



# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Quality, Excellence, Innovation

Rosemarie R. Gaglione  
DIRECTOR

*RG*

May 4, 2021

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

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

**SUBJECT:** Muir Woods National Monument Memorandum of Understanding Update and Report, County of Marin and National Park Service

Dear Board Members:

Accounting

**RECOMMENDATION:** Accept the report.

Administrative Services

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Marin and National Parks Service dated June 30, 2015, County staff and representatives of the National Park Service (NPS) are providing an update on the activities that have occurred in support of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) since the last community meeting on the MOU efforts was held on October 6, 2020.

Airport

Building Maintenance

Capital Projects

Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA)

**Discussion:**

Prior to the efforts provided through the MOU, visitation to Muir Woods National Monument (Muir Woods) was steadily increasing. The uncontrolled flow of visitors to Muir Woods was overwhelming the transportation infrastructure, including Muir Woods Road and Frank Valley Road. Over the years, the County has worked with various stakeholders including NPS, 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.

Communications Maintenance

Disability Access

Engineering & Survey

Fleet Operations

Flood Control & Water Resources

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 MOU that included goals and objectives, collaboration on the implementation of an NPS parking reservation system, detailed road shoulder parking limits, enhanced parking enforcement, and greater marketing and community outreach.

Land Development

Procurement

Real Estate

Reprographic Services

Road Maintenance

Two meetings were held in June 2015 by your Board to received 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.

Stormwater Program

Transportation & Traffic Operations

Waste Management

### *Memorandum of Understanding 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/Frank Valley Road between approximately Conlon Parking Lot and Kent Canyon.
- Over the course of seven years, the parking reservation system will allow Muir Road shoulder parking to be prohibited south of the Redwood Creek 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. Phase one occurs over the first two years. This 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 MOU began on January 16, 2018, with the implementation of NPS's reservation system. This phase continues for the next five years. 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 the parking demand and Muir Woods Road shoulder parking would be limited to 30 spaces north of the bridge, and near the Muir Woods Monument 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 Conlon 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, <http://gomuirwoods.com>. Since 2019, the Muir Woods Shuttle as well as tour bus operators were restricted from using vehicles larger than 30-feet in length on upper Muir Woods Road. Since the length restriction went into effect, the shuttle and tour buses now approach the Muir Woods Monument from Frank Valley Road via Highway One. To accommodate the increased bus traffic on Frank Valley Road an temporary alternating stop control was placed on Frank Valley Road to improve safety until slides downhill of the road can be repaired.

The reservation system started with some challenges including queuing at the parking lot entrances as some visitors have no reservation and parking attendants need to provide instructions. There was also a period of education for the public to grow used to creating a reservation prior to arrival at Muir Woods. This resulted in some cars having to return to four corners to gain cell phone service to make a reservation. This problem has largely been addressed through the continuing education outreach by NPS through signage and electronic communication.

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 County, NPS, State Parks, & 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 1200 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 & Higher Fines: In October 2015, your Board adopted additional no parking zones 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 \$6.5 million dollar Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant to reconstruct 2.48 miles of road. The construction includes a segment of Muir Woods Road and all of Frank Valley Road from the Muir Woods National Monument entrance to State Route 1. The project includes landslide and creek embankment repairs, drainage culvert replacement to improve water quality in the watershed and rehabilitation of pavement. The project is currently at the 30% design phase. The current project cost estimate for design and construction is \$16.3 million dollars which is nearly \$10 million dollars over the initial grant amount. Due to FLAP grant funding limitations the construction funds have been reprogrammed for fiscal year 2025. Replacement of the concrete bridge at milepost 1.91 has combined with the road rehabilitation project. Both projects are being 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.

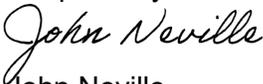
**CONCLUSIONS:** The MOU milestones for the first six years have been met by all the parties. The County and NPS are committed to meeting future milestones, making steady progress on common goals, and reporting publicly on that progress to all interested stakeholders. The MOU provides for public updates 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.

**EQUITY IMPACTS:** As the action by your Board is to receive the presentation and no decision or direction is sought, there are no equity impacts. Staff will, however, ensure that ongoing implementation of the MOU in partnership with NPS does not generate inequities or adversely impact underserved communities.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no additional impact to the General Fund with this report.

<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 type="checkbox"/>	County Counsel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A

Respectfully submitted,



John Neville  
Associate Civil Engineer



Attachments: Memorandum of Understanding between County of Marin and National Park Service

C: Congressman Jared Huffman, Member of Congress  
Laura Joss, General Superintendent  
Robert T. Doyle, Sheriff-Coroner  
Nancy Whelan, Marin Transit

