MARIPOSA COUNTY
Merced River Trail Community Working Group

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: June 1, 2022
TIME: 4:00 PM
LOCATION: TELECONFERENCE + DEVELOPMENT SERVICES CONFERENCE ROOM // 5100 BULLION STREET, MARIPOSA, CA

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Goralnik called the meeting to order at: 4:02 PM

   Members Present: Art Baggett, Rosemarie Smallcombe, Jessica Thompson, Ralph Mendershausen, Michael Martin, Susie Clark, Wendy Brown
   Members Absent:
   Excused Absences: Tara Fouch-Moore,
   Visitors:

2. **APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE 5/18/22 MEETING:**
   The minutes were unanimously passed.

3. **DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL UPSTREAM ROUTE ALTERNATIVES:**
   Art Baggett provided an update on his collaborative efforts with the residents of El Portal and Foresta, the US Forest Service, and Yosemite National Park to develop a route into Yosemite National Park that is palatable to these groups. First, the alternative would bypass El Portal by leaving the rail grade upstream of the El Portal school along an existing fire break towards Foresta; the route would then bypass Foresta by going up Crane Creek at McCauley Ranch around Foresta to the Davis Cut-Off to Crane Flat or build a new trail around Big Meadow towards the El Cap trailhead.

   Priority next steps in the engagement effort center on discussions with the US Forest Service and the Superintendent's office at Yosemite National Park. Goralnik reminded the CWG that the Groveland District Ranger and Stanislaus Forest Supervisor have been and remain highly engaged in the project, including providing recommendations for potential route options in the Forest between the Merced River and the park. The group discussed formally re-confirming the community-recommended bypasses with the El Portal Planning Advisory Committee and the Foresta Neighborhood Association.

   The group voted unanimously to direct the Board chair to work to secure buy-in on the community endorsed El Portal and Foresta bypasses from the USFS, Yosemite leadership, and El Portal and Foresta neighborhood groups. The Board chair indicated he would collaborate with Supervisor Smallcombe to work towards these goals and would update the CWG shortly.

4. **UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON MILLER GULCH PROPERTY:**
   A discussion took place regarding the recommended direction to follow to acquire right of way access through the Miller Gulch property for the trail. Michael Martin expressed support for the technical components of the EPA technical assistance document. However, he expressed concern that study was too limited in geographic scope, since it did not include the site's historic gold mining

operations. He suggested that the County pursue acquisition of a recreational easement that corresponded with the boundaries of the EPA study area, allowing trail access through the site. It was also clarified that the County would acquire the easement and work to transfer that right of way to the USFS for maintenance and management purposes.

A discussion followed about expanding the proposed easement to include language that would enable, though not require, the County to pursue funding to implement the recommendations of the EPA Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives and conduct the restoration activities within the easement. Committee members looked favorably on this idea.

Jessica Thompson asked a question about whether USFS would be able to accept a parcel that is encumbered by an easement. Art Baggett suggested that the situation on the Hites Cove Trail could serve as a model. In this instance, the property owners of the parcel have an agreement with the Forest Service whereby USFS maintains the trail while taking on the liability for it within the trail easement.

There was an additional discussion about the importance of both a survey and an appraisal to a potential easement. Goralnik noted that the survey in particular would be crucial to understanding the relationship between a potential trail along the rail grade through the larger Miller Gulch parcel and the property's three inholdings. He added that the survey and appraisal would be part of the due diligence associated with easement acquisition.

A motion encompassing these concepts was discussed but tabled for the next meeting so that committee members could refine the language prior to formal adoption.

5. **DISCUSSION ON VISION PLAN CHAPTERS:**
   The group tabled an in-depth discussion of the Chapter 3 of the Vision Plan due to time constraints, but Goralnik shared that he had received comments on this chapter from two CWG members, and that those comments had been recorded in a comment log. This log would be used to track progress on addressing recommended edits and would be shared with the committee on an ongoing basis.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
   Goralnik shared that Tony McDaniel has resigned from the committee and indicated that Dr. Jeffrey Jenkins had expressed interest in filling this vacancy. Rosemarie Smallcombe indicated that she was working on filling the ex officio vacancy created by Supervisor Sweeney's departure.

7. **ADJOURN:** The meeting adjourned the meeting at 5:33 PM.

Minutes Prepared by: Mikey Goralnik