

Approved Meeting Minutes
PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE
 May 23, 2016

ATTENDING: Best, Kern, Beyaert, Coffey, Gregory, Ho, Mercurio, Palacios, Rickard, Sanwong, Simmons, Thompson, Robinson, Wilkins, Yee
 NOT ATTENDING: Godfrey, Madsen, Texeira, Volin, Coomber
 STAFF ATTENDING: Graul, Hamlat, Johnson, Koh, Polt-Jones, Pfoehler, O'Connor, Clay
 GUESTS: None.
 PUBLIC: None.

The meeting began at 7:01p.m.

1. **Approval of April 25, 2016 Minutes:** The April 25, 2016 minutes were approved with edits. PAC member Robinson abstained due to being absent from the April meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was moved by PAC member Beyaert. PAC member Rickard seconded and approval of the minutes passed unanimously.
2. **Introductions:** None.
3. **Board Member Comments:** None.
4. **Public Comments:** None.
5. **Presentations:**
 - (I) a. **Natural Resources Update Continuation – Matthew Graul, Chief of Stewardship**
Matthew Graul, Chief of Stewardship reported he oversees all the natural resource management departments within the District: Water Resource Management, Wildlife Vegetation Management, Integrated Pest Management and Fisheries. Graul gave an overview of projects from each group. Graul discussed the use of remote cameras to study wildlife. Graul said current studies in the Sunol/Ohlone Regional Wilderness are tracking mountain lion behavior and usage of the parks. The District will be expanding the use of remote cameras for the fuels management work in the East Bay Hills. Initial placement of the cameras will be between Tilden and Sibley. This should be an effective area to observe mammals and species interactions typically unseen by biologists. The District is also working on a whipsnake study in the fuels management areas. Graul explained, in addition to mountain lions, the cameras in the Sunol/Ohlone Regional Wilderness have photographed golden eagles, Cooper's hawks, gray horned owls, bobcats, gray fox and coyotes. Through this work, District staff have been able to identify 10 to 12 individual mountain lions by their physical characteristics. The District hopes to expand this program to get a better understanding about how these animals are interacting with each other, and how they are interacting or not interacting with the public.

The District is also doing an Alameda striped racer or whipsnake study as part of the fuels management program. Staff are looking at how fuels management work in the East Bay Hills will impact the Alameda whipsnakes. This is the area where the District is thinning brush, and/or thinning or clearing eucalyptus trees. Graul explained 40 traps are within the control areas that won't be treated. There are 80 traps within the treatment zones. 23 Alameda striped racers were found, all in the southern half of Tilden. Three of the large Alameda striped racer snakes were fitted with radio transmitters so the District can track their behavior. Beyaert inquired if this program was being funded by FEMA grants. Graul replied it is partially funded by FEMA.

Graul reported it has been another very successful breeding season on the Least Tern Island in Hayward. In 2015, there were 71 least tern nests, 120 chicks and 98 of those were fledglings.

Fisheries Management has finished the Wildcat Creek watershed sediment study and are working on implementation. Fisheries is assessing the lake population, and they continue to work with Yolo County Resource Conservation District on Sacramento perch captive breeding and reintroduction at Jewel Lake. Fisheries is considering introducing Sacramento perch into a pond in Point Pinole that has a lot of carp and no California Red-Legged frog population. Fisheries is also doing a Del Valle food web study, and partnering with Urban Tilth to help repair the riparian zones. Since completing restoration work, Nook Pool has been a successful area for trout in Tilden Park. The District is working on getting grants to expand this work and are hoping to continue the partnership with Urban Tilth.

PAC Chair Kern asked if the District receives grants from the Workforce Investment Boards. Graul replied the District has considered this option.

Graul reported the serpentine prairie vegetation management and monitoring is an ongoing project at the Trudeau Training Center. 2016 has been a successful year with many wildflowers and other native plants flourishing.

