

Staff Report
Summary of Pre-Scoping Public Comments on Point Reyes Public Access

November 5, 2008

Background

In May 2008, the National Park Service (NPS) and County of Marin (COM) hosted a series of small community meetings and one public event to discuss public access ideas involving the southern portions of the Giacomini Wetland Restoration Project Area as well as Levee Road.

This was a follow up to the Giacomini Wetland Restoration EIS/EIR and federal Record of Decision (ROD) which noted that “the planning team recognized that, based on the amount and types of comments that it received from individuals and agencies, public access components on the southern perimeter of the project area warranted further analysis.” The ROD recognized a need to bring to the table interested agencies, including the County of Marin, to evaluate additional access options on the southern perimeter of the project area, including:

- *Bridge across Lagunitas Creek*
- *Levee Road*
- *Extension of trail from White House Pool park to Inverness Park*

Point Reyes Public Access Process

The NPS and the County developed a public outreach process focused on potential routes and uses between White House Pool County Park and Green Bridge County Park. Improved access north of White House Pool County Park towards Inverness Park and Inverness would be considered independently at a later time. A key element of the outreach process was to define potential access elements and provide more detail regarding potential alternatives. This included description and depiction of potential bridge options across Lagunitas Creek, and a description of standard trail classifications.

The outreach process included several small group conversations with local leaders and a public meeting to share more detailed information regarding the public access options. The purpose of this public outreach process is to identify a range of issues and opportunities regarding the public access concepts based on providing the community more detail on the concepts.

A community meeting was held on May 14, 2008 where information was presented regarding access options and challenges specific to bridge across Lagunitas Creek and Levee Road alternatives. More than 175 participants attended the two-hour meeting which was facilitated by Joan Chaplick, MIG, Inc. The meeting included opening remarks by Don Neubacher, Superintendent, Point Reyes NS, and presentations by Steve Kinsey, Marin County Board of Supervisors, Lorraine Parsons, NPS Project Manager for

the Giacomini Wetland Restoration Project, and Rachel Kamman, Kamman Hydrology and Engineering Inc.

The presentation included an update on the Giacomini Wetland Restoration project, a detailed description on the hydrology of Lagunitas Creek, and an overview of potential concepts for providing public access to trails connecting Marin County and NPS lands. The public access concepts included a potential bridge across Lagunitas Creek and improvements to the Levee Road Trail.

Following the presentations, participants were divided into four groups. Each group rotated through short presentations and a question and answer section given at each of the four stations. The stations were as follows:

- Station 1 – Giacomini Wetland Restoration Update
- Station 2 – Lagunitas Creek Hydraulics and Bridge Concept
- Station 3 – Levee Road Trail Concept
- Station 4 – Alternative Transportation

Participants were encouraged to provide written comments either by completing a comment card and turning it in at the end of the meeting, or by sending their comments via mail or e-mail to the NPS by Monday, June 2, 2008. A total of 128 letters or comment cards, and four petitions were submitted. In addition, 204 postcards stating support for a bridge across Lagunitas Creek were received during the comment period.

A brief summary of comments is included in Table 1 below. The comment analysis was conducted by NPS using all comment cards and letters received during the comment period as well as review of the public meeting notes. Comments and statements of concern presented in Table 1 are summarized and categorized to represent all of the issues raised through these public comments. The comments are summarized under the following categories:

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|---------------------|-------------------|
| ➤ General Comments, | ➤ Levee Road Uses |
| ➤ Bridge Design, | ➤ Past Uses |
| ➤ Public Safety, | ➤ Process, |
| ➤ Bridge and ramp, | ➤ Impacts, and |
| ➤ Trail Uses, | ➤ Alternatives |
| ➤ Levee Road, | |

As announced at the meeting, these are pre-scoping comments which are intended to help the NPS and County identify areas for further analysis. Because this is pre-scoping there are not responses to these comments. In a few cases a note is included to clarify the existing condition with respect to the comment. The NPS and County of Marin will evaluate the comments and issues raised through this pre-scoping and consider potential next steps in the process.

Giacomini Wetland Restoration Project Update

The major elements of the Phase II restoration actions within the Giacomini Wetland Restoration Project area are nearing completion. It should be noted that this is not the only public access associated with the Giacomini Wetland Restoration Project. The park is currently pursuing funding to implement public access elements included in the approved Project EIS/EIR. These elements include overlooks at four locations adjacent to the project area, as well as a spur trail along the north side of Lagunitas Creek from Green Bridge County Park to the general location of the old summer dam. As part of the Phase II implementation, the NPS has been able to accommodate the southern spur trail, North Levee Overlook, and general improvements at the site of the former dairy barns near Point Reyes Station. The trail is located 100 feet from the top of bank to allow for restoration of the riparian corridor and reduce potential long-term maintenance requirements.

