

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Quality, Excellence, Innovation

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DIRECTOR

June 16, 2015

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Dear Board Members:

**SUBJECT:** County of Marin and National Park Service Muir Woods Road Draft Memorandum of Understanding

**RECOMMENDATION:** Hold hearing on draft Memorandum of Understanding between National Park Service and County of Marin, solicit public input and Board discussion, provide direction to staff, and continue hearing to June 30, 2015, for final consideration and decision.

Accounting

Airport

Building Maintenance

Capital Projects

Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA)

Communications Maintenance

County Garage

Disability Access

Engineering & Survey

Flood Control & Water Resources

Land Development

Purchasing

Real Estate

Reprographic Services

Road Maintenance

Stormwater Program

Transportation & Traffic Operations

Waste Management

**SUMMARY:** Visitation to Muir Woods National Monument (Muir Woods) has steadily increased, especially at peak periods, overwhelming the current transportation infrastructure that services it, including Muir Woods Road (aka Franks Valley Road). Over the years, the County has worked with various stakeholders including the National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), Marin Transit, and various other local government organizations and community interest groups to develop solutions.

Recently, the National Park Service (NPS), in consultation with the County, CDPR and other stakeholders, has proposed to create a reservation system in conjunction with enhanced public transit, reduced roadside parking, enhanced parking enforcement and improved public service announcements. Congressman Huffman created an 'ad hoc' group of government, community and environmental groups to establish a consensus on a path forward to improve traffic and parking congestion problems. Staffs have worked with all parties to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that includes goals, objectives, and detailed road shoulder parking limits that will in seven years nearly eliminate road shoulder parking along Muir Woods Road. Attached for your consideration today is that draft MOU.

**Memorandum of Understanding**

The MOU identifies the following goals:

- To protect, preserve and enhance the health of Redwood Creek watershed, including its salmonids.
- To reduce traffic congestion at Muir Woods, on Muir Woods Road and in the local communities adjacent to and leading to Muir Woods.
- To improve traffic and pedestrian safety and reduce environmental impacts that may arise from parking along Muir Woods Road.
- To increase local transit and better manage buses, both commercial buses and public transit.

The MOU would allow the NPS to implement a visitation reservation system as summarized below:

- NPS will create a reservation system for visitors using motorized transportation, including managing commercial buses and arrival by reservation only.
- NPS will manage the reservation system to limit visitation levels and reduce peak attendance, and associated traffic congestion and parking demand.
- A Parking Management Corridor will be created by the County for NPS parking permits along Muir Woods Road between approximately Conlon Avenue to Kent Canyon.
- Over the course of seven years, the parking reservation system will allow Muir Woods shoulder parking to be prohibited south of the Redwood Creek bridge (30 parking spaces will remain between Muir Woods entrance and the bridge).
- Through a cooperative agreement between the Sheriff and the Park Police, parking enforcement and controls will be enhanced for all of Muir Woods Road.
- Both the County and NPS will continue to collaborate to improve Redwood Creek water quality and environmental conditions, and will work to improve public transit and public service messaging.

#### **MOU Phasing and Parking Restrictions**

Actions within the scope of the MOU are divided into two primary phases. The first two years is for the development and implementation by NPS of the reservation system. During this time period, road shoulder parking south of the Redwood Creek bridge will be reduced to a maximum of 80 spaces during peak periods (and 30 spaces north of the bridge) through additional regulatory parking restrictions, physical barriers, and parking enforcement.

Staff is currently coordinating with NPS and CDPR to identify appropriate parking restriction zones that will improve pedestrian safety, as well as protect the nearby creek environment. The proposed parking restrictions will guide the public away from locations where there is no viable parking, including the adjacent drainage ditch, narrow or steep shoulders, and drop-offs to Redwood Creek. In the draft MOU, the NPS and County also agree to undertake interim stormwater measures to reduce impacts from roadside parking near Redwood Creek.

The draft MOU would designate a Parking Enforcement Corridor along the entire length of Muir Woods Road. The parties will undertake enhanced parking enforcement, with the NPS hiring additional parking enforcement officers to conduct the parking enforcement and control. While the Sheriff will provide authority necessary to NPS to enforce traffic and parking regulations, the Sheriff would not relinquish or reduce any of its existing authority to perform those functions.

The second phase begins upon the initiation of NPS's parking reservation system and continues for the next five years, which is the end of the MOU term. During the first 2 ½ year period, parking is capped at 80 spaces south of the concrete bridge, then for the following 2 ½ year period, to 40 parking spaces. At the end of this time, the reservation system would accommodate all of the parking demand and Muir Woods parking would be limited to 30 spaces north of and near the Muir Woods entrance. There would be no parking spaces south of the bridge (peaks times currently can have up to 400 vehicles parked).

The MOU does allow for use of up to 80 spaces in the last 2 ½ years during any NPS off street parking lot construction periods associated with any upgrade or expanded parking facility work. In order to enhance parking enforcement from current levels, NPS will add two additional parking enforcement officers upon commencement of the reservation system.

In conjunction with the reservation system implementation, the parties agree to jointly work to expand public transit to Muir Woods utilizing Marin Transit's Muir Woods Shuttle. NPS will also manage changeable message signs (CMS), provide information on its website, and conduct other public service announcements to inform visitors of the need to secure a reservation before visiting Muir Woods.

While the actions outlined in this MOU will take place over a number of years and some improvements will be gradual, the County and NPS are committed to meeting milestones, making steady progress on common goals, and reporting publicly on that progress, including parking enforcement, to all interested stakeholders. The draft MOU provides for public updates at least twice a year, once before the Board of Supervisors, and once at a local community meeting in Southern Marin. Staff will also be returning to your Board for traffic ordinances and resolutions to implement parking restriction and permit parking zones contemplated in this MOU.

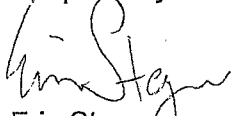
**Categorical Exemption**

Under the draft MOU, it is recognized that each agency has certain environmental compliance requirements within their responsibility. The County must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act, whereas NPS must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. Staff has reviewed the scope of work and County actions, and determined that there will not be a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, a Categorical Exemption is appropriate (see attachment).

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Should the Board approve the draft MOU at the June 30, 2015 hearing, it would result in the installation and ongoing maintenance of new signs, implementation of stormwater management measures, and additional Sheriff staff time. The MOU provides NPS is to fund parking restriction measures. County costs are within existing budgets. There is no additional impact to the General Fund.

<b>REVIEWED BY:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Department of Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	County Counsel	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A

Respectfully submitted,

  
Eric Steger  
Assistant Director

**Attachments:**

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Notice of Exemption

- C: Congressman Jared Huffman, Member of Congress  
Chris Lehnertz, General Superintendent, GGNRA  
Victor Bjelajac, California Department of Parks and Recreation  
Robert Mota, CHP Commander  
Robert T. Doyle, Sheriff-Coroner  
Nancy Whelan, Marin Transit



