



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Watershed Committee/Board of Directors
Title: Watershed Recreation Management Planning Feasibility Study Update
From: Shaun Horne, Director of Watershed Resources
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: June 20, 2024

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TYPE OF ACTION: Action X Information Review and Refer

RECOMMENDATION: Receive update on the Watershed Recreation Management Planning Feasibility Study Strategic Opportunities and the development of the pilot programs

SUMMARY: The Marin Municipal Water District (District) partnered with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) to engage District Board members, executive leadership, stakeholders, and constituents in early scoping of a Watershed Recreation Management Planning Feasibility Study. Since June 2022, the District has hosted six (6) community workshops, two (2) site visits, and completed an updated watershed census survey to solicit input relating to watershed operations and visitor management. The Board adopted the Watershed Recreation Management Planning Feasibility Study (Feasibility Study) at the April 16, 2024 Board of Directors Meeting. Staff will provide an update on the Watershed Recreation Management Planning Feasibility Study Strategic Opportunities relating to the development of pilot programs for evaluating trail sharing methods and E-Bike Class I access.

DISCUSSION: Mt. Tamalpais and its adjacent watersheds support a rich array of plants and animals, panoramic vistas, and recreational opportunities that are treasured by residents and visitors alike. Since before the turn of the last century, Mt. Tamalpais has been a magnet for recreationists. The Marin Municipal Water District's Mt. Tamalpais watershed lands receive approximately 2 million visitors annually and are part of the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO 2002). Watershed users include anglers, hikers, equestrians, nature viewers, runners, walkers, youth camps, cyclists and many more. With the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic and associated Shelter in Place Orders the number of watershed visitors drastically increased, overwhelming many of the District's facilities (restrooms, parking lots, trash receptacles and popular trails). This dramatic increase in users demonstrates the significant value of natural areas and open space lands to the community and the community's deep connection to these areas. However, this increase in visitors also accentuated long-standing watershed issues relating to existing facilities and between different visitor groups.

Watershed Recreation Management Planning Feasibility Study

The planning process was designed to facilitate a conversation with the community around existing visitation in an effort to help address long-standing issues around various modes of recreation on Mt. Tamalpais. The Feasibility Study reviewed existing watershed recreational facilities, visitor use data, biological resources, stewardship and volunteer programs, and visitor management strategies. The planning process aligned with the District's adaptive watershed management strategy and informs multi-benefit outcomes that can be advanced to help protect the unique goals of different watershed visitors and the biodiversity of the District's watershed lands. The final section of the Feasibility Study presents a series of Strategic Opportunities organized around stewardship initiatives, visitor services, watershed facilities, and adaptive management operations.

As part of the Watershed Facilities Strategic Opportunities two pilot programs were identified. One pilot program to evaluate trail sharing methods to assess bike access on a select number of single-track trails. The second program is an E-Bike Class I Trial period to evaluate E-Bike access on the watershed in the same manner as regular bicycles, including any trails where bike access would be permitted under the pilot program. Staff will provide an update on the development of the pilot programs and discuss next steps.

The District has developed a webpage to keep the community updated on the planning process and where the Feasibility Study can be viewed: (<https://www.marinwater.org/WatershedRecPlan>).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: Not Applicable.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT(S): None.