The District is working to improve grazing infrastructure management. A more strategic approach is being developed to spread out maintenance money evenly throughout the parks and track projects more closely. Graul reported the District partnered with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Alameda County Resource Conservation District (RCD). NRCS provided 70% of the funding and another 20% came from RCD to restore four ponds in the Garin/Dry Creek area. This project enhanced the habitat for the California Tiger Salamander and improved livestock dispersion across fields.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) has a challenging project with Medusa Head control at Round Valley. IPM has used many different techniques there: fire, chemical application and mowing with various levels of success. IPM thinks timed mowing twice a year might be the most successful method. Graul said there has been success with Yellow Star Thistle control at Briones. IPM is using more volunteer work and smaller programs with community groups. IPM is working with staff to map weed populations, increase staff training and education to identify weeds and mechanical methods to reduce chemical use. PAC member Mercurio asked about the process of removing Yellow Star Thistle. Graul replied the work is done by manual labor. PAC member Ho asked if cutting and baling has been tried. Graul replied no, they cut and leave the thatch at a time of year when seeds aren't active.

Graul reported blue green algae has changed over the last few years. The District has had blue green algae in the lakes for many years. Between 2008 and 2014 there were numerous blue green algae blooms at Lake Anza. They were lab tested and toxins were not detected. The first toxic bloom occurred in 2014 at Lake Temescal. Since then there have been numerous toxic blooms which have extended to several of the District's lakes. The most challenging bloom was at Lake Chabot which caused three dog deaths. The District put up flyers, but it wasn't enough notice. Since then, signs have been put up at all entrance points to the parks. All lakes, except Shadow Cliffs, have been closed for a period of time in the last few years. IPM is working to improve monitoring and educate field staff to notify Stewardship about blooms. PAC member Simmons asked what causes an algae bloom to become toxic. Graul replied it is unknown.

Treatment is vacuuming up small blooms or treating with PAK 27, a benign product comprised of hydrogen and oxygen that breaks up the algae and shortens the life cycle.

Kern asked about fish consumed in these areas. Graul said consuming the liver or organs of fish can be toxic, but the filet is okay to ingest. Rainbow trout and catfish are low risk as they are raised in a fishery first and then released into lakes.

Beyaert thanked staff for the good work they are doing to understand plants and animals, and improve their habitat. It is important to also engage volunteers, especially youth, in vegetation management and enhancement. The work product is great, and it is important to educate, and help them learn more about the natural world and the District.

(I) b. Social Media Update – Isa Polt-Jones, Public Information Representative

Isa Polt-Jones, Public Information Representative stated the District is being recognized this month by the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts (CARPD) for outstanding social media. Polt-Jones commented the number one way the District reaches the public is through the website. There are over one million unique visitors to the website each year. The second platform is the Regional in Nature Activity Guide which is distributed via newspapers, community centers, etc. These two are the largest social platforms for reaching the public and letting them know what's happening in the District.

A few years ago, Public Affairs decided it was time for the District to have an official social media presence because that's where people were having conversations. YouTube was the first social media platform the District joined. Public Affairs developed some internal guidelines about the use of social media for the District. The District has been inspired by President Obama's Government 2.0 Initiative which encourages Federal government agencies to provide more information to the public, be more transparent and embrace new technology. The District uses social media to communicate messages, address questions and complaints, develop new relationships and inspire new ambassadors. The District is communicating with 50,000 people per month through social media. The hope is to gradually develop followers who become more interested in the parks. The goal is for followers to learn more about the parks, take action such as volunteering, become a member or attending an event, go to new parks, and finally become advocates and ambassadors who spread the word.

Social media platforms the District is using are Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube. These are all places where you can write short stories, upload pictures, comment back and forth, and share them with friends.

