



COUNTY OF MARIN
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACE
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March 13, 2007

Board of Directors
Marin County Open Space District
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, California 94903

SUBJECT: REPORT ON DICKSON RIDGE TRAIL, SAN GERONIMO VALLEY

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Accept staff report and public testimony regarding the Dickson Ridge Trail through the Mease property in the San Geronimo Valley.

SUMMARY: On June 20, 2006, the Board of Directors held a public meeting regarding the issue of obtaining a permanent public trail easement on the fire road along Dickson Ridge through the Mease property, above the French Ranch Open Space Preserve. The background to this issue is outlined in the attached June 20 staff report. At that meeting, the public, the Meases and their attorney gave substantial testimony about the issue, including testimony about the merits of building a new trail for public use down slope and south of the existing fire road as an alternative. The Board's direction to staff following the meeting was to continue negotiating with the Meases with the goal of returning to the Board with a proposed agreement that would provide a permanent, safe trail for public use.

Subsequently, staff and the Meases discussed options based on a letter of intent from the Meases that offered a license to the District to build an alternative trail route below the fire road to bypass agricultural operations on the Mease property. Staff explored the feasibility of building the alternative route by conducting a geotechnical review of the alignment and preparing a trail construction cost estimate. The cost to build the alternative trail came in very high due to the steep slope conditions and landslide potential of the area through which the alternative trail would pass. Staff then explored the construction of a narrower trail with more modest engineering improvements, but estimated costs remained substantial.

Staff and Director Kinsey met again in December 2006 with David Mease to review trail alignment options. At this meeting, Mr. Mease stated that he and his wife have always agreed to allow public access across their property and would continue to do so. Although such a statement does not create a permanent trail easement across the Mease property, it nonetheless constitutes a satisfactory arrangement to permit continued public trail access through it. Staff recommends that the Board endorse this arrangement.

Staff and Board have historically taken the position that successful District land and trail negotiations rely on the cooperation with landowners. We believe this arrangement is a win-win for the Meases, the County and the community of trail users and neighbors. The arrangement that was verbally offered by David Mease was summarized in a letter from the District to him dated January 30, 2007, a copy of which is attached. The letter also stipulates that the Meases may occasionally need to close the road for agricultural operations or activities associated with the construction of their residence. In those instances, they agreed to notice the closure in advance and coordinate with District staff to install appropriate boundary signage.

The arrangement summarized in the attached letter does not preclude the District's pursuit of permanent public trail rights across the property in the future. District staff will continue to monitor trail use patterns on the Dickson Ridge Fire Road and coordinate with the Mease family on any concerns or needs.

FISCAL IMPACT: None

REVIEWED BY:	<input type="checkbox"/> Auditor-Controller	<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

Planning and Acquisition Manager David Wm. Hansen is the primary author of this report

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon McNamee
General Manager

RM/DWH/kbl

c: David Mease and Catherine Salah
Chris Bramham, Open Space Superintendent
Jim Flageollet, District Counsel
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San Geronimo Valley Planning Group
Parks and Open Space Commission