



Thanksgiving 2017

My best to everyone as we head into the Thanksgiving weekend—a time to count blessings—family, friends, health. In this County, where most but not all thrive economically and are able to enjoy the fruits of their hard work, fortune, position in life--we also have economic disparity, cultural divide, and passionate debate over many issues and community choices. Hence the importance during this time of reflection, of taking stock of our capacity for compassion, forgiveness, our responsibility to each other, our connection to community.

As County Supervisor representing the residents of District 2 (Southwestern San Rafael and the Ross Valley), but also a voice and a vote on issues and decisions that impact residents well beyond my district, I am well aware of the range of challenges and passions, the sometimes converging but often diverging views and values held by the people of this County. As with communities throughout this state and country, there is never complete uniformity of view, issues are rarely black or white, answers/solutions are rarely easily attained. And in a County the size of ours, the very same folks with whom one might have passionate disagreement over one issue (or many), are often ones' neighbor, parent of your children's friends, folks you run into at the grocery store or on Nextdoor.

During this time of reflection, and particularly in the wake of the devastating North Bay fires, and the many other disasters our country has witnessed this cataclysmic year, I urge all to double down on the importance of community. Whether it's coming together/putting behind divisions over an issue, recognizing our shared responsibility, our vulnerability or dependence on one other during a disaster or time of need, we are all part of one community, and it's a good one.

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North Bay Fires – A Wake Up Call for All Marin

It's been less than two months since the devastating North Bay fires first ignited taking loved ones, destroying thousands of homes and hundreds of businesses, changing forever the lives of so many and entire communities as well.

Here in Marin, we stepped up as institutions and individuals to help our North Bay neighbors throughout the fire response and continuing into their recovery efforts. From our first responders who came from every agency in this County to fight the fire, to our disaster service workers and volunteers who supported evacuation centers, to the individual acts of generosity and support that have come in the form of contributions to relief funds, gift cards, food and supply donations, housing, I am incredibly proud of our County. My thanks to everyone who played a part in this effort.

The impact of the fires is being felt not only in the communities where they occurred, but in ripples and in some cases waves across the entire North Bay. They represent what could have been/what may happen someday right here in Marin. They are the ultimate wake-up call as to just how vulnerable we are, and that this ever-present (and worsening) risk of wildfire is not just for those living on the edge of open space. The North Bay fires demonstrated all too harshly how easily wildland fire can sweep into more urbanized settings. Hence the importance and urgency of understanding and assessing what took place, and then acting on those learnings to reduce our risk, protect our communities, be better prepared to respond in the event such a terrible fire ever breaks out in Marin.

As was the case in the early 1990's when first Loma Prieta hit, followed by the Oakland Hills fires, the North Bay fires are a call to action that involves everyone – the public and private sectors, agencies, organizations, communities and individuals. The catastrophic fires must serve as a catalyst for us all to double-down on fire prevention, disaster and evacuation planning, and emergency preparedness generally.

As Supervisor representing the Ross Valley, an area of the County particularly vulnerable to wildfire, and in my role serving as honorary chair of [FIRESafe Marin](#), a coalition of fire agencies, public land managers, utilities, and organized neighborhoods and HOA's that was born out of the 1991 Oakland Hills fires, I am acutely aware of our ever-present wildfire risk. Hence the emphasis I have placed on efforts to reduce fire risk on both private and public property and support enhanced communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the stakeholders -- fire agencies, public land managers, HOA's and neighborhoods within and adjacent to the wildland urban interface.

The fire districts serving Ross Valley communities – from Larkspur and Kentfield to Ross Valley Fire, Sleepy Hollow Fire District and Marin County Fire—do an amazing job and do so in a coordinated/mutual aid fashion across district lines. In addition to fire, rescue, and medical response, these agencies (often supported by [FIRESafe Marin](#)) bring programs essential to preventing fire and supporting resident emergency preparedness in the form of defensible space inspections, fuel break/fire fuel reduction projects, sponsorship of CERT (Community Emergency Response Training) and [ReadyMarin](#) (emergency preparedness) classes. The fire agencies also work closely with Marin County Open Space and Marin Municipal Water District, the agencies that manage the majority of public open space adjacent to our communities, to plan and implement fire fuel reduction work and maintenance of fire roads, in addition to mowing, maintaining and reducing accumulated fuel loads on thousands of acres of open space land every year.

In addition, collaboration, strategic planning and information-sharing across agencies and communities is supported by [FIRESafe MARIN](#). Today, [FIRESafe MARIN](#) is as strong as ever, bringing in \$1.2 million in grants over the past four years that have helped to expand wildfire prevention efforts, improve fire detection capability, the development of a countywide wildfire prevention plan, and support/enhance fire prevention, protection, and evacuation education in communities across the County.

The North Bay fires took a horrible toll, but for Marin they serve as a catalyst to act, to maximize our efforts to prevent such an event from ever happening here. I will continue to support collaboration between agencies, communities and land managers, action and accountability on the part of utilities, aggressive fuel reduction programs on our public lands, and the involvement of individual residents, property owners and HOA's in prevention and readiness efforts. We all have a role to play.

