

DATE: September 29, 2017
TO: Bolinas Lagoon Advisory Council
FROM: Veronica Pearson, Open Space Planner
SUBJECT: Bolinas Lagoon North End Project Conceptual Design Report

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the North End Project Conceptual Design Report and recommend to the Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) Board of Directors (BOD) that they accept the Conceptual Design Report and direct staff to proceed with design and environmental review for the restoration concept described in Phase 1, which is the same for all alternatives.

Motion

To accept the Bolinas Lagoon North End Project Conceptual Design Report, and recommend that staff forward the report to the Marin County Open Space District Board of Directors for acceptance and action.

DISCUSSION

North End History

On June 10, 2014, the MCOSD Board of Directors authorized staff to investigate the rehabilitation of the north end of the lagoon. The direction was to focus on item 4-LPP from the *Bolinas Lagoon Ecosystem Restoration Project, Recommendations for Restoration and Management* (also known as the Locally Preferred Plan or LPP) based on technical guidance from experts and staff. The project was to evaluate the feasibility of developing a wetland enhancement and sea level rise (SLR) adaptation plan for the vicinity of the Bolinas “Wye”. The project included identifying a project area, identifying resources within the vicinity of the Wye in a Site Conditions Report, and developing some potential conceptual designs for adapting to SLR and climate change and improving hydrologic and ecologic processes. As part of investigating the potential project that has become known as the North End Project, a number of scientific studies have been conducted, and are still being conducted and planned. These include biological, geomorphic, hydrologic, geologic, and traffic studies. Current studies underway include a fish habitat assessment, and ground and surface water monitoring.

Current Status of the North End Project

AECOM was contracted to conduct the background studies for the Site Conditions Report, and to prepare a Conceptual Design Report, with three conceptual designs, that analyzes the feasibility of their construction. The scope included two drafts of all contracted products. On June 26, 2017, MCOSD received the first draft of the Conceptual Design Report. Based on comments and edits from MCOSD and its partners, the report was extensively revised. On August 25, 2017, AECOM provided a second draft of the report, which was posted on the Marin County Parks website (marincountyparks.org) on August 29, 2017.

The report was divided into three sections. Part one is an overview of the project, and background information related to the project history, project area, existing conditions, and SLR projections used. Part two discusses each of the project alternatives, phasing, costs, and timeline for potential completion. Part three contains the alternatives analysis and discussion on the opportunities and constraints associated with each alternative, environmental review, and permitting.

Conceptual Design Report

AECOM designed the alternatives to address three main project goals that were the result of the LPP and community engagement, which include habitat restoration and hydrologic reconnection, adapting to climate change and SLR, and improving road safety. All projects have been designed to meet these goals, with Alternative 3 providing the greatest level of attainment, followed by Alternative 2. The Conceptual Design Report provided an analysis table (Table 10, pg. 63) that weighs the different alternatives and phases and their level of attainment for the following categories: costs/timeline, constructability/complexity, environmental effects, social considerations, and project benefits (defined goals). Since Phase One for all alternatives is the same, the only difference from the alternatives are the impacts from Phase 1 and 2. Overall, the takeaway from the analysis table is that Alternative One is the most cost and time effective, but is the least preferred in relation to project benefits to the environment because it does not provide the greatest gains in relation to climate change adaptation, habitat improvements for species, and hydrologic connectivity. The reverse is true for Alternative 3, which is the costliest but provides the greatest gains to the aforementioned categories. It should be stated that the difference in scores between all the alternatives is relatively minor.

The opportunities and constraints analysis of the report identified a number of potential impacts, benefits, and constraints to each alternative's development. Most specifically, are the added costs of Alternatives 1 and 2 based on the findings of the geotechnical investigation that found existing sediments and seismic risks limit the cost effectiveness of placing fill to elevate roads, as well as increasing design complexity. Additionally, there are added risks and benefits associated with restoring Wilkins Gulch Creek and Lewis Gulch Creek onto their alluvial fans and creating a functional floodplain for all alternatives and phases. These include short term impacts to steelhead and red legged frogs, and sensitive habitat that could be offset by the long-term vision of the project. There would also be impacts to the cultural landscape of Wilkins Ranch as vegetation communities and floodplain change with full connectivity of Wilkins Gulch Creek to Wilkins Ranch (Alternatives 2 and 3), thus altering the viewshed. Lastly, the community would be disrupted during construction of all phases for each alternative.

Staff Analysis and Recommendations

Based on the data from the conceptual design document, staff is concerned about the potential costs and impacts of phases 2 and 3, regardless of the alternatives. Staff is, therefore, recommending that the BLAC recommend that the Marin County Open Space District Board of Directors pursue Phase 1, and to defer subsequent phases as a long-term "vision" that the community could work towards. This would allow for current studies to be completed and additional discussion that could refine the analysis, and allow for the development of funding strategies.

Staff recommends proceeding with Phase 1 because it is the most financially feasible, requires the least amount of disruption to the environment and the community, and would result in immediate benefits to the community upon completion. In addition, during the pursuit of Phase 1 the MCOSD can continue to work with its partners and the community on developing subsequent phases.

Final Action Items

After receiving feedback from this meeting, staff will schedule a meeting before the Open Space District Board of Directors. The earliest available OSD BOD meeting date is November 14, 2017. The community

is encouraged to provide comments and recommendations on the Conceptual Design Report to Marin County Open Space District staff no later than November 3, 2017. Comments will be submitted to the BOD by their deadline for receiving information for the scheduled meeting date.