

MUIR WOODS TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS UPDATE

Parking Reservation and Shuttle System, and Transportation and Access Site Improvements



Dear Park Friend,

The National Park Service is sharing this in-progress report about the two transportation projects for Muir Woods National Monument in advance of scheduling our next public meeting in 2014. In brief, the National Park Service is:

- Moving ahead with plans for a parking reservation and shuttle system,
- Taking more time to consider the transportation and access site improvements project,
- Exploring alternatives to a new parking lot on Panoramic Highway, and
- Continuing to listen to our neighbors and work collaboratively with State Parks and the County of Marin to define solutions that meet our varied interests.

Moving Ahead with a Parking Reservation & Shuttle System

At the September scoping meeting, and in many of the 150+ comments we have received since then, we are hearing clear support for a parking reservation and shuttle system. Building upon that support, we plan to complete environmental compliance in 2014 with the goal of implementing the system in 2015. The parking reservation and shuttle system has the greatest potential to reduce peak visitation, while also protecting resources, improving the experience for visitors, and reducing traffic congestion at Muir Woods and Tam Junction.

We have received feedback suggesting that the purpose of the reservation system is to increase visitation to Muir Woods. This is not one of the goals of the project. Every option that the National Park Service is considering would reduce visitation during peak periods and maintain a quieter off-peak season. All of the visitation forecasts under this new system would also be within the carrying capacity of Muir Woods, established in studies by some of the most respected university



researchers who are engaged in managing outdoor recreation across the country. Findings from those studies were incorporated into a user management program described in the park's draft general management plan. The draft plan was released for public review in September, 2011 and is available at www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/planning.htm.

It's possible that some peak season trips could shift from weekends to weekdays; however, this would only occur in months such as May when weekend visitation is very high and weekday visitation is low. Even in these cases, visitation would continue to be substantially lower during the week than during the weekend. The parking reservation and shuttle system would also reduce traffic congestion outside the park. Forecasts show that it would reduce Muir Woods-bound traffic through Tam Junction by 30-40% during peak-season weekends.

The reservation system, as currently envisioned, would not require visitors to park on the shoulder of Panoramic Highway, or entail the development of any new parking lots. Additionally, the 101/Highway 1 visitor intercept (now at Pohono St.) and ferry connections through Sausalito would continue to be important elements in an expanded shuttle system.

Public Conversation to Continue

In response to public requests, the deadline to submit scoping comments on the two projects was extended to January 11, 2014. At this early stage in the planning process, the NPS is looking for comments from the public and regulatory agencies on the purpose and need for the projects, the issues the projects will address, possible alternatives, and the potential environmental impacts of the projects

that should be studied. We are interested in knowing if we are addressing the right issues; if you have additional information the planning team should consider; and what ideas you have to address the problems.

As of late November, we had received many comments on both projects. While a summary report will not be completed until after January 11, 2014 when the comment period closes, the most common viewpoints expressed to date are:



- Support for better management of visitation; especially to reduce traffic congestion
- Support for implementing a parking reservation system, particularly if it would reduce traffic congestion
- Opposition to constructing a new parking lot on Panoramic Highway
- Opposition to managing Muir Woods Road as a one-way road
- Interest in reviewing more specific information about the projects in the future

The National Park Service planning process includes public meetings in 2014 to provide more information about the projects and allow for continued discussion about them. The next public meeting in early 2014 will focus on the proposed parking reservation and shuttle system project—defining the way it would operate, estimated visitation figures, possible environmental impacts, and other planning parameters. The Transportation and Access Site Improvements project description identified the possibility of

constructing a new parking lot off Panoramic Highway to eliminate the need for shoulder parking in the watershed. As a result of strong local opposition to this idea, we are studying other options. We look forward to hosting a public workshop in the spring where stakeholders can discuss a full range of alternatives for this longer-term project. There will be another opportunity for the public and regulatory agencies to comment on the site improvements project following the alternatives workshop.

No dates have been set for the next meetings; however, the likely schedule of major project milestones is as follows:

Parking Reservation and Shuttle System	
First Scoping Meeting	September 2013
Public Meeting	Winter 2014
Prepare NEPA document	Winter/ Spring
Public comment period	Spring
Decision document	Summer 2014
Implementation	Estimated 2015-2016

Transportation and Access Site Improvements	
First Scoping Meeting	September 2013
Alternatives Workshop	Spring 2014
Public comment period	Spring
Prepare NEPA document	Summer/ Fall
Public comment period	Fall
Decision document	Winter 2015
Design and construction	2016-2020

Recent Accomplishments

Over the last few years, the National Park Service, County, State Parks and the local community have successfully collaborated in many ways. Together we've made steady progress reducing congestion, improving visitor safety, and protecting the environment. Some highlights include:

- Shared funding the Muir Woods Shuttle for 7 seasons, with expanded and improved service each year
- Supported Marin Transit in the purchase of new shuttle buses
- Funded installation and operation of changeable message signs on Highway 101
- Constructed a new sustainable Dias Ridge Trail for multi-use access from Panoramic Highway to Muir Beach
- Completed schematic design for a new California Coastal Trail segment from the end of the Dias Ridge Trail to the beginning of the Redwood Creek Trail
- Removed the most problematic shoulder parking spaces, particularly on upper Muir Woods Road

- Completed studies to support decision-making, including Redwood Creek Watershed Vision for the Future, Redwood Creek Watershed Assessment, and soundscape studies

Other successful National Park Service projects in the watershed include significant restoration of the creek and wetlands at Muir Beach, and a soon-to-be-open relocated beach parking lot and picnic area to further improve the floodplain. In the redwood forest, we have removed asphalt, extended boardwalks, repaired connecting trails, and created an inviting pedestrian entry plaza that also quietly helps us to manage the flow of visitors into and out of the park. The photo (right) shows the park Trails Crew removing asphalt at the Founder's Grove. A new boardwalk will open there in February.



Moving Forward Together

Planning for Muir Woods has been going on for many years. We believe that the two transportation projects we are now discussing grow out of past planning efforts, including the Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan (CTMP). They also build upon our experiences managing Muir Woods under conditions that have changed, and with information gathered since the CTMP effort ended.

The National Park Service and its partners at the County of Marin and California State Parks look forward to continued constructive dialog with you about the next steps for managing transportation to Muir Woods National Monument.

Basic information, and an easy way to submit comments, is online:

- **Parking Reservation and Shuttle System:**
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/muwo_parking
- **Transportation Access and Site Improvements:**
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/muwo_access

We will do our best to inform the public and regulatory agencies about future meetings. The best way for people to stay informed is by signing up for email updates. You may sign up by following the links on:
<http://www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/planning.htm>