

DATE: April 13, 2017
TO: Bolinas Lagoon Advisory Council
FROM: Veronica Pearson, Open Space Planner
SUBJECT: Letter Property

Marin County Parks (MCP) has begun investigating potential options for uses of the 6.26-acre Letter property, which is located at 830 Olema Bolinas Road, Bolinas. There are three structures on the site: residence, barn, and boat shed. Although the County acquired the property in the 1970s, it returned a life estate deed to the previous owners and, after their deaths, Marin County Parks began investigating the structural integrity of the dwelling and structures on the land.

In 2011, an initial inspection on the residence concluded that the structure was in a state of total disrepair. The report also warned of potential health and safety threat to occupants and that the building was not habitable by the housing, civil, and health and safety codes. That report recommended that the most cost effective and practical way to address the building was to raze and reconstruct, rather than to attempt to correct the deficiencies.

In 2013, the Marin County Parks followed up this initial inspection with an evaluation by a structural engineer. That report concludes that the entire wood foundation, concrete piers, and decking material for the residence need replacement. Additionally, rot and insects have damaged the siding and windows. The barn requires improvements to its sheer wall to comply with code standards and to withstand wind and seismic loads. This would include upgrading the foundation. Insect damage and water intrusion are also evident, which would require replacement of the roof and portions of the siding. The boat shed lacks adequate structural integrity, and would require the replacement of all structural members.

In 2016, MCP retained the services of Peter Baye, Ph.D. (ecologist) to describe the existing conditions and to identify feasible environmental restoration and enhancement alternatives that would be appropriate for the property and that considered future impacts to the parcel from sea-level rise. The report divided the parcel into five shoreline reaches (south end, residential, pad fill, pocket brackish marsh, and north end), with a description of existing conditions for each reach and recommendations. Overall, Dr. Baye found that the site contains a number of native species across five different habitat types that are important for the maintenance and enhancement of a transition zone from salt marsh to upland habitat.

The south end reach is comprised of native oaks and scrub species, with some ornamental vegetation, and fringed by a narrow tidal marsh habitat composed of native brackish marsh species. A portion of the reach is experiencing active erosion along the shoreline. To combat wave erosion, coarse sediment could be imported and deposited at the toe of the eroding shoreline within the intertidal zone. This would require complying with regulatory requirements from a number of government entities. An

alternative could include the use of groins and a higher volume of coarse sediment to create a wider beach that could allow for increased recreational access. If nothing is done at this location, portions of the reach would continue to erode and, in the future, may require rock slope protection and emergency road armoring.

The residential reach is comprised of the fill, residence, and concrete piling that are located over tidal flats. The residence has eliminated marsh habitat that would be located within its understory. The pad fill and crib wall reach extends from the north side of the residence to the north end of the pad fill, and tidal marsh is on the fringe of this area. Within these two reaches, Dr. Baye recommends the use of a "living shoreline." A living shoreline is a design approach that would create a gentle sloping gradient with tidal and high marsh vegetation, which would act as a wave damper. The existing building and crib wall would be demolished, the slope re-graded (1:20 to 1:10) up to the high tide line, and the area re-vegetated with local native vegetation. Dr. Baye also recommended that Parks install log groins to retain sediment. The report also considers managed retreat as an option to the recommended restoration. Managed retreat would include removal of structures as necessary due to rising seas.

The pocket brackish marsh, north of the pad fill, is a stable species-rich habitat supported by freshwater seepage and springs, and the area includes salt-sensitive rushes, sedges, and forbs. The north end reach is a discontinuous narrow fringe tidal marsh with an over story of blue gum eucalyptus trees. Under the eucalyptus trees, there is little vegetation and an eroding shoreline. The recommendation is to remove the eucalyptus trees that are shading the tidal marsh, and re-vegetate the area with native marsh species.

Due to the potential for erosion and inundation of portions of the property, the report recommends against the installation of permanent structures, roads, and parking. The site may be best suitable for low-intensity recreational uses, including interpretive signs and a picnic area. The report suggests that the site is not appropriate to support access for boats, because there would be the risk of crafts being stuck due to the shallow-sloping shoreline, deep mudflats, and the lack of a tidal channel.

Marin County Parks would appreciate any recommendations on public access, recreational, and interpretive facilities for the site. Staff is also interested in any ideas on preserving the Letter's memory at the site.