Table 1: Summary of Pre-scoping Public Comments on Point Reyes Public Access

Comment Number	Description of Concern Statement or Comment
	General
G1	Development of bridge and trail route would provide a safe route, encouraging more people to walk, fostering healthier habits for people of all ages, and would reduce driving (and all associated GHG and Carbon emissions) for local travel.
G2	The Public Access components identified and permitted through the 2007 Final EIS/EIR is adequate to meet public access and outreach for the area. Proposed public access opportunities should not conflict with the project's purpose of restoring natural hydrologic and ecological process and function. East pasture areas at higher elevations should be managed for native habitat and wildlife.
G3	Bridge is the best chance to enhance public access to Giacomini Wetland Restoration Area, and would increase opportunities for children to experience wetland in order to develop stewardship ethic for long-term protection, and would increase public interest in the preservation of our natural surroundings.
G4	The County right of way between communities should be developed to accommodate all modes of transportation, not just automobiles.
G5	Room exists for safe bike and pedestrian use along the County right of way using non-standard design (as proposed on Sir Francis Drake through the Samuel P. Taylor State Park)
G6	The County needs an in-depth analysis for additional non-vehicular transportation use of its right of way. Non-standard designs are common in Marin and dismissing the use of the right-of-way based only on standard designs does not represent a fair analysis
G7	Non-vehicular access along Levee Road and the Lagunitas Creek Bridge and trail serve different purposes, so improvements to Levee Road for non-vehicular uses and construction of a bridge across Lagunitas Creek are both desirable outcomes and are not similar alternatives.
G8	The shared-use pathway is needed as alternative transportation route to sustainably and safely connect communities.
G9	The ecological footprint of new development, financial and other resource costs call for rigorous scrutiny of potential costs and benefits of a new bridge structure.
G10	The widening of Levee Road is a reasonable alternative to achieve alternative transportation objectives.
G11	No information was presented at the public meeting to make a Levee Road a workable, safe, and environmentally sound alternative to using the restored wetlands.
G12	Consider revisiting ideas in a few years, it is far too soon to understand the workings of the new wetland system and the public's impact on it.

G13	The bridge is in conflict with restoration where significant public funds were contributed for restoration of process.
G14	There is no demonstrated need to connect wetland restoration area with White House Pool Parking Lot and no demonstrated information about public use levels to evaluate impacts
G15	The bridge and path route from White House Pool Park to the trailhead near Green Bridge, does not achieve the goal of linking communities and does not make sense unless there is safe access from Point Reyes Station to Inverness (in its entirety), the proposed area of current discussion does not deal with the problem of safe access from Inverness Park or Inverness. County of Marin should take the lead in determining the total access to Inverness along the right of way which they already own.
G16	The County and Park Service should explore all options for safely linking our communities, in a manner that encourages carbon free, healthy and safe transportation for people of all ages including but not limited to a bridge connecting existing pathways through the wetlands.
G17	The public use at 3rd Street has increased dramatically since Phase I, with associated impacts of increased traffic, parking, noise and litter. Keep public access plan with selected Alternative in Giacomini EIS including location of trailhead with parking for any trail be near the Green Bridge County Park.
G18	The wetland restoration is served by pursuing improvements to Levee Road that increase “Sharing the Road”
G19	The NPS and County should conduct a study of potential use, and cost/benefit analysis of a bridge and trail network, as well as alternative transportation corridor along Levee Road is necessary for appropriate evaluation of the potential alternatives
G20	Although bridge/path was originally intended as an alternative transportation route, the bridge and trail would be a low use recreational path. Dealing with the bridge first would shift attention away from possibility of making Levee Road a safer alternative transportation route.
G21	A recreational bridge and path within a half mile of an existing bridge and path is redundant in an area rich in paths already accommodating foot, horse and bicycle use.
G22	The Cross Marin Trail is a separate issue from the Giacomini Wetland Restoration
G23	The path and bridge are not part of the natural marsh, but the marsh is in middle of community, and planning for this project should also consider community needs. It is important that planning is responsive to community concerns.
G24	Under any scenario, trails should not be constructed as part of Class I multi-use path.

