

Clayton Ranch Public Scoping Meeting, Clayton Community Library

Sept 9, 2015 at 6:30pm

Started: 6:41pm

Questions/Comments:

Q: What is the security residence on the land?

A: The District has a residence program that allows staff to live in residences for rent on park property to act as front line security and to open and close entry gates, if necessary.

Q: Is the land open 24 hours or will there be limited access?

A: There is a curfew. Black Diamond Mines has a stricter curfew than most regional parks because of the mining resources; open park hours vary from 8-9 AM to 5-7 PM, depending on the season. The new park would also be closed at night, with backpack camp bringing potential overnight campers. All regional parks have curfews, which are typically 10 PM – 5 AM. If Clayton Ranch becomes a part of Black Diamond Mines it would likely have the same curfew as the existing park.

Q: Is the Powerpoint presentation shown at this meeting available online?

A: It will be posted online on the District's Clayton Ranch website page located at this link:
<http://www.ebparks.org/about/planning#clayton-R>

Q: How far from Morgan Territory Road is the planned staging area?

A: Approximately six-tenths of a mile; the proposed entrance is located directly across from the Diablo Valley Ranch rehabilitation center on Marsh Creek Road.

Q: Is Clayton Ranch connected to Morgan Territory?

A: The areas are not connected.

Q: When the trail design is in being considered will the District include single track for hiking only to not share with bikes?

A: The District can construct new, natural surface narrow trails to safely accommodate multiple user groups. The District could consider hiker- or biker-only trails.

Q: Are the trails gravel?

A: Except for one road this is paved the roads and trails are all dirt or natural service.

Q: Will dogs be allowed off-leash on the Clayton Ranch land? Morgan Territory allows dogs off-leash.

A: The leash policy will be discussed. According to the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan, dogs are allowed on-leash during daylight hours on land purchased in partnership with the ECCC Habitat Conservancy. The District generally allows dogs off-leash outside of developed areas. Clayton Ranch is the first area with a public access plan developed for the jointly acquired and managed lands so the dog policy will need to be worked out during the planning process.

Q: What is the development timeframe for Clayton Ranch?

A: The Land Use Plan will likely be adopted by the District's Board of Directors in 2016. The Conservancy will need to prepare a Preserve Management Plan (PMP) for the area prior to opening it to public access. Recommendations contained in the land use plan and PMP will need to be consistent. It is possible that the District would consider opening specific areas of the property prior to others. For example, the staging area is going to be a potentially expensive construction project. The District does not yet have an engineering plan or funds yet allocated to the project. Full build-out will likely take several years once the plan is adopted to allow time for the District to secure regulatory permits and funding. So perhaps the District would consider opening areas that do not require development to the public sooner.

Q: Will fences be up between public and private areas?

A: The entire park boundary should now be fenced. If park boundaries are not now fenced, fencing will be installed soon. Please show staff on a map where boundary fencing does not now exist.

Q: Does the District Master Plan contain a source of funding?

A: There is some funding available through grants and Measure WW development but likely not enough to construct the staging area. That's one of the limitations of the LUP: no funding source is identified, but implementing the land use plan will be a District priority.

Q: Will there be water at the proposed campground?

A: Yes. The District would need to develop a well and the water may not be potable. There is water and electricity at the proposed staging area at Marsh Creek Road.

Q: How many people can stay at the campground?

A: The backpack camp will be primitive with several graded pads, a restroom building and water. The site will be walk-in only. Although the plan is not finalized, the site will be by reservation only with a possible capacity of 20 people.

Q: Why is there only backpacking allowed and no group camping when there is an asphalt road already on the land?

A: Nortonville Road is a private, paved road that connects Kirker Pass Road to the Clayton Radio site from the north. Staff initially considered converting the two-acre Clayton Radio site to a group camp site. However, public vehicle access is not allowed on this road from Kirker Pass Road, so the District is

not endorsing the group campsite concept here. Access to the backpack site by the public will be by foot only.

Q: Would the road be demolished? In the spirit of preservation I think we should keep it restricted and access.

