

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Quality, Excellence, Innovation

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Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
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SUBJECT: Muir Woods Road Memorandum of Understanding Update
County of Marin and National Park Service

Dear Board Members:

Accounting

RECOMMENDATION: Accept the report.

Airport

SUMMARY: Visitation to Muir Woods National Monument (Muir Woods) has steadily increased, especially at peak periods, overwhelming the current transportation infrastructure that services it, including Muir Woods Road and Frank Valley Road. Over the years, the County has worked with various stakeholders including the National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), Marin Transit, and various other local government organizations and community interest groups to develop solutions. The Muir Woods Shuttle is an example of such a successful element.

Building Maintenance

Capital Projects

Certified Unified Program
Agency (CUPA)

Communications
Maintenance

County Garage

Disability Access

Engineering & Survey

Flood Control &
Water Resources

Land Development

More recently, the National Park Service (NPS), in consultation with the County, CDPR, and other stakeholders, proposed to create a reservation system to manage demand, reduce roadside parking, enhance parking enforcement, and improve public service announcements. Congressman Huffman created an 'ad hoc' group of government, community, and environmental groups to establish a consensus on a path forward to improve traffic congestion and parking problems. The parties worked together and developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that includes goals and objectives, collaboration on the implementation of a future NPS parking reservation system, and detailed road shoulder parking limits, which will significantly decrease road shoulder parking along Muir Woods Road.

Purchasing

Today, staff and NPS are providing an update on the activities that have occurred in support of the MOU since the last community meeting was held specifically on this topic before your Board on June 14, 2016. Indeed there have been numerous other public meetings as well on various aspects of programs and proposed projects in the Redwood Creek watershed in the last year.

Real Estate

Reprographic Services

Road Maintenance

DISCUSSION:

Two meetings were held in June 2015 by your Board to receive public comment on the draft MOU, and after recommended changes were made, the MOU was adopted by your Board on June 30, 2015 (attached). NPS subsequently signed

Stormwater Program

Transportation &
Traffic Operations

Waste Management

the MOU after conducting an Environmental Assessment for the implementation of the Muir Woods Reservation System, soliciting public comment, and releasing a Finding of No Significant Impact determination. Per the MOU, two public meetings regarding the MOU implementation have been held each year, the last one on June 14, 2016.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Summary

The MOU creates the framework for the NPS to implement a parking and transportation reservation system as summarized below:

- NPS will create a reservation system for visitors using motorized transportation, including managing tour bus operators.
- NPS will manage the reservation system to limit visitation levels and reduce peak attendance, and associated traffic congestion and parking demand.
- Creates a Parking Management Corridor for NPS parking permits along Muir Woods Road between approximately Conlon Avenue to Kent Canyon.
- Over the course of seven years, the parking reservation system will allow Muir Woods shoulder parking to be prohibited south of the Redwood Creek concrete bridge (approximately 30 parking spaces will remain between Muir Woods entrance and the concrete bridge).
- Parking enforcement and controls will be enhanced for all of Muir Woods/Frank Valley Road with a cooperative agreement between the Sheriff and National Park Service.
- Both the County and NPS will continue to collaborate to improve Redwood Creek water quality and environmental conditions, and will work to improve public transit and public service messaging.

MOU Phasing

The MOU implementation is divided into two main phases. The first two years is for the development of the reservation system by NPS. During this time period, road shoulder parking south of the Redwood Creek bridge is reduced to a maximum of 80 spaces during peak periods through additional regulatory parking restrictions, physical barriers, and parking enforcement.

The second phase of the MOU begins upon the initiation of NPS's reservation system and continues for the next five years, which is the end of the MOU term. During the first 2 ½ year period, parking is capped at 80 spaces south of the concrete bridge, then for the following 2 ½ year period, to 40 parking spaces. At the end of this time, the reservation system would accommodate all of the parking demand and Muir Woods Road shoulder parking would be limited to 30 spaces north of the bridge and near the Muir Woods entrance, and no parking spaces south of the concrete bridge (up to 400 vehicles previously parked at peaks times).

The MOU does allow for use of up to 80 spaces in the last 2 ½ years during any NPS off street parking lot construction periods associated with any upgrade or expanded parking facility work.

MOU Accomplishments

Coordination: The local governmental agency staffs convened an interagency working group to plan and coordinate all roadside activities. The working group included staff from the County, NPS, State Parks, and Sheriff. A construction team was also created to interact during the detail design and construction of the roadside bollards and erosion control measures.

Parking Enforcement: The Sheriff provided authority, through a separate agreement, for NPS to enforce traffic and parking regulations. In doing so, the Sheriff did not relinquish or reduce any of its existing authority. However, this allowed NPS to add parking enforcement staff and parking violation ticketing rates increased. NPS has been actively enforcing parking violations and issuing citations since November 2015, with citations paid through the Marin Parking Authority.