	Bridge Design
BD1	In order to support equestrian use, bridge should be 8-10 feet wide, railings should be 4 feet high, with non-slip footing for horses (wood) and mounting blocks installed at either end of the ramps.
BD2	Bridge designs presented at the public meeting are acceptable.
BD3	Bridge designs presented at the public meeting are too big and not in the context of the community.
BD4	The design of the bridge should involve community input to develop a smaller, unobtrusive structure that is aesthetically acceptable .
BD4	The bridge design should minimize width and length of the bridge, and the ramps should be the smallest, least expensive, and lowest profile that meets regulatory requirements.
BD6	One design objectives should be to slow down fast moving travel (e.g. bicycles).
BD7	The proposed location of the bridge (presented at public meeting) is the right place for access and the length and height is necessary to accommodate the 50 to 100 year flood event.
BD8	The bridge and ramps shown at the public meeting were too large. The preference should be towards a smaller structure, with shorter ramps, that may even flood on an annual basis.
BD9	Consider a smaller seasonal bridge, such as that used at the Garland Ranch Park on the Carmel River [NOTE – there is a narrow seasonal pedestrian bridge maintained at this park – need more details on the operation of this structure].
BD10	Any design should account for sea level rise and earthquake safety
BD11	The bridge design should include an observation area.
BD12	The Inkwells Bridge is a good model.
BD13	What are the elevations of the bridge with respect to the Green Bridge, and could that be incorporated into scale of the bridge?
BD14	Why is there a concern if the bridge is inundated during floods?

	Public Safety
PS1	Levee Road is not currently safe to walk or bike on due to excessive speed, unmaintained shoulders, thick vegetation and intersections.
PS2	The bridge and trail will provide safe routes to school for children and safe pedestrian access to Point Reyes Station from White House Pool
PS3	The 45MPH speed limit is too high for the Levee Road residential area, thereby increasing the possibility of accident occurring with driveway access.
PS4	Levee Road is dangerous for pedestrians to cross, but the best line of site is located at the site near the old summer dam.
PS5	The bridge and trail do not improve safety or access for users north of White House Pool, leaving most potential users on dangerous narrow portions of Sir Francis Drake.
PS6	The widening and upgrading of Levee Road will improve conditions to support safe biking and walking.
PS7	Improvements on Levee Road should account for earthquakes, etc., to make it a safe route of access under other catastrophic events.
PS8	Future planning should focus on protecting public safety on ½ mile of road not in White House Pool County Park.
PS9	The bridge and trail serve a local need by providing safe, non-vehicular access for pedestrians and wheelchairs which are not compatible with vehicle traffic on Levee Road.
PS10	Road safety goals should be considered in balance with environmental restoration/conservation goals.
PS11	The bridge and trail route could provide Shoreline Unified students with a safe route to school, allowing safe travel to school in physically active manner.
PS12	Use of the route for safe school access would be limited. The West Marin School enrollment (Grades 2-8) is 120 students, while Inverness School (K-2) has an enrollment of 45 students. The school bus provides safe access to school, with most children dropped off at the bus stops along Sir Francis Drake.

	Bridge and Ramp
BR1	The bridge, ramp and trail are in existing public access areas including White House Pool and Green Bridge County Park.
BR2	The trail should be next to the creek within the 100 foot SCA unless the riprap area is going to be removed. [NOTE – As part of the Phase II Project, the riprap has been removed and the bank laid back at a 10:1 slope]
BR3	The bridge and ramp would involve a minimal new development footprint and provide greater functional use of the land.
BR4	The bridge, ramp and trail would provide a shorter route and connect existing pathways and would be used by local community members as well as visitors to the area.
BR5	The bridge and ramp provides safe non-motorized transportation connection that includes recreational opportunities for viewing the wetland. These connections would increase the education and stewardship opportunities.
BR6	The bridge and ramp would not solve alternative transportation and safety issues along Levee Road as most users would still drive to the endpoints for access.
BR7	The bridge, ramps and trail opens a door to greater trail network eventually connecting with Inverness.
BR8	Point Reyes Station will benefit from White House Pool Parking lot (approx 40 spaces) to help relieve congestion in town.