A: The District would keep the road in its current state, but would likely not re-pave it. The road will not be open to public vehicles, only maintenance and emergency vehicles. An all-weather road in this area is an advantage for maintenance and emergency vehicles.

Q: Does the District monitor the campsites during curfew? There is a long response time for emergency services in the area already.

A: When occupied, as a general rule, District staff does not check in on campsites unless there is an issue. Park Police are on duty at all times. There is a form of tracking park use for enforcement. When the property is open there will be a higher public and police presence, which should reduce vandalism and police issues.

Q: Will there be campfire restrictions?

A: There are no campfires in Black Diamond Mines. Campers are restricted to propane stoves for cooking. Different weather conditions require different levels of fire warning. On fire warning days, stoves are not allowed.

Q: Will there be grass management?

A: A managed cattle grazing program in grassland areas that exists now will continue when the landbank property opens.

Q: Will the new development have any effect on the nearby shooting range and hours? Will the sound from the shooting range affect the user experience in the new park?

A: The opening of the park will not have an impact on the hours of the nearby shooting range operated by the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office. The District does not have any authority or control over the shooting range. The sound is intermittent and unfortunate.

Q: Will there be an increase in budget for fire protection and operations staffing?

A: The District has a pipeline process that applies capital funds towards additional Operations and Public Safety staff at new or expanded parkland. The pipeline includes allocating additional staff based on a certain formula, such as acreage. One-and-a-half staff positions for Operations (rangers) have already been designated to the Deer Valley and Clayton Ranch landbank area. Public Safety has a similar budgeting process, and maintains mutual agreements with other fire and police agencies. Fire safety is a top concern. The area is a part of a fire safety council that the District participates in. There is a lot of mutual aid for the area. Funding does exist for additional staffing to ensure sufficient maintenance and public safety.

Q: If the existing Black Diamond Way staging is not going to expand, will it remain only a walk-in entrance? Will there be paving on Black Diamond Way? Please do not expand Black Diamond Way as a means of entrance for Clayton Ranch.

A: There is not space for expanding parking at Black Diamond Way and the District has no plans to expand here. The staging area will stay the same and the District will not pave Black Diamond Way.

Q: What is the perceived public use walkthrough? Enter in southeast entrance and end in upper north? Would the trail system be expanded? Will the land be used to its fullest extent if the southern entrance is the only vehicular entrance?

A: It is hard to say what the specific experience is. The hike from Marsh Creek Road to the ridge is very intense, with large distances and some long uphill portions. Part of the planning process is finding reasonable routes with accessible staging areas and resources. The District is planning to expand the trail system and opportunities for public access; the southern area on Marsh Creek Road is currently the only viable vehicle access point although the park contains an existing road system that provides access to most of the parkland.

Q: Please provide a trail connection between this park and Mt. Diablo State Park, for convenience and safety reasons. Without a safe crossing, did the District rule out the use of the tunnel from the creek? There's an existing tunnel under Marsh Creek designed for cattle.

A: On the southern side of Marsh Creek Road in the location of the existing undercrossing, it is likely private property. The District will evaluate the existing undercrossing, a new overcrossing, or possibly an at-grade crossing on Marsh Creek Road. The undercrossing would limit horse access. If the District can acquire a public access easement for the land, access to Mt. Diablo State Park may be expanded there. Connecting the existing trail system in Clayton Ranch to Mt. Diablo State Park is a primary purpose of the land acquisition and goal of the land use plan, including a safe connection across Marsh Creek Road.

Q: Is there a plan for future acquisition of open space north of Marsh Creek Road?

A: The District will consider additional acquisition if it can identify willing sellers. The boundaries for the Clayton Ranch development are not necessarily set, but they will likely remain for now. Additional acquisitions can happen, likely in areas to the east. The boundaries of Deer Valley Regional Park to the east will likely be expanded and there is a proposed regional trail connection between Deer Valley and Clayton Ranch.

Q: What's the hole in the map marked "In Holding"?

A: That is privately held land that is grazed.