Polt-Jones discussed the five features of the social media program. The District's social media is intended to be inviting and include the public. It is a dialog back and forth. The District has built communities online. Flickr is a site where photos can be uploaded and shared. The District can comment and write the public using a messaging system. There are over 1,500, mostly local, photographers that contribute to Flickr with more than 30,000 photos. The benefits have been tremendous. Over 90 % of the photos on the District's website come from social media. The District is able to integrate these photos into brochures, interpretive panels, signage in the parks, the yearly calendar, and other types of media, usually for no cost to the District. Polt-Jones stated when there is a budget for a specific project, she will make sure the photographers get a stipend for their work. Sometimes they are hired for certain needs, and they have also been included in photography contests and exhibits.

In 2008, the District webmaster and Polt-Jones were the only two staff able to upload content to the site. Today, there are over 30 staff in various positions throughout the District who contribute to the District's social media channels. Many of the Visitor Centers, Public Safety and the Fire Department have Facebook accounts. Of the 30 staff, 90% are in the field and can write detailed accounts of stories and projects happening in the District. Public Affairs created written guidelines to aid in social media protocols. Social media is used throughout the Public Affairs Division.

Polt-Jones said it is not predictable what sharable content goes viral. The post of a dog named Bigges, who picks up trash in the parks, reached over 90,000 people. The photo of Bigges had 2,300 reactions, hundreds of comments and hundreds of shares.

The District uses Facebook and social media to address complex issues. An open letter to the community from General Manager Doyle regarding the District's wildfire fuels management work reached over 44,000 people. A Facebook post about the District's legal victory on the McKay property in Alameda reached over 30,000 people. Polt-Jones stated social media users can become District ambassadors and provide valuable, critical feedback which is another way to build connections with the community.

Polt-Jones urged the PAC members to participate in the various social media platforms, and invite friends and family to follow the District. She also asked to be contacted by PAC members if they have any stories, pictures or events that would be of interest to the public.

PAC member Palacios asked if the District has a staff person who responds to questions posted by the public. Polt-Jones said the staff person who posts usually answers questions to their own posts. Polt-Jones also stated she is on line during the day, and will answer questions, or let staff know if it needs to be addressed. Staff also work collectively to answer complaints.

Palacios asked if Board or other meetings are tweeted. Polt-Jones responded subject specific meetings are posted, such as Land Use Plans, but not frequent meetings like Board meetings.

Beyaert said it is important staff are empowered to post, but how do you monitor all that is posted by others, for example on Flickr? Polt-Jones replied she has a volunteer, Jerry Ting, to help moderate Flickr postings. The other platforms are managed by the rest of the staff.

PAC member Robinson thanked Polt-Jones for her work, especially in East County. Robinson stated she volunteers at Black Diamond Mines (BDM) and about 80% of the visitors to BDM have learned about events via Facebook.

Rickard inquired if the District interacts with Yelp. Polt-Jones answered people talk about the District on Yelp constantly, which drives a lot of traffic to the District's website.

PAC member Sanwong asked if the District has looked at using Meet Up, a place to connect with people to do activities such as hiking. Polt-Jones replied Public Affairs has not, but some Visitor Centers have occasionally used it to advertise their hikes. Sanwong mentioned Pleasanton has a mobile citizen app which enables residents to notify the city about incidents that need to be addressed. Sanwong inquired if the District has a mobile app. Polt-Jones replied it is a little out of her scope, but the District's GIS department has an app called *Park Finder* which is accessible

from the website to locate parks and amenities, and find activities. Polt-Jones commented Public Safety is currently on Nixle, a site to get alerts, and on NextDoor.

Beyaert asked if the District has considered putting QR codes on trail sign posts for park users to access maps, etc. Polt-Jones replied Crab Cove has used QR codes for visitors to take a history walk, and QR codes have been used to watch short videos about the parks. Operations AGM O'Connor commented QR codes are starting to be used on interpretive signage.

(I) c. Climate Change, Adaptation and Cap and Trade, Erich Pfuehler, Government Affairs Manager; Sandra Hamlet, Senior Planner, ASD

Government Affairs Manager Pfuehler introduced Sandra Hamlet, Senior Planner, ASD and told the committee he, Hamlet and Brian Holt, Principal Planner have been leading the charge to develop a Climate Action Team / Committee for the District.

