

MARIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT RTMP/EIR

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING COMMENT SUMMARIES

In late November and early December of 2010, the MCOSD held a series of four public scoping meetings to kick-off the planning process for the RTMP/EIR and to solicit preliminary input about the interests and concerns of Open Space users. The meetings were held in Novato, San Geronimo Valley, Mill Valley, and San Rafael. Additional public scoping will take place following initiation of the CEQA process, which will result in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The meetings were publicized on the MCOSD website, and notices were mailed to local media, property owners adjacent to Open Space Preserves, community groups, stakeholder organizations, and individuals that may have an interest in the RTMP/EIR process. Attendance was good, and participation was enthusiastic.

At the meetings, participants were asked to work in small groups that were facilitated by MCOSD staff. Each participant was given two handouts and a set of trail maps. (The handouts are available on the RTMP/EIR webpage, under the Public Workshops section, Public Scoping Meetings, in the Meeting Materials item. Trail maps are available at: <http://www.maringov.org/Depts/PK/Divisions/Open%20Space/Main/PreserveMaps.aspx>). Staff facilitators guided the small group discussion and solicited input relative to the participants use and enjoyment of Open Space Preserves in general, and the road and trail network in particular.

The handouts and exercises were not “surveys” designed to generate quantifiable data. However, all of the input from these meetings was carefully reviewed by staff. Staff summarized public comments from flip charts and responses to key questions were summarized as the “Top Ten Responses to Four Key Questions.”

TOP TEN RESPONSES TO FOUR KEY QUESTIONS
RTMP Public Scoping Meeting
Margaret Todd Senior Center, Novato
November 29, 2010
Summary of Comments

What Do You Value Most About Open Space?

1. Solitude
2. Camaraderie
3. Freedom
4. Safety
5. Getting away from it all
6. Enjoying nature and scenery
7. Easy to access, close to home
8. Encountering friendly and respectful users
9. Finding new trails, loop trails, long distance rides and hikes, cross country rides.
10. Exploration and discovery of new routes, scenery, natural settings

What Works Well?

1. Fire roads
2. Trail maintenance
3. MCOSS website
4. Multi-use trails
5. Access to Open Space
6. Recreational opportunities for youth
7. Single-track trails for mountain bikes
8. Quality of natural resources being maintained
9. Opportunities to appreciate nature
10. Opportunities to use and improve variety of outdoor recreational skills

What Could Be Better?

1. Trail system design for multiple users, some trails shared, some exclusive.
2. User compliance with trail designations
3. More positive signage (opportunities vs. restrictions)
4. Management of dog poop
5. Enforcement for safety of all users
6. Trail connections
7. More single track trails for mountain bikes
8. Better protection of creeks and streams against erosion and contamination
9. Too many unauthorized trails become established
10. Be more welcoming of mountain bikers, increase mutual respect and appreciation between all users

What Issues Should Be Addressed in the RTMP/EIR?

1. Improve access for mountain bikes to single track, cross country, and technical riding opportunities

2. Safety measures, including trail design, ranger patrol, signage, enforcement, seasonal trail closures, and dogs under control
3. Trail access should be secondary to natural resource protection (water quality in creeks and streams, native plant species, sensitive wildlife habitat, etc)
4. Concentrate on developing trail connections within and between MCOSD preserves and offering continuous access to adjacent public lands
5. More trail amenities such as trash cans and dog poop bags at trail heads, restrooms. Also at key points within the trail system, such as intersections. Horse troughs at intersections of long trails
6. Better signage for direction, distance, specific uses allowed, education
7. Provision of adequate parking at trail heads (space for horse trailers at key equestrian access points)
8. Trail system should emphasize opportunities to view nature, scenic vistas, and variety of settings
9. Trail system should accommodate mountain biking as a recent form of recreation, in addition to the traditional uses of hiking and horseback riding
10. The RTMP should address ways MCOSD can pay for trail system improvements in the future

TOP TEN RESPONSES TO FOUR KEY QUESTIONS
RTMP Public Scoping Meeting
Lagunitas School, San Geronimo
November 30, 2010
Summary of Comments

What Do You Value Most About Open Space?

1. Peace and quiet, solitude
2. Wildlife in natural setting
3. Exploration and recreation in nature, in solitude
4. Protection of wildlife, creeks and streams, natural habitat
5. Variety of trails for multiple uses
6. That the Open Space is preserved as open space
7. Cooperation between road and trail users
8. Natural setting without too many signs and over-engineered trails
9. Narrow trails that appear natural
10. Freedom

What Works Well?

1. Multi-use trails that connect with other trails and preserves
2. Low key Open Space District (less signage and maps)
3. Intimate trails
4. Poop bags
5. Keeping trails passable
6. Opportunities for cross country rides (horse and bike) as well as obstacles to test skills (horse and bike) such as ditches and jumps
7. Long trails with connections to adjacent public lands
8. Trail closures in wet weather to protect sensitive areas
9. Separating mountain bikers from other users to reduce conflict
10. Using erosion control techniques to reduce sedimentation in the creeks

What Could Be Better?

