

DATE: November 20, 2014
TO: Parks and Open Space Commission
FROM: Carl Somers, Chief of Planning and Acquisition
SUBJECT: Draft Road and Trail Management Plan and Final Tiered Program Environmental Impact Report

RECOMMENDATION

1. Recommend to the Board of Directors of the Marin County Open Space District that it certify the Tiered Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for the Road and Trail Management Plan.
2. Recommend to the Board of Directors of the Marin County Open Space District that it adopt the Road and Trail Management Plan.

DISCUSSION

As you know, approximately four years ago, staff initiated a process to develop a Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) for all 34 open space preserves. The process began with an evaluation of the physical conditions of the existing roads and trails and a survey of users within various preserves. The MCOSD completed this evaluation in November 2011. The process also included multiple public workshops and meetings to allow interested parties to participate. The public was also given the opportunity to review and comment on a preliminary draft and public draft of the plan. Staff has also presented various aspects of the plan to your commission on several occasions.

The current draft of the RTMP includes the following elements: (1) a description of the road and trail evaluation and visitor use surveys; (2) visitor use goals and management areas; (3) existing and new policies for the management and use of roads and trails; (4) a decision making process for designation of the road and trail system and approval of road and trail projects; (5) best management practices (BMPs) for the protection of biological, geological, air and water quality, noise, and cultural resources; and (6) road and trail design and construction standards in use by the County of Los Angeles, Midpeninsula Open Space District, Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, and the US Forest Service.

The Draft RTMP reflects that the Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) inherited most of its roads and trails when it acquired the various preserves. Many of these roads and trails were built for agricultural or logging purposes or were created through informal use, and were not constructed to minimize impacts to natural resources or facilitate recreational use. Additionally, the RTMP recognizes that there are existing uses and use patterns, which are increasing and changing over time. The Draft RTMP provides an organized framework to address these issues, reduce potential impacts to natural resources, and provide some remediation of the effects of past and ongoing actions and uses.

The MCOSD released the Draft RTMP and its companion Draft Tiered Program Environmental Impact Report (TPEIR) for public review and comment on September 26, 2013. Staff received several hundred comments on the draft TPEIR. However, most of these comments raised concerns with the policies, BMPs, and decision making process described in the RTMP. Based on these concerns and additional issues raised by this commission, staff revised the RTMP and recirculated the draft TPEIR, on August 8, 2014. The MCOSD received approximately 130 comment letters in response to the recirculated draft TPEIR. Staff has prepared a Final TPEIR, which includes the following: (1) all the comment letters and responses; (2) an errata chapter showing changes to the Draft TPEIR in response to comments; and (3) a proposed draft project worksheet as a mitigation monitoring and reporting program for all reconstruction, rerouting, active decommissioning, active road-to-trail conversion, new construction, and planned maintenance projects as described in Table 5.1 in the RTMP.

In addition to the public comments on the adequacy of the recirculated draft TPEIR, the MCOSD received many comments on the merits of the policies, BMPs, design standards, and decision making process in the draft RTMP. Staff has prepared an evaluation of these comments that is attached to this letter. Neither the TPEIR nor RTMP comments have resulted in any changes to the RTMP or significant changes to the TPEIR.