Hamlet explained District parklands include multiple sectors: shorelines, wildlands and transportation. She noted the District owns and manages 90 miles of shoreline property in the East Bay. The District is currently experiencing risks and vulnerabilities, particularly along the shorelines. Hamlet gave an example of Bay Trail flooding where levees are overtopped from storm water overflows. Hamlet stated there are millions of dollars invested in the trail. It is a resource the District, region and partners need to protect. The District is also experiencing levee failure, which is extraordinarily expensive to repair.

The District holds conservation easements and protects a number of habitats for threatened and endangered species. As the climate changes, the habitats may change and not be suitable for the species for which they were originally protected.

Hamlet commented that the vast majority of the District's wildlands are grassland, oak woodlands and some forests. Most of which are located in the urban wildland interface. Preventing a catastrophic wildfire prevents a major carbon release. Properly managed oak woodlands and grasslands can protect against wildfire and store carbon. These are important resources the District needs to manage. The District will need to ensure the fuels management program can adequately respond to increased threats from wildfire.

Hamlet continued there are also risks in vulnerabilities related to water and habitat. The rise of blue green algae is impacting the public's ability access District lakes. Drought has intensified the occurrences of blue green algae.

Hamlet explained climate change planning is broken down into two different categories: mitigation and adaptation. The District has done work in each category. The Green Transportation Initiative "mitigates" by providing alternate transportation corridors which keep vehicles off the road. Counters are being used on paved trails to gather information about their commuter use. More data is needed to accurately assess the impact the District is having on transportation. Hamlet mentioned the District is initiating a renewable energy project at Shadow Cliffs which, once online, will offset energy use Districtwide. It also sets the District up to participate in some other renewable energy projects in Alameda County.

The District could benefit from a comprehensive strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prioritize actions. Oak woodlands, grasslands and wetlands sequester carbon. Land acquisition and wetland restoration projects could be funded through the cap and trade program. Wetlands also

provide the co-benefits of buffering communities, including disadvantaged communities, from sea level rise. The District has shoreline properties in Martinez, Richmond, Bay Point and Oakland which could all provide co-benefits through wetland restorations. Breuner March, now Dotson Family Marsh, is an example of climate change adaptation. It has been designed to allow for wetlands to migrate inland as sea levels rise. It will also allow habitat to migrate inland.

Hamlet stated there is potential funding from cap and trade. In 2015, there was \$2.7 billion generated. There are two main mechanisms for how funds are being distributed through cap and trade. Pfuehler explained 60% of all cap and trade funds are set aside for specific programs such as high speed rail, transit and other greenhouse gas reduction mechanisms. 40% are more discretionary and allocated through the budget process every three years. Pfuehler continued this is the time to define the parameters about how that money is allocated through the budget process. The state agencies have made some recommendations to the Governor and Legislature which are favorable to the District in terms of wetlands creation, carbon storage, urban forestry and Cal Fire money, which can be used to thin trees to prevent wildfires. Other categories may be included which could apply to grazing as a fuels management technique for grasslands.

Pfuehler said The Trust for Public Land is leading the effort in Sacramento. The cap and trade funding is collected from those buying offset credits. There may also be a potential for funding derived from land that is used as a credit. Staff is studying the District's assets to see what the potential might be.

Kern asked if an inventory currently is being done. Hamlet replied staff is updating a carbon sequestration study from 2008 to help support some of the advocacy work around cap and trade. The goal is to move toward a more robust analysis and strategy for the whole District.

Sanwong asked if private companies purchase credits through the cap and trade market exchange. Hamlet replied yes, there is a verification process for either buying or selling credits. Simmons asked about a private entity purchasing credits, which essentially invest their money in the carbon sequestration value of someone else's property. Does the private entity have some rights to the property? Is the property subject to building restrictions? In the case of the District, could it build a visitor center on "credited" property? Pfuehler replied he suspected there may be some restrictions on altering the landscape.