	Trail Uses
TU1	The bridge and trail will encourage use by people of all ages fostering healthy uses including walking, jogging, slow bikes and benches for sitting.
TU2	The bridge and trail will encourage children to use and access the wetland and provide safe routes to schools.
TU3	The bridge and trail should be multi-use supporting equestrian uses, as well as biking and walking.
TU4	All dogs should be on leash.
TU5	Bikes and horses should be walked across the ramps and bridge, not ridden.
TU6	The trail would not provide an alternative transportation link.
TU7	Use of trail would be limited by wind and rain, limiting it as a school access route.
TU8	All roads feeding Sir Francis Drake from Inverness Ridge are very steep and may limit bike use or require driving to one endpoint or another.
TU9	The bridge will not connect Inverness Park with Point Reyes Station, Sir Francis Drake between White House Pool Corner and Inverness Park is too dangerous.
TU10	The bridge and trail would enhance pleasure, safety, and education, while decreasing auto use between Point Reyes Station to Inverness Park.
TU11	The bridge and trail would improve non-vehicular access to Park Headquarters.
TU12	The bridge would provide a good overlook for restoration as well as a view of the creek, as once the riparian vegetation returns it would be one of the few areas to see the creek.
TU13	Currently, the existing trails in this area are used by pedestrians, horses, and bicycles.
TU14	Trails in their current condition do provide access for many disabled visitors, in addition, provision of equestrian uses helps provide access to other disabled individuals.
TU15	The trail use should be limited to walking only.
TU16	The need for ADA access has not been demonstrated.
TU17	It is untenable to have bikes, pedestrians, and dogs on the same trail. Should consider separate facilities for the different types of users.

	Levee Road
LR1	The County and NPS should evaluate the existing road and fill prism of Levee Road, as well as all bridges and culverts to determine feasibility of meeting different levels of design (Class I to Class III). This would be necessary in order to determine the basis for evaluating impacts of different design alternatives.
LR2	The Levee Road alternative would require construction on Levee Road, State Route 1, and B Street, alteration of 3-4 bridges (1-2 on Levee Road and 2 on State Route 1), and 1 or 2 pedestrian crossings on Levee Road.
LR3	Access along Levee Road is considered too long and roundabout.
LR4	The Class I Levee Road Alternative presented at the public meeting with 5' separation between road and trail, 8' wide trail, 2 foot shoulders on each side, totaling 17 feet is excessive.
LR5	A Class III bicycle route should be created by better utilization of the County right-of-way along Sir Francis Drake to achieve safe bicycle and pedestrian access.
LR6	The bridge route would bypass a small stretch (approx ½ mile) of Sir Francis Drake, much of which is the widest and safest.
LR7	Levee Road is not safe for children to use. Measures to separate pedestrian access from the road should be included.
LR8	The County should use the same approach to increase safety for all transportation modes on the County right-of-way that is being proposed along Sir Francis Drake through Samuel P Taylor State Park (Lagunitas Creek) riparian habitat.
LR9	A good example of a reasonably safe and environmentally conscious path that could be created along Levee Road is Lucas Valley Road west of Las Gallinas Rd, which has 5 foot paved shoulders outside the fog line and speed limit of 45MPH. Walkers, joggers, and bicycles use it. Another example of high traffic volume and school access is Sir Francis Drake through San Geronimo Valley – west of Nicasio Road.
LR10	Levee Road should be the transportation thoroughfare, repairs and improvements to would provide a safe access route.
LR11	Evaluate more than just a Class I alternative for Levee Road.
LR12	The fill prism on Levee Road is much wider than the road, the road can shift with that wider base to provide more space for safe transit.
LR13	All Levee Road routes seem to impinge on private property, would this require acquisition?
LR14	All but one landowner on Levee Road prefers a path along the road, and not a bridge.

	Levee Road Uses
LRU1	Fewer people would use the Levee Road alternative because it is noisy and more dangerous.
LRU2	Levee Road would not provide access to wetlands restoration area.
LRU3	Development of a road bike lane on Levee Road would be safe and useful addition.
LRU4	Levee Road is not a safe alternative for children's use.
LRU5	Levee Road provides an Alternative Transportation Corridor.

	Past Uses
PU1	Past means of crossing Lagunitas Creek included seasonal dam and boat.
PU2	Two trails used to be connected in past, as single trail, with seasonal gravel dam. [NOTE – construction of the seasonal gravel dam was discontinued under State Water Board Decision 95-17 for the protection of fisheries in Lagunitas Creek.]
PU3	Public common use has occurred on both sides of creek.
PU4	Past use across seasonal gravel dam does not constitute historic path.

