



MARIN COUNTY
PARKS
PRESERVATION • RECREATION



• OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
• REGIONAL PARKS & PATHWAYS
• COMMUNITY PARKS
• LANDSCAPE SERVICES

Linda Dahl
DIRECTOR & GENERAL MANAGER

Marin County Civic Center
3501 Civic Center Drive
Suite 260
San Rafael, CA 94903
415 473 6387 T
415 473 3795 F
415 473 2495 TTY
www.marincountyparks.org

DATE: January 23, 2014
TO: Parks and Open Space Commission
FROM: Ronald Miska, Deputy Director
SUBJECT: Summary of Revisions to the Draft Road and Trail Management Plan in Response to Public Comments on the Plan's Merits

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Consider policy changes described by staff
2. Solicit public comment
3. Provide input to staff

DISCUSSION:

The public comment period for the Marin County Parks Draft Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) and its companion Draft Tiered Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (TPEIR) closed on December 2, 2013. During the comment period, Marin County Parks received over 200 letters and e-mails from individuals and organizations. Over the past several weeks, staff has reviewed and sorted the comments according to whether they concern the plan or its environmental review. The vast majority of the written comments are directed to the merits of the plan. This is consistent with the public testimony your commission received at a special meeting concerning the RTMP on November 19.

The following is a summary of the revisions that Marin County Parks has made to the draft RTMP in response to the merits-related comments, both verbal and written. Staff feels that the merits-related comments deserve a response sooner rather than later, given the high level of public interest in the plan. Public comments related to the plan's environmental review will be addressed in the Response to Comments, which will be part of the Final Draft TPEIR. Marin County Parks will release the revised Draft RTMP and the Final Draft TPEIR spring 2014.

1. Policies have been revised to make it clear that pedestrians may walk off roads and trails, but will be encouraged to stay on roads and trails to protect plants and wildlife. Pedestrians with dogs may not walk off roads and trails, and equestrians and bicyclists may not ride off roads and trails. See policies SW.5, SW.6, SW.7, SW.8.
2. A public process to designate the future road and trail system is described, and referenced in a revised policy. Existing roads and trails that do not become part of the designated system through the public process will be decommissioned as time and resources allow. Until they are decommissioned, only pedestrians will be permitted to use nonsystem roads and trails. See policies SW.2, SW.6, SW.7.

3. A new policy recognizes the existence of social trails as separate from the designated system of roads and trails. The policy defines social trails and describes the circumstances under which they may continue to exist. Equestrians, mountain bicyclists, and pedestrians with dogs may not use social trails. See policy SW.3, SW.6, SW.7.
4. The number of Visitor Use Management Zones has been reduced, and the zones have been renamed. There will be three “areas” instead of four “zones”, corresponding to the sensitivity of the resources and the range of road, trail, and visitor impacts acceptable within each area. The new areas are:
 - Sensitive Resource Area. Sixteen percent of all open space acreage falls into this area.
 - Conservation Area. Seventy-three percent of all open space acreage falls within this area.
 - Impacted Area. Eleven percent of all open space acreage falls within this area.See policies SW.4, SW.11, SW.16.
5. Specific policies associated with the former Visitor Use Management Zones have been eliminated, thereby avoiding any discrepancies with new and existing policies applying to all areas.
6. The ratio of trail decommissioning that must accompany the construction of new trails has been eliminated. The Open Space District will reduce the impact of the road and trail network existing as of November 2011 with metrics objectively derived from plan’s road and trail evaluation tool. As part of the public process to designate the future road and trail system, each existing road and trail will be assigned a score using the evaluation tool. Among other input, these scores will help inform whether a road or trail becomes part of the designated system and, if so, whether a road or trail will be improved, converted, or rerouted to reduce its impact. If a trail does not become part of the designated system, it will be decommissioned. MCOSD will maximize the reduction of visitor impacts in the Sensitive Resource Area compared to the other two areas. See policy SW.4.
7. During the public process to designate system roads and trails, the retention of redundant roads and trails may be considered to separate trail users. See policy SW.19.
8. A new policy identifies current “leash only” preserves, and provides for the designation of others as necessary for resource protection, visitor safety and the reduction of visitor conflict. See policy SW.10.

In addition to the policy revisions listed above, many other proposed policies have been slightly revised to improve clarity, and the text of chapters 1, 4, and 5 is being revised to reflect these policy changes. Only chapter 4, which includes all policies pertaining to roads and trails, is being rereleased at this time. A fully revised Draft RTMP will be released in spring 2014.