In the weeks and months ahead, you will be hearing from the various fire agencies serving your community about what they are doing, and what they are asking residents to do to improve on prevention, planning and disaster response for fire events. There will be [Firewise](#) community workshops, educational forums, evacuation planning exercises, and more. I will keep you informed as events are calendared, and encourage you to participate, to join up with neighbors, to do your part to prevent, prepare, and support your community in the event of a fire or other emergency event.

For a high level overview of Marin's current fire risk, prevention and protection activities see the [Video link](#) of the presentation made by Marin County Fire and Marin County Parks at the Board of Supervisors meeting on November 14. Also, you can review the [power point](#) from the presentation.

Finally, if you have not yet, sign up/make sure your current/all phones are registered with [AlertMarin](#) - the countywide emergency alert system—the communication tool that will be used in the event of a fire or other emergency to communicate with residents. Also visit [FIRESafe MARIN's website](#) for resources and instruction to help you and your family step up your prevention, protection, and evacuation planning efforts. Please contact me if you need additional assistance or have specific concerns in your area.

San Geronimo Golf Course Property Purchase Update

On November 14, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to enter an agreement with Trust for Public Lands (TPL) towards eventual purchase and ownership of San Geronimo Golf Course property.

The issue has been intense and controversial. The decision, one with political and personal consequences, but none-the-less, one I stand by. The importance of this property – for habitat/resource value, its location connecting the valley communities of Woodacre, San Geronimo and Lagunitas, the opportunities it affords as a public asset forever—cannot be overstated. So, while it pains me to know that the beloved SGGC will sunset, I believe this acquisition/ opportunity is one that cannot be passed up. And is one that will have lasting broad, community benefit for generations to come.

For those unfamiliar with the details: As currently structured, the 157-acre property (including clubhouse facility, all fixtures, equipment, licenses and water rights) would be purchased by Trust for Public Lands for \$8.85 million. The County would purchase the property from TPL once all funding is secured. As currently proposed, the County funding would be comprised of: \$1.4 million in County general funds, \$2.5 million in Measure A/parks acquisition funds, and \$4.9 million in outside grant funding.

There has been much criticism and some confusion around the funding sources. To clarify: \$2.5 million in Measure A funds are being used as approved by voters--for acquisition of park or open space lands to preserve for public use; \$1.4 million in County general funds (from one-time reserves) would be applied to purchase of the 25-acre central parcel, future uses to be determined through a community planning process, but designated for public benefit. The outside grant funding makes the entire purchase possible in addition to supporting the restoration of critical salmonid habitat, and forever protecting for public access and use.

While the currently anticipated grant funding would require restoration of riparian corridors that run through much of the property, it would not preclude passive recreational or other compatible use. The 25-acre center parcel, which includes the existing clubhouse facilities, is envisioned to support more intensive public use(s) which

will be determined through an extensive community planning process that would begin in spring of 2018.

My support for this acquisition was dependent on several conditions:

- The property should not lie “fallow” during the interim/community master planning process; TPL/Parks shall pursue and develop a.s.a.p. an interim operations and maintenance plan that allows for all reasonable opportunities for public use of the property, *including opportunities* for golf operations.
- That Parks immediately reach out to adjacent neighbors of the property to discuss and develop plan to address neighbor concerns around maintenance, privacy, fire/defensible space, etc.
- That the grant acquisition and community planning process going forward allow for and support as much latitude as possible with regards to potential long-term future uses of the property;
- That the community planning process be inclusive, adequately funded, technically supported, and open to the broadest range of feasible, compatible public uses that respect neighbor and community concerns and do not compromise goals of fishery restoration.

Sir Francis Drake Improvement Project Update

As the public comment period on the project’s [Draft Environmental Impact Report](#) (EIR) winds down (comment period closes December 6), the project team is preparing for the next steps in the process: response to comments on the Draft EIR and a community workshop to discuss project priorities.

Draft EIR Comments: As part of the environmental review process, all comments received on the Draft EIR are compiled, analyzed, and responded to. These responses, along with any additional information and analysis resulting from the comments, are included in the Final EIR document. The Final EIR will include its own comment period and will then go to the Board of Supervisors for a public hearing and action. The Final EIR is expected to be released in late February and the Board hearing is planned for mid-March.

Community Workshop: A community workshop is planned for late January or early February to discuss the project’s various components and prioritize those for funding. The list of project components that evolved through several previous community workshops and meetings and their respective costs exceeds the current grant funding available for the corridor. While County staff are seeking additional funds for the project, it is necessary to prioritize the various project components in the event that funds for the full project cannot be secured. Outcomes from environmental review and this workshop

will be the basis for a final project proposal to be presented at a public hearing of the Board of Supervisors. Once a final project is adopted by the Board, design work will commence to prepare construction-level documents.

You can visit the [project page](#) for more information about the environmental review process/document (Current Documents and Exhibits section) and also [subscribe for updates](#).

Please never hesitate to contact me with your opinions, comments, questions, or concerns on these or any other issues. Email krice@marincounty.org or call 415-473-7825. You can also connect with me by “liking” my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/D2KatieRice and twitter at @SupervisorRice.

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