

**JAMUL DULZURA
COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP
FINAL Minutes
Tuesday August 26, 2014
Approved, September 23, 2014
Oak Grove Middle School Library
7:30 p.m.**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** - Dan Neirinckx called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

Present: Janet Mulder, Dan Neirinckx, Elizabeth Kelly, Steve Wragg, Bill Herde, Joan Kouns, Michael Casinelli, George Novinger, Jean Strouf, Rich Marzec, Randy White, Joe Stuyvesant, and Earl Katzer.

Excused: Judy Bohlen and Preston Brown

Absent:

3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA for August 26, 2014 and minutes of August 12, 2014 regular meeting correcting the minutes to show that Joe Stuyvesant was present, and a reminder that under agenda item 10, Dan Neirinckx was driving his motorcycle when he was sandblasted by a truck from JIV not his automobile. Motion carried unanimously.**

4. **OPEN FORUM: Opportunity for public comment on any item not on the agenda – 3 minute time limit**

A. **Randy White reminded us that the County wants the public to list County roads that need repair and send the information to Dan Neirinckx so it could be put on the list for the County. Send to jdcpgsd@gmail.com. (Note change in address from the meeting as per Dan)**

B. **Joan Kouns will miss the next two meetings. Bill Herde will miss the next meeting as well as Dan Neirinckx and Michael Casinelli would serve as Chair in their absence.**

C. **Steve Albrecht, resident, Vista de Chaparros and Lyons Valley Road –** There is a large piece of vacant land that was sold (next to bus yard and behind the Jamul Primary School.) The new owner told him that he would like to put in a 60-bed retirement home and the neighbors are concerned. Several neighbors were present in the audience. **Dan Neirinckx** stated that it has not come before us and that it would not be a simple project. He suggested that Mr. Albrecht call the County and check the parcel number to see if anything had been started there. **Mark McAdams** asked if the previous owner, **Carl Impink** had come to us with a project as he feels there are big investors in this proposed project.

Randy White reminded us that the County does not seem to be moved by big investors and don't change their zoning because of the size of the investors.

5. **PARKS & RECREATION BRIEFING ON PLDO PROJECTS** – Dan Neirinckx asked Janet Mulder to show the PowerPoint sent by Bill Saumnier of County Parks and Recs to give an overview of the process. After the presentation of the PowerPoint, questions came up regarding what we have prioritized. **Dan Neirinckx** told about the plans for the fields at Oak Grove Middle School which includes an artificial turf field and running track that would be available for public use after school hours.

6. **PLDO PRIORITY LIST**
Dan Neirinckx read our priority list from last year which included 1) **Renovate Oak Grove Middle School sports field +perimeter track.** 2) **Acquisition of Barrett House Property for a community center/park.** He then read the **Recreation program priority list** which included 1) **Athletic programs using school facilities (soccer, little league, adult softball, basketball, track, etc)** 2) **Equestrian Events** 3) **Movies in the Park** 4) **Art Program featuring local artists** 5) **Music Programs,** 6) **Cultural Community Events.**
Question was asked as to what is happening to Barrett House Property. Dan Neirinckx gave a brief background from our last meeting.
Glen Stewart pointed out that he would like to see a full-blown park and it seems to him that would be a perfect location. Steve Wragg asked him who would maintain it and pointed out that it has to be maintained either through a CSA for maintaining of the park. It costs about \$300,000 to \$500,000 to maintain it in perpetuity. It would take an election of the community to agree to pay for it through a CSA. He suggested that **Mr. Stewart** check with the community to see if there would be interest in adding another tax to their annual tax bills.
Dan Neirinckx moved we approve the priority list from last year with no changes. Motion approved 12, yes; 0, No; 1 abstained (Mulder conflict of interest – School Board)

- 7 & 8. **Echo Valley Access to NWR Trails – Jean Strouf** – reported on the meeting of the public held here at which the members of the public drew trails on the map for Fish and Game. There will be a meeting with Supervisor Jacob as to why the National Fish and Wildlife can block entrance to the trails off of Echo Valley Road which is a private road. She pointed out that only one resident on Echo Valley Road objected to the ingress and egress onto the trails and she was present at the meeting. **Jean Strouf** read a letter written by **Congressman Duncan D. Hunter in support of further meetings with the community and it is attached here and made a part of these minutes.**



Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California

August 12, 2014

Mr. Ren Lohofener
Regional Director, Pacific Southwest
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way, W-2606
Sacramento, CA 95825

Dear Director Lohofener:

I am writing to provide official comment regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment (DCCP) of the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Refuge). I have reviewed the plan, discussed this important issue with constituent groups that utilize the area and had my staff both attend the public meeting held by the FWS at Steele Canyon High School on July 15, 2014, and discuss the plan with FWS staff in my office. Following these actions, I have concluded that this plan is in need of major improvements.

I will preface my remarks by stating that I completely understand the mission of the FWS and the mandate it has to provide environmental protection to threatened and endangered habitat on federal public lands. I also understand the unique challenges the Refuge presents and am somewhat encouraged that the proposed DCCP alternatives contains an attempt at providing outdoor recreational opportunities to the public, particularly hiking, biking, equestrian and hunting. At the same time, however, I believe these proposed alternatives better serve as a starting point for additional dialogue rather than a path toward final action.

The innate challenge of any management of public lands is to balance the federal legal mandate of protection with the rights of citizens to enjoy and recreate on property that belongs to them as American citizens. While a balanced approach to these dual goals is certainly achievable, far too often federal agencies introduce and implement policies that simply restrict public access because it is politically and bureaucratically convenient. The primary complaint I hear from my constituents involved in land management issues is that, despite comment periods and public meetings, their voices are not heard and policies are predetermined. This is a very valid concern, but I believe we have an opportunity with this situation to create a new course.

It was made very clear at the July 15 public meeting that FWS proposed these alternatives for the DCCP before receiving any public input from the very people who utilize the lands and/or live in the immediate and surrounding area. Constituents have contacted my office making me aware of gates that have been installed in vicinity of Echo Valley Road in Jamul without any advanced notice. Additionally, it is my understanding that prior conversations were held between FWS staff and outdoor recreational groups regarding management of the Refuge with the understanding that future proposals would incorporate input from these individuals to help ensure that priorities of user groups would be evident from the beginning of the process. According to these groups, and based on the alternatives proposed, this did not occur.

That being said, there appears to be general consensus that the proposed alternatives contain some benefits. For example, while user-created trails typically pose a challenge to environmental protection priorities, it is appreciated that a portion of these trails are proposed for continued use rather than just closing them outright. However, with more than 11,500 acres, providing only a 25-mile loop trail for equestrian, hiking and mountain bike recreation is more than insufficient; it is insulting to those who utilize these trails. It also provides a conflicting message that in an effort to preserve these lands, a significant portion of recreational activity will be concentrated into a small area that will certainly prove to be detrimental to the trails themselves.

Another benefit is that hunting was at least part of the conversation in the DCCP. It is widely understood that hunting and recreational shooting provides many benefits through education, tax revenue, volunteer labor and conservation. Additionally, this would be consistent with several policy statements and past executive actions that call for enhancing hunting opportunities on federal lands. Unfortunately, any positive gain made by incorporating hunting into the plans is undermined by the FWS' preferred action, Alternative D, 160 acres in the Otay Lakes and Mesa area. Authorizing hunting in only one percent of a refuge area that has a long-standing tradition of hunting is a myopic, minimalist approach at best and hardly consistent with the intent of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. As you know, in passing this legislation, Congress designated six wildlife-dependent recreational uses as priority public uses of the system, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation, with no use holding priority over another.

