**Update on CSA 20 Open Space Activities (Staff Information Item)**

**April 12, 2021**

Luke Bishop and Nate Clark provided an update. For several months, Park Staff activities have been redirected to Marin County’s COVID-19 vaccine distribution program at the Civic Center. Incident contacts have been primarily dog-off-leash calls and unauthorized trail use by mountain bikers.

Commissioner Witzel noted the healthy environmental situation recently observed at Pacheco Pond with several turtles out in the middle on the turtle ramps, several pairs of ducks, and numerous fish from fingerling to full adult size.  Concerns raised as to what mitigation might be possible when the water level drops as the drought continues to worsen. Nate Clark said the Pacheco Pond reportedly is 13’ deep at the maximum, anticipated to be adequate for a multi-year drought.

Commissioner Gasson noted the large number of newts observed on the Witzel Trail and concerns as to the impact by the number of hikers and recently observed mountain bike tracks.

Discussion ensued regarding the numerous downed trees and eroded steep trail areas on the IVC end of the Schwindt trail, as well as the downed trees at the Pencil Belly area of the Schwindt Trail, and the blocking off of an unauthorized new trail from private property on Garner St. onto Pacheco Open Space property near the southern terminus of the Schwindt trail.

Commissioner Knowlton commended Staff for their work on the COVID-19 distribution program, and noted that the extraordinarily high number of visitors and bikes off trails has had impacts on the Preserve. Commissioner Witzel noted specific bike off-trail vegetation damage continues along the Indian Valley Fire Road by the split rail fence.

Staff reported that increased Ranger presence will now resume monitoring public usage and evaluate downed trees and fuel mitigation issues. Public activities are being resumed including issuance of permits for cross country races with appropriate COVID protocols.

Nate Clark mentioned renewed efforts to evaluate fuels issues together with the Advisory Board’s Fuels Subcommittee (Commissioners Knowlton and Gasson).  Establishing defensible space is effective for fire prevention efforts within 200-300’ of structures and situations which create fuel ladders. Commissioner Knowlton mentioned contacting Old Ranch Road neighbors in association with NFPD inspections.  Jim Chayka agreed to explore additional fuel mitigation projects in the Pencil Belly area, and focus on fuel reduction projects. Commissioner Knowlton suggested taking a second look at the area at the top of Rowland Blvd to the Open Space property.

With prior project expenditures the FY 2020-2021 Budget has $21,600 remaining available through the June 30 end of the FY for additional fuel mitigation projects.

Jim Chayka reminded the Board and public that an Incident Reporting contact number is provided to report Open Space issues, (415) 473-2816.