

**JOHN MARSH COWELL RANCH STATE PARK
GENERAL PLAN/EIR**

Resource Summary / Plan Alternatives Workshop

Tuesday March 21, 2007

City of Brentwood Community Center

730 Third Street, Brentwood, CA 95413

6:30 – 9:30 PM

MEETING SUMMARY

Issue Date: April 23, 2007

Agency Representatives

California State Parks

Donald Monahan, District Superintendent

Craig Mattson, Sector Superintendent

Stephen Bachman, Associate Park and Recreation Specialist

Brian Hickey, Project Manager

Lorrie Thomas-Dossett, District Maintenance Chief

Karen Barrett, Regional Interpretive Specialist

Cyndy Shafer, Environmental Scientist

Breck Parkman, State Archaeologist

Marianne Hurley, Architectural Historian/State Historian II

Dave Keck, Sr. Landscape Architect

City of Brentwood

Craig Bronzan, Director, City of Brentwood Parks and Recreation

Felix Errico, Park Planner

Ken DeSilva, Park Services Manager

Linda Stadlbauer, Park Planning Technician

EDAW

Donna Plunkett, Project Manager

Sindhu George, Landscape Designer

The meeting began at 6:30pm. Craig Bronzan, Director of the City of Brentwood Parks and Recreation, opened the meeting and introduced members of the planning team from the City of Brentwood, California Department of Parks and Recreation Parks (California State Parks), and the consultant, EDAW. Craig Mattson, Sector Superintendent for California State Parks, then welcomed participants to the General Plan Process and introduced the team members representing California State Parks. He provided a brief statement about the General Plan process for the Park and the goals and intent of this particular meeting. Following this Mr. Mattson introduced Donna Plunkett, the Project Manager for the consultant team. The meeting proceeded according to the agenda and a summary follows below.

Meeting agenda and schedule

Donna Plunkett introduced members of the team from EDAW and then gave a brief overview of the agenda for the meeting. The items on the agenda included the project status/timeline, an update on naming and classification, resource summary, issues and

opportunities, draft alternatives and a break-out session for alternatives discussion and rating. Ms. Plunkett encouraged all participants to sign-in for the meeting and collect the hand-outs provided. She briefly outlined the contents of the hand-outs, which included a contact information sheet, a copy of the workshop agenda, and a comments sheet. She noted that there were multiple sources for obtaining information on the General Plan process including newsletters, websites and information newsletters that were mailed out and also available at various locations. She noted that the contact information sheet gave the locations where people can send comments or questions during the planning process. She stated that the City of Brentwood and California State Parks have websites that provide up-to-date information regarding the General Plan process and relevant data. Ms. Plunkett mentioned that this meeting was the second in a series of public meetings for the General Plan and EIR process and encouraged participants to ask questions, offer comments and provide suggestions for input to the planning process.

Planning Process Overview and Plan Alternatives

Following these general comments, Ms. Plunkett provided a brief overview of the Park in relation to its regional context and within the State Park system. Ms. Plunkett's overview was in the form of a PowerPoint presentation which is available for review and download on the State Parks' website under the section entitled "General Plans in progress." Ms. Plunkett noted that the Park was the most recent addition to the State Park system, and that it formed an important link within the regional network of public open spaces. She also mentioned that the Park has never been open to the public and that it presents a unique opportunity to provide for a good balance of recreational opportunities and resource management.

Naming and Classification

Ms. Plunkett noted that as part of the planning process California State Parks was required to go through the naming and classification process for the Park. She mentioned that the issue had been discussed and commented upon during the previous public meeting and turned to Craig Mattson for a status update. Mr. Mattson noted that the naming and classification process was an essential step that would influence the direction and final form of the General Plan. He stated that the Department had arrived at a classification for the Park, but had not made a determination on the name of the Park. The Park is to be classified as a "State Historic Park" so as to allow for the dual goals of providing recreational opportunities while preserving the rich and layered cultural history of the Park. Mr. Mattson cited a few examples of such parks in the California State Parks system to illustrate this point. He stated that the Department has decided to defer naming the Park in light of some new information that was obtained during the resource inventory phase about the prehistoric use of the Park lands. He mentioned that the proposed classification would be presented to the Commission in May 2007 for approval, but further thought and deliberations were necessary before the name could be decided and presented for approval.

Planning Process Update

Following the update from Mr. Mattson on the naming and classification, Ms. Plunkett once again took the floor to give a detailed overview of the planning process to date and the draft alternatives proposed. Ms. Plunkett returned to the PowerPoint presentation by reading aloud the mission statement of California State Parks, which provided the framework for understanding the goals of the General Plan process and the proposed draft alternatives. Ms. Plunkett then focused the rest of her presentation and discussion on the

information and issues specific to the John Marsh/Cowell Ranch Park lands. Ms. Plunkett's presentation was grouped under two broad sections, namely, the Resource Summary section and the Plan Alternatives section.

