



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Quality, Excellence, Innovation

Raul M. Rojas
DIRECTOR

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Administration
PO Box 4186
San Rafael, CA 94913-4186
415 473 6528 T
415 473 3799 F
415 473 3232 TTY
CRS Dial 711
www.marincounty.org/pw

Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

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

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION: Accept the report.

SUMMARY: The single most important milestone of the joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County of Marin and National Park Service was achieved on January 16 this year with the Muir Woods reservation system launch. In addition, a second reservation system, managing commercial tours, was launched on May 15, 2018. Reservations are now required for all personal vehicles, shuttle riders, and commercial tour operators visiting Muir Woods National Monument. The reservation system along with other parking controls has significantly reduced roadside parking, improved safety, and is anticipated to also improve the visitor experience and reduce overall visitation levels at Muir Woods.

Today, staff and NPS are providing an update on the activities that have occurred in support of the MOU since the last community meeting on the MOU efforts was held in November 2017.

DISCUSSION:

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 and Frank 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. The Muir Woods Shuttle is an example of such a successful element.

In late 2014, Congressman Huffman created an 'ad hoc' group of government, community, and environmental groups to establish a consensus on a path forward to improve traffic congestion and parking problems. The parties worked together and developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that included goals and objectives, collaboration on the implementation of a NPS parking reservation system, detailed road shoulder parking limits, enhanced parking enforcement, and greater marketing and community outreach.

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Two meetings were held in June 2015 by your Board to receive public comment on the draft MOU, and after recommended changes were made, the MOU was adopted by your Board on June 30, 2015 (attached). NPS subsequently signed the MOU after conducting an Environmental Assessment for the implementation of the Muir Woods Reservation System, soliciting public comment, and releasing a Finding of No Significant Impact determination.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Summary

The MOU creates the framework for the NPS to implement a parking and transportation reservation system as summarized below:

- NPS will create a reservation system for visitors using motorized transportation, including managing tour bus operators.
- NPS will manage the reservation system to limit visitation levels and reduce peak attendance, and associated traffic congestion and parking demand.
- Creates a Parking Management Corridor 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 concrete bridge (approximately 30 parking spaces will remain between Muir Woods entrance and the concrete bridge).
- Parking enforcement and controls will be enhanced for all of Muir Woods/Frank Valley Road with a cooperative agreement between the Sheriff and National Park Service.
- 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

The MOU implementation is divided into two main phases. The first phase is for the development of the reservation system by NPS. During this time period, road shoulder parking south of the Redwood Creek bridge was reduced to a maximum of 80 spaces during peak periods through additional regulatory parking restrictions, physical barriers, and parking enforcement.

The second phase of the draft MOU began on January 16, 2018, with the initiation of NPS's 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 Road shoulder parking would be limited to 30 spaces north of the bridge and near the Muir Woods entrance, with no parking spaces south of the concrete bridge (up to 400 vehicles previously parked at peak times).

The MOU does allow for use of up to 80 spaces in the last 2 ½ years of the MOU during any NPS off-street parking lot construction periods associated with any upgrade or expanded parking facility work.

MOU Accomplishments

Reservation System: The largest single effort outlined in the MOU has been achieved with the implementation of parking and arrival reservation system by NPS. The MOU focused on traffic operations, parking, and arrival management aspects of Muir Woods National Monument by creating a reservation system that reduces and caps parking

demand and peak arrival times. NPS completed a concessionaire procurement process and implemented a reservation system for Muir Woods that includes marketing and outreach, and a one-stop, web-based system for both parking and transit reservations. Starting on January 16, 2018, an \$8 parking reservation is now required for each privately-owned vehicle. The system balances visitation levels and parking availability throughout the day.

As part of the overall parking management plan, NPS also reconstructed the commercial vehicle overflow parking area at Colon Avenue so that it can now be used for general public parking or other needs as the reservation system is implemented. The Muir Woods Shuttle (operated by Marin Transit) is also a key component of the overall parking management and arrival at Muir Woods; shuttle reservations can also be made on the system web site, <https://gomuirwoods.com>

The reservation system implementation has not been without challenges. While roadside parking near Muir woods has been significantly eliminate so far, queuing occurs at the parking lot entrance, as some visitors have no reservation and parking attendants need to provide instructions. This queuing is currently being addressed through increased public outreach and in future parking lot improvement plans. The system will be tested as visitation has now reached the peak season. NPS continues to 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.