The solution here is simple; go back to the beginning of process, meet with local representatives from the community and user groups and develop alternatives that utilize the best of their recommendations while, at the same time, are consistent with federal mandates. It would also demonstrate and rebuild good faith within the community if the FWS were to take down any barricades or gates that were recently constructed without public consideration. I understand this will take both time and resources, but the end result will be a stronger policy because it will be one that incorporates an approach that has the FWS teaming with the stakeholders that care for the land the most and have a vested interest to see it is protected in the long-term.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide these comments on this important issue. I look forward to continue working with the FWS on this and other federal project important to my constituents. If you have any questions, or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or Michael Harrison in my office at (619) 448-5201.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,



Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress

Cc: Victoria Touchstone, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Diego NWR Complex

Joe Stuyvesant stated that he does not believe that Fish and Wildlife will take down the gate voluntarily and the only he sees it coming down is to establish a public easement for the public to go down a county road. **Steve Wragg** stated that if they are going to put a public hiking and riding trail across the easement, all residents must agree and it sounds like one does not agree. **Joan Kouns** stated that anyone who owns part of the road is liable for maintaining it. **Randy White** suggested we invite **Andy Yuan of US Fish and Wildlife** to come to our Planning Group meeting to inform us of the reasoning behind their decision not to allow access onto the Refuge in general and the Echo Valley in particular.

Joe Stuyvesant moved we send the following letter as our official position. Motion carried unanimously.

26 August 2014

JAMUL DULZURA COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP

P.O. BOX 613

JAMUL, CA 91935

Victoria Touchstone, Refuge Planner
San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex
P.O. Box 2358
Chula Vista, CA 91912-2358

Subject: Jamul Dulzura Community Planning Group (JDCPG) written comment on Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan

1. The Jamul Dulzura Community Planning Group appreciates the opportunity to comment on the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) Environmental Assessment (EA). This plan and the associated EA have generated significant community interest and concern in the Planning Group's area of responsibility.
2. After reviewing the CCP/EA and listening to public comment, the JDCPG finds that the CCP and implementation of any of the proposed Alternatives will result in measurable adverse environmental consequences to the surrounding community and that the EA has failed to adequately assess the environmental impacts of the adverse effects, which will result from implementation. Quite simply the EA considers the environmental consequences within the Refuge, but utterly fails to look outward into the community that borders the Refuge, to assess the environmental consequences of the proposed Alternatives to the neighboring communities and population.
3. In addition to the concern over the complete failure of the EA to consider the impact of the Alternatives on the Community, JDCPG has specific areas of major concern with the CCP/EA that must be addressed in revised Alternatives:
 - Public access to the existing trail system, which in almost all cases predates the establishment of the Refuge, is considerably reduced under all Alternatives and must be responsibly restored. The reduction of public access to established trails will have environmental consequences not only within the Refuge, but to the community as well, in the areas of; reduced wildlife observation opportunities; loss of access to

culturally and historically significant trails; negative economic impact to ranches and small businesses such as horse boarding operations and riding stables;

- While we concur with the hunting area proposed in Alternative D, the hunting area proposed in Alternative C presents a safety hazard to residents in the vicinity of the east side of McGinty Mountain and is incompatible with current residential and wildlife observation trail usage.

4. Jamul / Dulzura is a rural community with an equestrian and ranch style culture that is seamlessly integrated into the surrounding environment. There is an extensive trail system network within and surrounding the Refuge, that is woven into the fabric and culture of the community, which has existed for decades. The establishment of the Refuge was initially a welcomed addition to the community, as it was seen as a compatible neighbor to the rural, equestrian culture of this community. Assurances were made during the establishment of the Refuge that public access via the trail system network would be maintained. The proposed Alternatives in the CCP/EA disrupt the integrated trail system network and are not consistent with assurances made to the community during the establishment of the Refuge.

5. The CCP/EA estimates that there are over 210 miles of trails, pathways, utility easements, etc currently existing with the Refuge. All of the Alternatives contained with the EA propose the existing trail system be eliminated in favor of a designated trail system consisting of a total of 20-25 miles of trails, which “would allow large portions of the Refuge to be closed to public use, while still providing the public with opportunities to experience, observe, and enjoy the resources protected within the Refuge.” Elimination of 90% of the existing trails, the majority of which have been there for decades and predate the Refuge, will concentrate the public access to a very small set of trails and will result in safety issues resulting from the confluence of equestrian, hiking and biking groups into a very limited area. This will also completely disrupt and sever the trail system network that allows safe, road free transit in the community. Adverse environmental impacts include: Potential accelerated damage to designated trail system due to concentration of use over a very small geographical area; damage to remaining trail systems by illegal motorized use, encampments, dumping and other illegal activities that will flourish due to the lack of public scrutiny from responsible trail users.