Q: What about connecting to Concord Hills?

A: There is potential for future Conservancy acquisitions. Some of the area is District land and land bank owned by the District. Black Diamond Mines will ultimately likely connect to Kirker Pass Road to the west. There is a lot of land that is in the process of being planning or needs to be planned and opened to the public: expanding Black Diamond Mines is Phase 1, planning the Clayton Ranch area is Phase 2, acquiring and planning Deer Valley is Phase 3. Also the District is working on a current plan for Concord Hills Regional Park to the west. Kirker Pass Road may be the boundary between the two parks; there is potential for additional land acquisition in the area. The District is currently working on two land use plans: Clayton Ranch, and incorporating land bank properties to the north of Black Diamond Mines. There have been amendments and land bank pieces that could be folded into one LUP. Part of this planning process is deciding whether Clayton Ranch will be part of Black Diamond Mines or a separate park.

Q: Is there a trail in Mt. Diablo State Park that comes close to proposed staging area?

A: The Mt. Diablo State Park Road and Management Plan shows the Three Springs Entry that provides limited parking and abuts Marsh Creek Road across from Chaparral Spring. This is potential access point, although Marsh Creek Road is busy and there is not room to accommodate public parking safely to the north on District property.

Q: Do you have a rough estimate for when Clayton Ranch might be open?

A: The Clayton Ranch LUP will be considered by the Board of Directors in 2016. Some properties could be open simply with gates and signs while others may need several years to develop safe access.

Q: Thanks from Save Mt. Diablo (George Phillips) for working on this project for so long. From our perspective the link between Mt. Diablo St Park and Deer Valley is important.

Q: What is the argument against Clayton Ranch being a part of Black Diamond Mines?

A: One is that the Clayton Ranch doesn't have the same mining resources as Black Diamond Mines and therefore would be managed and operated differently, and the land use plans would have a different focus. Second, Black Diamond Mines is associated with the East County area of Antioch and Pittsburgh, but Clayton Ranch may be more focused towards Clayton. Clayton Ranch and BDM have different historical associations. The boundary between the parks is based on historic property lines – there is no obvious physical reason to separate them. The southern boundary of Black Diamond Mines could be adjusted to match topographic features like the ridgeline.

Q: Will the District lead hikes through the new land area?

A: The District is starting a program to lead hikes to land bank properties. On Sunday, Oct 18th the District will have a naturalist-guided hike in Clayton Ranch. Registration is required. Information on the hike is on the District website and in the Regional in Nature publication. Additionally, Save Mt. Diablo periodically leads hikes on the Irish Canyon and Chaparral Spring properties that leave from the Peacock Creek parking area.

Q: With regards to expanding Black Diamond Mines, the different curfews between Mt. Diablo State Park and Black Diamond Mines could be an issue. Will Mt. Diablo State Park traffic affect that? Will the curfew be aligned with Mt. Diablo State Park?

A: The District will look into that as part of the planning process.

Q: If the staging areas were built today, when would it be opened?

A: There is a planning process, funding needs to be identified and necessary regulatory permits obtained prior to development. Development of the staging area could take several years from plan adoption.

Q: For users who don't drive, could the Black Diamond Way entrance be opened to the public?

A: Black Diamond Way will continue to be accessible to the public, but not by vehicle.

Q: Could the Clayton Ranch area be included in a soft launch for local residents before a broader opening that would require developing vehicle parking?

A: The District hears that you want the park open and would consider opening specific areas of the park if opening other areas may be significantly delayed. However, even though the site may not be a major destination among park users, the District understands that not all park visitors will walk to the site and opening portions of the park will attract vehicles, which will be a problem if there isn't on-site parking provided. It is not safe to park on Marsh Creek Road.

Q: Will there be restrooms in the area?

A: Yes, the District will install vault toilets at the Marsh Creek staging area and at the campground.

Q: I'd like the record to show that I would like as many bike trails as possible. I would also point out that a bike accessible Mt. Diablo connection would be good.

A: That will be part of the plan.

Finished: 7:53pm