Get Out and Enjoy Parks

Hands down, one of the best things about Marin County is our parks and open space. We are so fortunate to have access to such beautiful areas for outdoor recreation. The Marin County Parks Department provides a myriad of opportunities for family activities and programs year round. If you have not done so already, I would encourage you to check out the Parks website at www.marincountyparks.org.

In addition to ongoing programs, there are two big projects Marin County Parks is working on that I want to share: Inclusive Access Plan and implementation of the Road and Trail Management Plan.

Made possible by the passage of Measure A, Marin County Parks is developing its first Inclusive Access Plan to increase the equitability of access to County open space. The plan will provide a mechanism for identifying opportunities to improve access to the County preserve trail system for all users regardless of ability or age. Easy access and mobility through open space is something many of us may take for granted, but something I think we all can agree should be shared and enjoyed by as many users as possible.

Development of the plan will include review and analysis of current State, Federal, and County requirements, standards, and best practice guidelines relating to accessibility in open space areas and will relate these to current Marin County Parks policies, standards, and practices.

Marin County Parks has started a public outreach effort to help draft the plan - including facilitation of focus groups and public workshops. Watch for meeting announcements and opportunities to provide input on the Inclusive Access Plan page of the Parks website: www.marincountyparks.org.

In December 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved the Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) which outlines a framework and process for making Marin County open space road and trail project decisions in an inclusive, transparent and fair process.

The RTMP divides the County’s 34 preserves into six regions. Those six regions will be used in the public outreach and engagement process to designate a formal system of roads and trails that will be managed and maintained within each region and to solicit input on specific future road and trail projects. Road and trail projects can encompass several types of activities, including: reroutes, reconstruction, new trail construction, decommissioning of trails, and road-to-trail conversions.

The first region to begin this process is region one which includes the following open space preserves: Baltimore Canyon, King Mountain, Blithdale Summit, Camino Alto, Horse Hill, and Alto Bowl. Novato is encompassed in regions three and four.

Region one will have its first community workshop on March 22 at 1:30 pm at the Mill Valley Community Center. Following the region one workshop, the process will be duplicated for the County’s five other regions. The next regional workshop is tentatively planned for later this year.

One major goal of the workshop is to seek reaction to maps depicting Marin County Parks’ proposed designations for the region one preserves. In addition, the public will formulate and submit proposals for specific road and trail projects, consistent with policies, standards, and best management practices established in the RTMP.

Your input is important in helping draft these policies and decisions. I hope you will consider participating. For additional information and to sign up to receive email alerts about upcoming meetings, visit the RTMP page of the Parks website: www.marincountyparks.org.

With spring right around the corner, I hope to see you in our parks and open space preserves! In case you missed it, fee reductions go into place on July 1! These include: elimination of bicycle and walk-in entry fees, a reduction of summer weekday use fees, and a reduction in special event fees.