1. Management of dogs and dog waste
2. Enforcement of Open Space rules
3. Fence maintenance for cattle control
4. Illegal trails with poor drainage should be decommissioned
5. Need better signage for trail closures and trail construction/management projects
6. Need more education for users on appropriate activities and conduct in sensitive areas such as creek crossings, road and trail junctions, steep slopes, etc
7. Providing appropriate re-routes and detours for closed or decommissioned trails
8. Safety
9. More District staff and resources dedicated to road and trail management
10. Often interactions between mountain bikers and equestrians are unnecessarily difficult

What Issues Should Be Addressed in the RTMP/EIR?

1. More sensitive preserves should receive priority for road and trail maintenance and management
2. Reduce conflict and poor communication between various types of Open Space users
3. How to provide more single track access for mountain bikers
4. Equal enforcement of Open Space rules for all users
5. Safety on the roads and trails for all users
6. Environmental effects of using heavy machinery in trail construction and maintenance.
7. Techniques for managing drainage and erosion around roads and trails.
8. Coordination between MCOSD and resource agencies (CDFG, County Flood Control) as well as managers of adjacent public lands (GGNRA, State Parks)
9. How to connect District roads and trails to roads and trails on adjacent public lands
10. Protecting natural resources unique to each preserve from road and trail users using techniques that are appropriate for each specific preserve

TOP TEN RESPONSES TO FOUR KEY QUESTIONS
RTMP Public Scoping Meeting
Mill Valley Community Center, Mill Valley
December 1, 2010
Summary of Comments

What Do You Value Most About Open Space?

1. Just glad it's there
2. Opportunities for contemplation, reflection, spiritual inspiration
3. The challenge and exploration of the road and trail system
4. Recreation and exercise outdoors, in nature
5. Protection of natural habitat, natural resources
6. Natural beauty and peace
7. Cooperation and respect between user groups
8. Access to full range of trails for mountain bikes, "equitable access"
9. Trails which link to other trails and other public lands
10. Trails that are maintained, brush cleared, erosion stopped

What Works Well?

1. Rangers leading hikes, interpretive programs
2. Volunteer program
3. MCOSD website and communication
4. Signage and trail maintenance
5. Vegetation management-invasive species and WUI protection
6. Connectivity, longer trails, getting to a destination
7. More naturalized trails, less "manmade" look
8. The views of Open Space from surrounding areas
9. Diversity and shared use of trails
10. Allowing dogs and bikes

What Could Be Better?

1. Management of dogs and dog waste
2. Access to more trails for mountain bikes
3. Enforcement of Open Space rules for all users
4. Control of invasive plant species
5. Signage
6. Cooperation between user groups
7. Drainage and erosion control methods
8. Designated easy access, ADA trails, ie, flat, seating, views, good parking, interpretive info
9. Management of Open Space use for special events, gatherings, races, etc., including the permit process
10. Connections between preserves and trail linkages

What Issues Should Be Addressed in the RTMP/EIR?

1. Conflicts between user groups

2. Improve connections between preserves
3. Provide access to Open Space from all adjacent neighborhoods
4. Eradication of invasive species
5. Improve and expand access for mountain bikes
6. Increase use of volunteers
7. Protection of privately owned lands adjacent to Open Space from future development
8. Signage and interpretive resources
9. Abandon trails that are “unsustainable” due to steepness or unfavorable location and focus resources on constructing and maintaining sustainable trails
10. Potential for commercial exploitation of MCOSD preserves

TOP TEN RESPONSES TO FOUR KEY QUESTIONS
RTMP Public Scoping Meeting
Marin County Civic Center, San Rafael
December 2, 2010
Summary of Comments

What Do You Value Most About Open Space?

1. Good signs and maps
2. Easy access, including parking
3. Opportunities to enjoy nature
4. Protection of wildlife and natural resources
5. Getting away from it all, solitude
6. Camaraderie, hiking/biking/riding with friends
7. Healthy exercise in natural setting
8. Beauty and inspiration
9. Freedom
10. Variety of trail types

What Works Well?

1. Long cross-country mountain bike/horse rides, connecting public lands
2. Loops and staying off public roads
3. Multiple skill levels of trails for bikes
4. Open access for all users
5. Being considerate, greeting people, using a bell on bike
6. Watershed protection.
7. Volunteer opportunities
8. Mowing and keeping trails well defined
9. Signage is good, more would be better
10. Citations for enforcement.

What Could Be Better?

1. Communication between use groups
2. Public notice of maintenance and construction projects on the trails and roads
3. Trail head, directional, and interpretive signage should be expanded. Need maps at trail head, better upkeep, maybe in kiosks
4. More trashcan and bathroom facilities, parking with signage at Loma Alta
5. Safety practices for all users
6. Increased ranger presence at "hot spots", areas popular with lots of users.
7. User conflict is due to trail design, so design trails to reduce conflict.
8. Consistent trail maintenance
9. Protection of watersheds, natural resources
10. More access to single track trails for mountain bikes

What Issues Should Be Addressed in the RTMP/EIR?

1. Preserve natural resources, watershed, plant and wildlife habitat.
2. Signage and information

3. Public outreach should be an ongoing thing
4. Consider user fees, permits, licenses to minimize illegal activity
5. Trail protection/management/requirement to stay on the trail
6. Protect views of Open Space
7. Create more trail connections
8. Safety
9. Equal access, equal opportunity for trail use and enjoyment for all users
10. Better communication between users