

Hood Mountain Regional Park & Open Space Preserve Expansion Master Plan

May 19, 2016 Meeting Summary

Fourteen community members signed in and participated.

Introduction by Steve Ehret, Parks Planning Manager:

1. There will soon be an announcement of an additional 162 acres to be added to Hood Mountain Regional Park & Open Space Preserve closer to the Los Alamos Park entrance.
2. There have been many acquisitions that have added land to Hood Mountain Park. Since 1967 there have been ten acquisitions that have come into the park, one piece at a time. Regional Parks thanks the Lawson Family. Without willing owners, and voter approval and support of the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, these acquisitions couldn't happen.
3. "Funky Fridays" Summer Concert Series, the concerts that were previously held on summer Friday nights at Sugarloaf State Park, are now going to be at Hood Mountain Regional Park beginning May 27. Some of the money raised through the concert attendance will go to Hood Park. Bill Myers, one of the Funky Friday coordinators, was in attendance and introduced to the group.
4. A new interagency pass is available that will allow users of North Sonoma Mountain Park & Preserve and Jack London State Park, and Hood Mountain Park & Preserve and Sugarloaf State Park to share both day-use and annual park passes. The interagency pass will only work at these associated parks because the agreement is with the non-profits that run both Sugarloaf and Jack London State Parks and not between Regional and State Parks.

Supervisor Susan Gorin remarks:

The Hood Mountain Park and Preserve has been a really exciting Master Planning process. There are lots of interested hikers. The Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and Regional Parks share the overarching goal of getting people to the Parks. We are pursuing the goal of building a system of hut to hut hiking in Sonoma County, and with the Lawson Expansion Master Plan, a small piece of this will be accomplished.

Supervisor Gorin thanks the voters for their support of growing open space and parks in the County.

Presentation by Project Manager, Karen Davis-Brown (See PDF on website)

The presentation reviewed the project to date, summarized the Lawson Expansion Draft Master Plan, and ended with another look at the project schedule.

The Lawson Expansion Draft Master Plan includes over three miles of additional multi-use trail, and approximately one mile of hiker only trail. The plan also includes hike-in rustic overnight facilities, backcountry campsites, reuse of the footprint of the existing cabin, a pump out restroom facility, areas for informal picnicking, and interpretive signage.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q. How soon can I get out and hike on the new trails?
A. The anticipated schedule is summer 2017 for a trail from Lower Johnson Ridge to the cabin. There is funding in place from the District for this section of initial access.

2. Q. Are there any possible acquisitions coming that will be in the “donut hole”?
A. The new acquisition of 162 acres which will soon be announced is in the “donut hole”.

3. Q. How do we access the trails in the Lawson Addition?
A. Initial public access will be from Lower Johnson Ridge Trail (from the Pythian Road trailhead). This section of trail has funding in place and construction will begin after approval of the Master Plan this winter 2016/17. The trail in the draft plan includes access from both Lower Johnson Ridge Trail and from the Pythian trailhead, as well as Hood Mountain Trail and from the Los Alamos trailhead.

4. Q. Mountain bikers cut through the trails and carve out new ones. How do we deal with that?
A. Trails are designed anticipating these issues and natural land barriers are incorporated into the trail design. Natural land features like rock outcropping or trees, for example, are used as visual and actual barriers that are created between trail segments.

5. Q. The Sugarloaf parking lot fills up early frequently. What can Parks do to remedy this problem?

A. We are County Regional Parks, not State Parks (Sugarloaf is a State Park), but a shuttle between parks is scheduled to begin a route this summer 2016 which may help to minimize the parking issues at Sugarloaf. The shuttle route has not been finalized yet, and your input is encouraged on where you'd like to see stops. As much as possible we hope that people can leave their cars near Highway 12 and use the shuttles to get to trailheads and encourage hike-through routes between parks. People should talk to the Sugarloaf Park Manager about parking issues for Sugarloaf.

6. Q. Are there maps of the final draft plan trails available yet?

A. Keep your eyes open for Planning Updates emails – the presentation from tonight's meeting will be posted on our website in the next couple of weeks including final draft plan maps.

7. Q. I'm a member of the Sonoma County Bowmen and we have an archery range at Lake Sonoma. We are interested in trying to find an area where we could establish an archery range in Sonoma County. It needs to be a gated range, as we have problems with our Lake Sonoma facility – people have come in and messed up our range. They shoot off rifles, pistols, and toss hatchets at the targets. We want to relocate to a place that can be gated. We would have hours when we'd be open to the public, and would provide events and competitions. We would do some training for Boy Scouts and have free lessons. Is there any chance for us?

A. Parks Planning Manager said he'd be happy to talk more after the meeting, but there are some issues. County Code prohibits projectiles: archery, airplanes, and drones all fall into this area. There may be a place in Sonoma County where an archery range might be possible, but it won't be the Hood Lawson Property.

8. Q. I am with the 4-H Archery Club and wonder if Open Space District could keep a small 2-acre plot for the use of archery groups.

A. Open Space District has a matching grant program for non-profits. The 4-H Archery Club or the Sonoma County Bowmen might take advantage of this program.

9. Q. I am an advocate for steeper trails. Many of us hike to get a good workout and to train for sierra hiking.

A. Trails are designed for moderate grades to accommodate many user abilities. There are different options in trail design – some have steps instead of going straight uphill; other paths are paved to avoid erosion. Regional Parks doesn't want to build steep, difficult trails if avoidable as the trend is toward **more** accessibility, not less. When trails are too steep, erosion and land management become a problem, and when we minimize the slopes it creates a sustainable trail, designed for a broader user base.

10. Q. Parking is tight on Pythian. What about the Uplands and increasing access to Johnson Ranch?

A. Los Guilicos is a large plot – more than 85 acres of land. We are working with County General Services to incorporate Los Guilicos (LG) into Hood Park, so we should see a LG parking lot available for use in the next month or two. Regional Parks and County General Services are discussing the future of the holding ponds near the Pythian parking lot. The ponds are in need of repair or possible removal. If the ponds are removed then some of that space may be available for an additional parking area.

11. Q. Will the cabin have electricity?

A. Power from the grid will not be available to the cabin or property but the use of solar power most likely will be used for limited lighting and pumping water from the springs to the water tank. The use of a generator might be possible under special circumstances or by special use permit.

Coming Up – We will have a DRAFT Hood Expansion Master Plan by Fall 2016.