6. Severing the trail system network will have adverse environmental consequences to the historical and cultural aspects of our community, which depend upon the integrated network of trails. Additionally there will be adverse economic consequences to the small businesses involved in horse boarding and trail riding stables, due to lack of trail access. Loss of trail access will require trailering horses to limited access points, where today riders have the ability to ride directly from lodging to trails in a safe environment. This will lead to the closure of riding stables and reduction of horse boarding in many locations. These environmental consequences were not considered in the EA under any Alternatives’ analysis.

7. Trail system reductions that fail to consider impacts to the surrounding community and that are perceived by the public to be draconian, run the risk of being universally ignored, especially by the less responsible trail users. Conversely, a reasonable trail system developed with public input and buy-in, will result in public acceptance and better success in achieving the CCP goals for the Refuge. We strongly recommend

working with the community to achieve consensus on a reasonable and responsible designated trail system.

8. Recent efforts by F&W to engage with the public are noteworthy; however this engagement will only be meaningful if it results in changes to the CCP/EA in the areas of Public Access and the proposed designated trail system. We ask that you work with the community to develop a trail system that better balances responsible Refuge conservation management and public access.

9. Because the current Refuge CCP/EA Alternatives are fundamentally incompatible with our community and result in adverse environmental consequences in the areas of reduced wildlife observation opportunities; loss of access to cultural and historical trails; negative economic impact to riding stables, horse boarding operations and associated economically supporting businesses, the JDCPG most strongly opposes the current CCP/EA and would strongly recommend that the CCP/EA address the adverse environmental impacts to the community. In addition, JDCPG would actively oppose any further land acquisitions by F&W, as further Refuge expansion would be incompatible with our community. Should F&W work with the public to develop a plan that meets Refuge conservation goals while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding community, we would be happy to reconsider.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Neirinckx, Chairman
Jamul Dulzura Community Planning Group

Copy to:

Director Ren Lohofener, Regional Director, Pacific Southwest U.S Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. House of Representatives, 50th District, Congressman Duncan Hunter

Supervisor Diane Jacob, San Diego County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Greg Cox, San Diego County Board of Supervisors

9. PDS3014-MUP-13-027 AT&T CELL SITE AT SR 94 AND BARRETT SMITH RD - Randy White said to take it off the agenda until we have been notified that it is ready to be considered.

10. PDS2014-MUP14-027 AT*T CELL SITE AT 17348 LYONS VALLEY ROAD - Randy White said to take it off the agenda until notified that it is ready to be considered.

11. JAMUL INDIAN VILLAGE UP-DATE - Dan Neirinckx did a followup on his announcement from last week and stated that the truck from JIV that was travelling without being covered again sandblasted him. The Highway Patrol officer told Dan that he did not know about the law requiring covering of the truck beds, nor did he think he needed to know about the law. Dan contacted Senator Joel Anderson's office and they contacted CHP in Sacramento. Dan received a call from the CHP in Sacramento and they stated they would notify the El Cajon office of Dan's observations. **Dan estimated that at least 50% of the trucks were not covered as was evidenced by the quantity of sand that was accumulating at side of the road in the trough at the side.**

12. JDCPG OFFICER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

a. Bill Herde gave us all our own copy of the JDCPG Plan. Dan Neirinckx pointed out that the new plan reflects our 1-acre minimum as approved by BOS on June 18, 2014. He suggested we all keep our copy for reference.

B. Notice of availability and intent to adopt an environmental impact report for the proposed Cuyamaca Rancho State Park General Plan. – Given to Jean Strouf to check to see if it involves any of our trails.

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Mulder, Secretary

**NOTICE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING:
7:30 P.M. TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2014
OAK GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL LIBRARY**

Meeting minutes and agendas can be accessed at

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/pds/CommunityGroups.html>