Resource Summary

In the Resource Summary section Ms. Plunkett discussed the results of the resource inventory phase using a series of maps. Ms. Plunkett briefly described the method by which data was gathered and provided a brief summary of the information presented on each map. These resource items discussed included:

- Site Features
- Slope/Topography
- Watersheds
- Geology/Soils/Farmlands
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Resource Constraints

Ms. Plunkett concluded this section by summarizing the key issues identified during the resource inventory phase, namely,

- Sensitive plant and animal species
- Marsh Creek
- Wetlands, vernal pools
- Pre-historic (sub-surface) cultural resources
- Historic John Marsh House
- Cultural landscape
- Recreation Opportunities

Draft Alternatives

Ms. Plunkett then discussed the draft Plan alternatives proposed for the Park. She explained that this approach was an integral component of the CEQA process. Three alternatives were presented for exploring a continuum of Park use scenarios ranging from one without a General Plan to one with a more aggressive Plan focused on maximizing recreational benefits and long term demand at the Park. These alternatives were respectively named

- No action (without a General Plan)
- Alternative B
- Alternative C

Ms. Plunkett explained that in this continuum Alternative C was more aggressive with additional visitor facilities and Alternative B was more modest in terms of future uses and visitor intensity. She noted that in both alternatives, resource management would be generally equal and more aggressive than the No Action alternative. Each 'Alternative B' and 'Alternative C' incorporated four Management Zones to provide a framework for distributing uses and activities within the Park. These management zones were as follows:

- Visitor facilities
- Natural resource management
- Cultural resource management
- Maintenance and operations

Ms. Plunkett described the key plan elements addressed within each management zone, and also explained that the two alternatives differed from each other in the basic level of public use permissible within each zone and in the guidelines set forth for the historic area. Ms. Plunkett presented color-coded maps illustrating the extent and location of the zones for each alternative. Ms. Plunkett explained that the maps were meant to indicate broad areas within which specific uses or activities might be located. She clarified that the maps did not imply that the entire extent of a particular zone would be intensively developed for a prescribed set of uses or activities.

Question and Answer Session

Ms. Plunkett then introduced and led the Question and Answer Session, which was next on the agenda. Ms. Plunkett opened the floor to the participants for questions or comments. She reminded participants that if they wished to refrain from voicing their comments or questions at this meeting, they could express their opinions on the comment card provided with the hand-outs and hand it over to the planning team or mail it to the contact information provided on the contact sheet. The summary of the question and answer session follows:

Q: (Anonymous Participant). An anonymous participant requested more information about the design for the State Highway 4 Bypass where it crosses Marsh Creek and how it might impact the riparian corridor. He mentioned that a recent survey of Marsh Creek indicates that the corridor north of the John Marsh house is fairly intact and rich in natural resources.

A: Mr. Mattson responded that the bypass was not being constructed on California State Park land. He stated that the agency did not possess detailed knowledge of the proposed design for the crossing, and as such was not able to comment on the impacts of the proposed design. He clarified that the request for more information should be directed to the Bypass Authority responsible overseeing the design and construction of the bypass.

Q: (Anonymous Participant). The same participant wished to know whether State Parks was in dialogue with the Bypass Authority about the proposed Marsh Creek trail connection and for procuring relevant documents from them.

A: Mr. Mattson responded in the affirmative, and indicated that the agency was in dialogue with the bypass authority regarding the proposed trail connection. A member of the public commented that the proposed bypass would span the creek, and that the trail connection would be along the creek under the bridge.

Q: Gene Metz (John Marsh Historic Trust) commented that the historic/cultural resources inventory section of the presentation and the supporting maps did not indicate the Adobe site and requested that it be listed and represented on the map.

A: Mr. Mattson responded by stating that the exact location of the Adobe site was still unknown, and that it would take a great deal of planning effort to locate it. He also mentioned that even if the location was known it would not be possible to reconstruct it at the time, since it has come to light that the area might contain a significantly large extent of pre-historic Native American artifacts, and this would limit any active disturbance to the area. He requested Mr. Parkman, the State Archaeologist to offer additional information, if any, in response to the question. Mr. Parkman reiterated that the exact location of the Adobe site was unknown. He clarified that although there was an artist's rendition of the approximate location of the Adobe, the information was not precise enough to undertake an archaeological investigation for the site. He stated that given the extent of historic and pre-historic occupation of the area, a great deal of coordinated research will need to be undertaken to understand and assimilate information about all layers of the cultural history of the area. He concluded by stating that maybe in the course of this research a study might be undertaken to locate the Adobe site.

Q: A member of the John Marsh Historic trust, wanted to understand why it was not possible to find the Adobe site, when a great deal of effort was being put into archaeological investigations, and when it was possible to recover a 7000-yr old Native American artifact.

A: Ms. Plunkett responded that no sub-surface archaeological investigations had been undertaken on Park lands as part of the General Plan process. She clarified that the historic resources data was collected from the State cultural resources database, and informed by additional investigations recently triggered by the Vineyards development adjacent to the John Marsh historic site. Mr. Parkman stated that the 7000-yr old Native American artifacts were unearthed and dated as part of the Vineyards development, and clarified that no additional archaeological investigations were undertaken on Park lands.