	Process
P1	Two purposes have been posed for this project, and they are not compatible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “low-level recreational path” ➤ “Community Alternative Transportation”
P2	The bridge and multiuse path is at cross-purposes with various federal, state, and county regulations to protect wetlands (Executive order 11988 & 11990, California Coastal Act 30240, and County Streamside Conservation area)
P3	Executive Order 11990 requires federal agencies and responsible entities to 'avoid an undertaking or provide financial assistance for new construction located within wetlands, unless a finding is made that there is no practicable alternative to such construction.'
P4	No serious alternatives for access along Levee Road have been analyzed
P5	The bridge and ramps would be in conflict with the County Streamside Conservation Act.
P6	Baseline condition for the project should be the restored state, not the dairy condition.
P7	In 2008, the Marin County Board of Supervisors approved a Master Plan showing Class III for Levee Road, which was not presented at the May meeting.

	Impact Analysis
IA1	<p>Impact Topics raised during public comments for consideration under any alternative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wetlands (acres impacted) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Direct impacts (fill) ○ Impacts by shading ➤ Sea level rise – predicted changes and design requirements ➤ Riparian habitat (acres impacted) ➤ Subtidal and intertidal habitat (acres impacted) ➤ Flow hydraulics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change in flow patterns ○ Effect of abutments and ramp pilings on flow ○ Effect on flood elevations ○ Alteration to marsh development ➤ Water resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impervious surface ○ Leaching of treated wood chemicals into environment ➤ Visitor use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projected use levels ○ Use types and flush distance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Human ➤ Human with dog ➤ Group vs individual ➤ Bicyclist ➤ Equestrian ○ Dogs off leash ➤ Public Safety ➤ Wildlife disturbance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Birds (Black rail, potential clapper rail, Black Crowned night heron, common merganser, Wood duck, nesting savannah sparrows, nesting Northern Harrier, waterbirds) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Flush distance ➤ Smell-scape ○ Riparian habitat ○ Aquatic species and amphibians (coho salmon, steelhead, Chinook, California red-legged frog) ○ Wildlife (river otter, western pond turtle) ○ Trail and bridge as predator corridor ○ Elevations of potential impact and influence on flush distance ○ Introduction of disease ○ noise ➤ Traffic impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reduce traffic ○ Increase traffic at trailheads ➤ Viewshed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impacts to view from Whitehouse pool

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impacts to view from Point Reyes Station ➤ Impact on residences along Levee Road ➤ Air quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construction impacts ○ Reduction in pollution (long-term) ➤ noise ➤ Recreational opportunities
IA2	Impact of private residences on Levee Road to Lagunitas Creek should be included in impact analysis.
IA 3	Information needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cost benefit analysis of bridge versus number of users ○ Research on level of use for bridge ○ Evaluate carbon footprint
IA4	The bridge would introduce a man-made structure to the currently open [undeveloped] area.

	Alternatives
	Bridge and ramps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BRIDGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elevation to pass less than 50 year event (10 year event Pres. at Public Meeting) ○ Elevation to pass 50 year event or larger (Pres. at Public Meeting) ○ Suspension bridge ○ Seasonal bridge ○ Floating bridge ○ Pivoting bridge ➤ Evaluate other locations for bridge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ downstream of WHP curve to West Pasture Construction access to reduce flood elevation issues and get around WHP corner. ○ Upstream at location of former summer dam ➤ evaluate small self-operated ferry boats across creek. ➤ RAMPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ non-motorized counter-balanced lifts ○ installation of seasonal low-pitch ramps to accommodate equestrian and wheelchairs during dry season ○ oriented parallel to flow patterns ○ curved with piles ○ evaluate different types of piles (wood versus cement) as well as distance between piles
	Levee Road access
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Class I Route (presented at Public Meeting) ➤ Class III Route ➤ Widen bridges on Levee Road/SR1 so there is a shoulder for bikes/pedestrians on existing creek crossings. ➤ Raised causeway with widened shoulders ➤ Improve both sides of Levee Road keeping bicycles on one side and pedestrians on the other for safer use. ➤ Non-standard design (e.g. SFD through Samuel P. Taylor SP) to provide safe non-vehicular access through planning area ➤ Widen shoulders and slow traffic (35MPH) ➤ Narrow lanes and widen shoulder to promote safety through reduced speed and improved cycling bailouts ➤ Evaluate other shifts of the roadbed within the existing prism to provide more space for safe transit ➤ Las Gallinas Road example
	NO Action