Hamlet said there are other funding sources, competitive grants through Proposition I, Measure AA, and other state, federal and private foundations which fund this type of work. The next step is to finish the carbon sequestration study. The Climate Action Team's goal is to demonstrate the ability to sequester carbon, raise funds so the District can implement some pilot projects and continue to grow the climate change program. The District has been participating in a number of regional efforts including BCDC's Adapting to Rising Tides program.

Simmons inquired about the five policies Hamlet referenced. He asked if they were developed in response to looking at climate change as an individual issue, or were they existing policies in the Master Plan. Hamlet replied when she first started crafting the strategy, she referred to the Master Plan and found the policies. Pfuehler added there was a desire by the Board when the Master Plan was updated to include elements which address climate change, because it was known that it would be an issue. Hamlet commented Deputy General Manager Alvarez is very interested in doing a sustainability plan for the District.

Rickard commented a major challenge for the District is the large number of vehicles and the many miles they travel. He asked if this will be considered in the plan. Hamlet replied while it is difficult because of the remote parklands, the District is working to address this issue.

Kern thanked Hamlet and Pfuehler for their outstanding presentation.

6. **PAC Member Comments** – Beyaert asked PAC members to encourage their friends and family to support Measure AA.

PAC member Thompson announced MTC and ABAG are hosting two Plan Bay Area open houses. Thursday, May 26, 2016 in Richmond at the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, and Thursday, June 2, 2016 at the Metro Center Auditorium in Oakland.

PAC member Yee reported Vargas Plateau is a very beautiful park with incredible views from the north and south. Yee encouraged PAC members to visit the park. Yee stated at the last Fremont City Council meeting, a resolution for permitted street parking around Mission Peak passed unanimously. The program will be implemented October 2016.

Mercurio announced he went to the Board Executive Committee in May. There was discussion to extend the Iron Horse Trail from its current terminus at South of Highway 4 to the Benicia Bridge.

Ho announced Contra Costa County will be building a new park in Alamo right along the Iron Horse Trail at Hemme Ave. It is intended as a wayside park for the community and trail users with bathrooms and water. No parking will be provided, it is only for pedestrians and bikers.

Simmons reported Contra Costa County Transportation Authority is considering a revenue measure for the November ballot. Simmons explained part of the measure is important to the District. The Authority Board went from considering a 25-year measure at \$2.4 billion to a 30-year measure with \$2.9 billion. Simmons commented there is money in the measure for bike and pedestrian projects. Originally, it was at 2.9% or about \$67 million and the District would receive about one-third of it, about \$22 million. When the Authority extended the measure to 30 years, they also increased the bike – ped percentage to 4%, but they dropped the District's direct allocation from one-third to one quarter. General Manager Doyle attended the subsequent meeting and spoke passionately about how important the money is for what the District does. He stressed how much Contra Costa County benefits from the District and how much funding the District leverages from other sources. After the General Manager's appeal, the Authority Board increased the percentage back to one third, which increased the amount of money from \$23 million to \$38 million over a 30-year period.

7. **Report from Chair** – Kern discussed a potential PAC field trip. Pfuehler recommended Vargas Plateau, but asked the PAC members for their suggestions. Simmons thought it would be fascinating to go to some of the watershed areas. Pfuehler stated he will work with Operations to schedule the PAC field trip to Vargas.

Kern reported he and Pfuehler will be attending the June 3 Board Executive Committee to ask to amend the Work Plan to allow the PAC to receive a presentation about the evolution of the District's policies toward dogs, as recommended by several PAC members. If approved, staff would work to add it to the June PAC agenda. Next month there will be a Finance

Subcommittee meeting on the CAFR report.

8. **Board Committee Reports** – None.
9. **Status of Recommendations** – None.
10. **Old Business** – None.
11. **New Business** – None.
12. **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 8:45p.m.

Summary of Actions:

- I. The PAC unanimously approved the April 25th minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Clay
Confidential Secretary