

California Native Grasslands Association

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE BOARD

Date: 10-25-19 Board Meeting

4b CONSERVATION COMMITTEE Chair: Jim Hanson (jimhmail@sonic.net) Committee Members: Emily Allen, Robert Evans, Michele Hammond

DATE OF LAST MEETING – March 2019

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS - NEXT STEPS - ISSUES/CHALLENGES - ACTION ITEMS IN-PROGRESS/PENDING - ACTION ITEMS COMPLETED

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED – State CNPS letter to State Board of Forestry, report item #5

CNGA Conservation Committee – October 2019

1. **Hills vegetation fuel management (North Orinda Fuel Break)**
2. **CalFire VTP Draft EIR comments from CNGA**
3. **TESLA legislation vetoed by Governor Newsom**
4. **Pt. Molate mediation and support for park on a portion of this public property**
5. **EBRPD Coyote Hills park plan recap and follow up**
6. **Grazing EB Regional Parks – management of rare coastal grasslands by grazing and prescribed fire at Redwood Park Serpentine Prairie, Pt. Pinole, Wildcat Canyon.**
7. **New construction in coastal prairie at Richmond Field Station – analyzing environmental requirements from Global Campus EIR**

North Orinda Fuel Break – Since EBCNPS, Sierra Club, and Audubon's meetings with Moraga-Orinda Fire shortly after they got the Governor's fuel break funds, I've remained in touch with the environmental consultants on the project about retaining native herbaceous vegetation and rarer shrubs during the vegetation fuel reduction work. This policy follows from our field trip to the two EBRPD WUI fuel breaks above Kensington. Moraga Orinda Fire and CalFire have since put a public website up on project progress (one of our asks). Last weekend I walked the beginning 1/4 mile of the Inspiration Point trail. They avoided cutting down a coffeeberry in the path of the fuel break and did not trim a purple needle grass to bare ground (a common practice when weed whackers are used). FYI, the State CalFire Vegetation Treatment Program (CalFire VTP) Draft Programmatic EIR shows photo examples of fuel breaks with no native herbaceous or occasional shrubs remaining. What we model locally could help influence the CalFire statewide notion that bare earth fuel treatments are needed or beneficial. (I've transmitted local native plant protection examples to CNPS, the California Wildlife Foundation/Calif. Oaks and CNGA. They included these comments in their letters on the state's massive fuel treatment plan).

CalFire Vegetation Treatment Program Draft PEIR (CalFire VTP) comments by CNGA I used the information we gathered from field trips to the EB Parks fuel management sites and the meetings on the North Orinda Fuel Break managed by Moraga Orinda Fire to target CNGA comments to the CalFire VTP's representation of model fuel breaks in the only three photos in the Draft PEIR showing how they would look. They show all ground level is vegetation removed. Our comments challenge that model, and a follow-up article in Grasslands provides some evidence of why this is a counter-productive, damaging approach. (attached)

AB 1086 - TESLA The Governor vetoed AB 1096 (Senator Steve Glazer-Orinda and Assemblymember Rebecca Kaplan-Bauer -San Ramon). CNGA's letter to the Appropriations Committee in July was followed up with several support emails through Friends of TESLA Park when the legislation reached the Governor's office. In addition to the Sierra Club California, CNPS, and others, Diana sent out an alert to members to contact Governor Newsom. We are staying in touch with Friends of Tesla Park and hoping to add follow up support on Rebecca Kaplan-Bauer's Facebook page

Pt Molate – Federal court mediation this month on a Brown Act Open Government lawsuit on a former Council's closed-door settlement agreement with Berkeley developer Jim Levine and the Ukiah Pomo tribe about agreeing to require hundreds of housing units there. (note: planning of land uses is supposed to be a public process). Jim is attending mediation at the Federal courthouse at the end of October.

Coyote Hills Park Plan – Jim appeared before the East Bay Regional Park Board on the draft EIR for the Coyote Hills Park Plan got some text changes voted in into the EIR by the Park's board. The Draft EIR did not include a comprehensive botanical survey in the North Natural Area with its historic shoreline willow drainage. The North area reported to be primarily a ruderal site. However the document did report that several species of native grasses were found there.

Therefore, I contacted the Board directly to ask that they include specific language in the Final EIR to protect any native grasses in the North Natural Area be protected from revegetation work, that any native grasses in the way of new trail or parking construction be salvaged, that seeding be from regionally-collected species, and that the Final EIR specify that native grasses be seeded in as part of the restoration of the site. The Board adopted the first three items, but the last item was not included based on the wording provided by staff to the Board's motion. Several Board members were supportive of this native grass request, so I'm going to need to follow up further,

UC Field Station coastal prairie – A large building expansion is taking place into the central meadow at the Richmond Field station along the shoreline in Richmond. Following up on my meetings with UC staff on-site, Christine Schnieder, an EBCNPS Conservation Committee volunteer, has offered to read through the relevant documents on the UC Richmond Global Campus EIR to see what leverage we might have to get UC to appropriately manage the rare coastal prairie there.

ASSISTANCE/RESOURCES NEEDED FROM BOARD

- Discussion on Board position on glyphosate (please refer to Jim Hanson's email to Board Oct. 17, 2019)
 - Cal-IPC letter vote: 7 to support, 2 not to support, 6 abstentions
 - CNGA is an organized voice of native grassland ecosystem restoration and conservation in California and our position on this product's (regrettably) very important role in enabling native grassland restoration and conservation in California is important and needed.
 - Can we get a quorum vote of the Board by writing our own letter (or develop even a simple statement) that coincides with organizational and individual policies of more Board members so that we can reflect the Board through a consensus statement?