Additional Parking Restrictions and Higher Fines: In October 2015, your Board adopted additional no parking zones along Muir Woods Road and increased the fines to the maximum allowed of \$99 per violation. The MOU required no more than 80 parking spaces south of the concrete bridge no later than June 1, 2016. Because parking has been eliminated before the reservation system has been implemented, there remains a significant lack of compliance with the parking restrictions at peak visitation periods and diversion of parking to other undesirable locations occurs. Long queues have also formed periodically along Muir Woods Road as some motorists look or wait for an available parking space. The additional parking enforcement improves the shoulder parking demand situation, but challenges will remain until the reservation system is implemented.

Environmental Review: The NPS completed an Environmental Assessment for the implementation of the Muir Woods Reservation System, solicited public comment and released a Finding of No Significant Impact determination.

Parking Barriers, Bollards: Public Works Engineering Division prepared construction drawings, and NPS contracted and funded the installation of a parking barrier post system along the road to discourage parking. Approximately 1150 total posts made up of 6" x 6" and 4" x 4" redwood posts were installed, some with cables added between the posts next to steep shoulder drop-offs for added pedestrian safety. The barrier system extended both above and south of the Muir Woods entrance. The system not only discourages parking, but also creates a greater buffer from the creek to allow vegetation to grow. Erosion and sediment control measures were also installed behind the posts in areas that were previously used for parking. Construction began about in January 2016 and was completed by the beginning of March 2016.

In conjunction with the reservation system implementation, the parties agree to jointly work to expand public transit to Muir Woods utilizing Marin Transit's Muir Woods Shuttle. NPS will also manage changeable message signs (CMS), provide information on its website, and conduct other public service announcements to inform visitors of the need to secure a reservation before visiting Muir Woods.

Reservation System: The MOU focuses on traffic operations, parking, and arrival management aspects of Muir Woods National Monument by creating a reservation system that reduces and caps parking demand and peak arrival times. NPS issued a solicitation for a vendor managed reservation system in early December 2016. A site visit was held for interested parties on January 18, 2017, and the deadline to submit a proposal is April 18, 2017. It is anticipated that the contract will have a November 2017 effective date. On June 7, 2016, your Board established a preferential parking corridor whereby NPS can design and hire a contractor to implement a parking reservation system for visitors. As part of the overall parking management plan, NPS reconstructed the commercial vehicle overflow parking area at Colon Avenue so that it can now be used for general public parking or other needs as the reservation system is implemented. The Muir Woods Shuttle operated by Marin Transit will also be a key component of the overall parking management and arrival at Muir Woods.

Other Future Road Improvements

The County was successful in obtaining a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant to reconstruct 2.48 miles of Frank Valley Road from the Muir Woods National Monument entrance to State Route 1 near Muir Beach. Besides repaving the road, this project will result in various landslide and embankment scour repairs and culvert replacements that will decrease sediment load into Redwood Creek and improve overall water quality. The project is currently in the environment review analysis phase and construction is expected to occur as early as 2019. The project cost estimate for design and construction is \$5 million, with an 11.5% local funding match by the County. The County also received a grant to replace the concrete bridge at milepost 1.90. The bridge design and construction is estimated at \$2.1 million, also with an 11.5% local funding match by the County. Efforts are underway to combine the bridge reconstruction with the FLAP grant work on Muir Woods Road.

Other Infrastructure Improvements and Changes

NPS is developing plans to improve or replace the Muir Woods National Monument parking, pedestrian trails, and other arrival facilities. The project will improve and reorganize parking, trails, and other arrival infrastructure to address deferred maintenance, improve safety and visitor experience, and upgrade stormwater management design. The environmental assessment was released for public comment in October 2016. All of the alternatives are consistent with the MOU, including the number of parking spaces that were identified in the Reservation System Environmental Assessment.

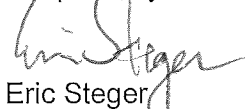
Lastly, through a road name change request from the Muir Beach Community Services District, the name of the lower, southerly, portion of Muir Woods Road (from the concrete bridge to State Route 1) was changed to Frank Valley Road.

CONCLUSIONS: Significant progress has been made and the MOU milestones have been met. The County and NPS are committed to meeting future milestones, making steady progress on common goals, and reporting publicly on that progress to all interested stakeholders. The MOU provides for public updates at least twice a year, one before the Board of Supervisors and one at a local community meeting in Southern Marin. Today's report satisfies one of the two annual meetings.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no impact with this action.

REVIEWED BY:	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Department of Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Counsel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A

Respectfully submitted,



Eric Steger
Assistant Director

Attachment: Memorandum of Understanding between County of Marin and National Park Service

c: Congressman Jared Huffman, Member of Congress
Craig Kenkel, Interim General Superintendent, GGNRA
Ryen Goering, California Department of Parks and Recreation
Robert T. Doyle, Sheriff-Coroner
Nancy Whelan, Marin Transit