Q: (Anonymous Participant). Will the General Plan include a plan for additional archaeological research in the area, or indicate the need for additional archaeological research in the area?

A: Mr. Parkman responded by stating that this would be contingent on adequate reasoning for the need for additional archaeological research in the area, and on the availability of adequate funding for the same. Ms. Plunkett mentioned that the Plan will likely indicate the need for a coordinated research effort to understand the larger historic timeline and picture of the area.

Following the question and answer session, Donna Plunkett proceeded to introduce the breakout sessions indicating that two stations had been set up with maps showing the proposed draft Plan alternatives. She explained that the sessions were aimed at soliciting comments and suggestions from the participants regarding the items included in the draft alternatives. The sessions would be facilitated by Brian Hickey, Project Manager for California State Parks, and herself respectively. Ms. Plunkett pointed out that a third station had been set up with the resource inventory maps where California State Parks resource specialists were available to take questions and comments. Ms. Plunkett also encouraged participants to rate the contents of the draft alternatives using color-coded dots, based on a rating chart that would be handed out and explained during the break-out session.

Break-Out Groups/Rating Session

The meeting attendees floated between the three stations, providing comments and asking questions. The questions and comments were recorded by the facilitators on flip charts, the contents of which have been summarized below.

Group 1: Donna Plunkett, Facilitator

- Camping encroachments on habitat for raptors and other species within the Dry Creek Valley. The area already impacted by golfing activities within the Vineyards development.
- Presence of sensitive and rare plant species within the Round Valley Creek area, potential for conflict with equestrian use in the area.
- Grazing vs. non-grazing
- Kit Fox habitat
- Trail should follow Marsh Creek
- Rebuild historic Adobe

Group 2: Brian Hickey, Facilitator

- Vote for Alternative C because it is least restrictive, there will be enough future restrictions.
- Vote for alternative camping
- Use green technology for trail design and buildings
- Marsh Creek trail should stay alongside the creek alignment
- Would like to see Adobe restored
- Make pedestrian bridge of remnant of concrete structure in creek
- No stock grazing
- No camping
- Yes grazing and prescribed fire

Alternatives rating

Participants rated the various items within the Plan Alternatives based on a color-coded rating system indicated in the attached hand-out and summarized, as follows:

- Green Element or alternative should definitely be included in the General Plan
- Yellow Element has merit and seems viable as an alternative
- Red Element should not be considered in the Master Plan
- Blue There are other ideas that need to be considered (please list)

Participants placed colored dots of their choice against alternatives or elements within the proposed plans, based on their agreement or disagreement with the proposed action. Copies of photographs of the ratings maps are included as an attachment to this summary.

Group summary

In lieu of a group summary, participants were given another opportunity to voice their comments and make statements regarding the planning process so far and draft alternatives. Donna Plunkett introduced the session and stated that the meeting summary would be available for public review with attachments of recorded comments and questions. She also mentioned that the members of the public had another 30 days to provide additional comments and suggestions regarding the General Plan process and draft alternatives. Ms. Plunkett then opened up the floor for comments and statements.

Mr. Metz thanked the various agencies and the consultant for facilitating the public meeting and commended them on the progress of the General Plan process. He proceeded to state that his comment was specific to the naming and classification process. He stated that the John Marsh Trust was delighted with the classification of the Park as a State historic Park, and expressed agreement with deferring the naming to a later date. Mr. Metz stated that the name suggested by California State Parks, namely, Los Meganos State Historic Park, was not appropriate for the Park, and felt that there were better suited names that conveyed the historic significance of the Park. He noted that Los Meganos referred to the larger Spanish land grant and that the Park bears little resemblance to this grant. He contends that the name does not convey the historic significance of the John Marsh period. Further, Mr. Metz mentioned that there was a potential to confuse the name Los Meganos with the similar sounding Los Megonos which would cause confusion among visitors and result in a dilution of the identity of the Park. Mr. Metz suggested that the Park be named Pioneer Park or John Marsh Pioneer Park, stating that he believed that it would convey the most dynamic part of California history when many significant and important events converged.

Jamie Perkins of the East Bay Regional Parks District read out a written statement from the agency, and the same is available as an attachment to this document. The agency extended its cooperation in preparing the General Plan and offered recommendations for trail connections and resource management.

Carol Jensen, a member of the John Marsh Historic Trust invited attendees to participate in a fund-raising gala hosted by the trust on April 14th.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Ms. Plunkett once again reminded attendees where they might obtain information about the General Plan process. She requested attendees to provide their names and addresses if they were not on the mailing list but wished to be included. Ms. Plunkett thanked the group for attending and for their participation and convened the meeting at approximately 9:00 PM.

Handouts Available at Meeting

- Meeting Agenda
- Contact List
- Comment Card
- Rating Guidance

List of attachments

Handouts (3)

Photocopies of sign-in sheets (3)

Photocopies of comment sheets returned at the meeting (1)

Statement from East Bay Regional Parks District

Photographs of ratings maps (8)