

**Draft Agreement between the County & the
National Park Service Needs Improvement
By Sharon Rushton
Posted in the Marin Post (June 15, 2015)**



Muir Woods by Veit Irtenkauf

At the June 16th Board of Supervisors public hearing, the Supervisors will discuss a [DRAFT Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#), a proposed agreement between the County of Marin and the National Park Service, which would create a Muir Woods reservation system in conjunction with changes to public transit, roadside parking, and parking enforcement.

Here's a link to the Supervisors' Agenda for June 16th and [the Staff Report](#).

Agenda Item #7 is about Muir Woods:

http://marin.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view_id=33&event_id=684

The DRAFT MOU is a step in the right direction but needs VERY important improvements. The devil is in the details!

The proposed MOU would allow the establishment of a reservation system for Muir Woods, which would reduce peaks of visitation by spreading about the same amount of yearly visitation (and associated traffic and parking) that we currently have, throughout the year. The agreement does NOT lower yearly visitation to the park. Rather, it still allows OVER A MILLION yearly visitors to Muir Woods (which is more than the population of San Francisco!) and a FOUR FOLD increase in buses heading to and from the monument.

The biggest concern about the MOU is that it does not include enforceable Visitor CAPs that would reduce total yearly visitation to Muir Woods and subsequently lower related traffic and environmental impacts. **Without such enforceable Visitor CAPs, the reservation system could increase visitation, traffic congestion, and related environmental impacts.**

Most organizations engage a reservation system to increase sales, among other objectives. Reservation systems have great advantages for boosting sales, including:

- The ease of online real time booking (24 hrs. / 7 days a week);
- Increased utilization of the destination by booking visits throughout the entire day;
- Up-selling, cross-selling, offering package deals and promotional discounts;
- Online performance measurement and sales matrix - A business story can be measured and scaled as online systems will display the performance matrix and act as a critic for every move you make. Real-time reporting shows the number of prospects, and how many were converted to actual reservations. This builds a profile of customer behavior and identifies sales trends information that can be used for strategic planning purposes;
- Currency and language settings to appeal to a global audience; and
- Repeat business with more sales - The customer database generated through sales can also be used for targeting future marketing campaigns.

Potential consequences from an increase in visitors include: destruction of sensitive habitat; harm to wildlife (including endangered species); increased traffic congestion; more pollution and debris; and greater risk of public harm due to more accidents, pollution, blocked evacuation routes and fires.

Yet, the reservation system could be used to lower sales, attendance, and related traffic and environmental impacts. However, the only way to ensure this is to establish enforceable, sustainable, hourly, daily, monthly and yearly Visitor CAPs. Such CAPs should be based on an Independent Scientific Carrying Capacity Study of Muir Woods.

Also of concern is the fact that the MOU slowly (over a period of 7 years) limits BUT does not eliminate parking along Muir Woods Rd. Parking along this road presents a safety hazard, threatens the health of the Redwood Creek watershed, and diminishes the visitor experience. The parking limitation is supposed to address these concerns. However, the coho salmon that live in the creek are facing extinction and 7 years isn't fast enough. Parking along this road should be eliminated at a MUCH quicker pace.

For a better understanding of the Muir Woods Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), please follow the below link to read the letter from Sustainable TamAlmonte to the Marin County Board of Supervisors regarding the issue.

http://www.tamalmonite.org/letters/Letter_from_Sustainable_TamAlmonte_to_BO_S_re_MOU_between_County_and_NPS%206-9-15.pdf

In order to preserve the environment and protect public health and safety, Sustainable TamAlmonte recommends that the Board of Supervisors make the following improvements to the Muir Woods Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

- 1. Insert realistic compliance mechanisms into the MOU;**
- 2. Require an INDEPENDENT Scientific Carrying Capacity Study of Muir Woods;**
- 3. Establish enforceable Visitor CAPs that lower visitation to Muir Woods;**
- 4. Establish bus CAPs;**
- 5. Establish car/parking reservation CAPs;**
- 6. Eliminate parking along Muir Woods Rd. within 3 years;**
- 7. Retain County control of shuttles and parking enforcement;**
- 8. Require a regional 'Point of Origin' shuttle system;**

- 9. Prevent new parking lots and visitor centers in writing;**
- 10. Lower bus lengths to 25 feet;**
- 11. Establish social equity measures;**
- 12. Establish a special provision for visitation of locals; and**
- 13. Ensure transparency.**

Besides attending the June 16th hearing, please send in letters/email to the Marin County Supervisors.

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