/2014/MCP_Newsletter_Spring14_Final.pdf

- News
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Naturalist-led Walks
- Naturalist-led Family Walks
- Ranger Events
- Dog-friendly Hikes

Microlending Funds Available this Spring!

The Marin Economic Forum (MEF), of which I serve as Vice-President, is excited to roll-out a partnership with Working Solutions to establish a microlending fund in Marin County for entrepreneurs with limited or no access to conventional financing this spring.

Working Solutions has a proven track record in the Bay Area and opened a Marin office in 2012. Working Solutions is an ideal partner for MEF because of their established platform providing infrastructure and underwriting which is already in place - loans will be available for startup and existing businesses.

MEF is working with local lenders to raise $500,000 to go towards this fund to target borrowers that have historically low access to capital. There are approximately 15,000 women-owned businesses and 6,000 minority-owned businesses in Marin County. Working Solutions data indicates that there is currently demand for approximately $2,500,000 in loans. An average size loan is $25,000, a $500,000 fund will provide 20 borrowers with loan capital which in turn would generate 76 jobs in Marin County.

Working Solutions provides mentor services and education for their borrowers and all of their borrowers are current on payments. The support they provide is of particular value to these small business owners.

If you are interested in learning more about Working Solutions and the microlending program go to www.tmcworkingsolutions.org or to learn more about MEF please go to http://marineconomicforum.org/.

Participate on a County Board or Commission

If you are a resident of Marin County and would like to participate in local government, consider applying for a seat on a Marin County Board or Commission. The Board of Supervisors is always searching for innovative, creative thinkers who are enthusiastic about our community and able to give their time and volunteer.

Board and Commission members serve in an advisory role to help direct policy by making suggestions and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Appointed commissions exist within the County as a whole, as well as the cities and towns, special districts and joint exercise of power authorities. Some positions are created by local elected officials and others are mandated by state statute.

A list of current vacancies, additional details about a particular Board or Commission, and details about how to apply can all be found on the County website: http://www.marincounty.org/depts/bs/boards-and-commissions/about-boards-and-commissions.
Board of Supervisors, Transit District, and TAM Meetings are held in the BOS Chambers in the Marin Civic Center: 3501 Civic Center Dr., Suite 329.

SMART Board meetings are held on the First Floor at the SMART office in Petaluma: 5401 Old Redwood Highway, Petaluma.

Start times for BOS meetings can vary. For start times and agenda packet materials for upcoming as well as minutes of prior meetings:

⇒ Go to the County of Marin website at [www.marincounty.org](http://www.marincounty.org). In the “Board of Supervisors” section, click “Agendas, Minutes & Webcasts”

BOS meetings are also webcast live. To watch a meeting live or to replay at a later date:

⇒ Go to the County of Marin website at [www.marincounty.org](http://www.marincounty.org). In the “Board of Supervisors” section, click “Agendas, Minutes & Webcasts”

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