General Coordination: The local governmental agency staffs convened an interagency working group to plan and coordinate all roadside activities. The working group included staff from the County, NPS, State Parks, and Sheriff. A construction team was also created to interact during the detail design and construction of the roadside bollards and erosion control measures.

Parking Barriers, Bollards: Public Works Engineering Division prepared construction drawings, and NPS contracted and funded the installation of a parking barrier post system along the road to discourage parking in early 2016. Approximately 1150 redwood posts were installed, some with cables added between the posts next to steep shoulder drop-offs for added pedestrian safety. The barrier system extended both above and south of the Muir Woods entrance. The system not only discourages parking, but also creates a greater buffer from the creek to allow vegetation to grow. Erosion and sediment control measures were also installed behind the posts in areas that were previously used for parking. Additional delineators were installed south of the concrete bridge when the reservation system began to further discourage parking along the road shoulder.

Additional Parking Restrictions and Higher Fines: In October 2015, your Board adopted additional no parking zones along Muir Woods Road and increased the fines to the maximum allowed of \$99 per violation.

Parking Enforcement: The Sheriff provided authority, through a separate agreement, for NPS to enforce traffic and parking regulations. In doing so the Sheriff did not relinquish or reduce any of its existing authority. However, this allowed NPS to add parking enforcement staff and parking violation ticketing rates increased until the start of the reservation system. NPS has been actively enforcing parking violations and issuing citations since November 2015, with citations paid through the Marin Parking Authority.

Parking citations have declined significantly since the launch of the reservation system as compliance with no-parking zones has been better than expected during this period.

Other Future Road Improvements

The County has obtained a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant to reconstruct 2.48 miles of Frank Valley Road from the Muir Woods National Monument entrance to State Route 1 near Muir Beach. Besides repaving the road, this project will result in various landslide and embankment scour repairs, as well as culvert replacements that will decrease sediment load into Redwood Creek and improve overall water quality. The project is currently in the environment review analysis phase at least through the end of 2018, with construction is expected to occur in 2020. The project cost estimate for design and construction is \$5 million, with an 11.5% local funding match by the County. The County also received a grant to replace the concrete bridge at milepost 1.90. The bridge design and construction is estimated at \$2.1 million, also with an 11.5% local funding match by the County. The projects have been combined in one construction effort managed by the Federal Highway Administration.

Other Infrastructure Improvements and Changes

NPS is developing plans to improve or replace the Muir Woods National Monument parking, pedestrian trails, and other arrival facilities. The project will improve and reorganize parking, trails, and other arrival infrastructure to address deferred maintenance, improve safety and visitor experience, and upgrade stormwater management design.

CONCLUSION: In just two years after completing an environmental review and signing the MOU, NPS has completed a concessionaire procurement process and implemented a reservation system for Muir Woods that includes marketing and outreach, and a one-stop, web-based system for parking, transit, and commercial tour reservations. While the reservation system was being developed, initial efforts also included new parking regulations, physical parking restrictions along the road to discourage haphazard parking, 'parking attendants' to help control visitor parking, and additional parking enforcement.

The County and NPS are committed to meeting future milestones, making steady progress on common goals, and reporting publicly on that progress to all interested stakeholders. The MOU provides for public updates at least twice a year, one before the Board of Supervisors and one at a local community meeting in Southern Marin. Today's report satisfies one of the two annual meetings.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no impact to the General Fund Net County Cost by this action.

REVIEWED BY:	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Department of Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Counsel	<input checked="" 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 between County of Marin and National
Park Service

c: Congressman Jared Huffman, Member of Congress
Laura E. Joss, General Superintendent, GGNRA
Ryen Goering, California Department of Parks and Recreation
Robert T. Doyle, Sheriff-Coroner
Nancy Whelan, Marin Transit