

THE GENERAL PURPOSE, HISTORY, AND SPECIFIC POLICIES  
.. of the  
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COMMITTEE OF WEST MARIN

February 10, 1988

I PURPOSE: Since 1970 the EAC has brought all kinds of people from the community together to define threats to the environment and work out strategies for protecting it. These strategies for action are based on a respect for the diversity that makes West Marin such a rich environment. Rancher, birdwatcher, entrepreneur, fisherman, builder, teacher, horticulturist, all have a place in West Marin.

During 18 years of leadership, EAC has worked to stop threats to the environment while building powerful alliances in a diverse community. The EAC has been a steady friend to West Marin ranchers, setting a precedent for environmental organizations all over the country to appreciate the bond between precious rural open space and healthy agriculture. EAC works cooperatively with the National and State Park Systems to preserve the West Marin environment while welcoming the visitors who pay for our country's parks.

II HISTORY: The EAC was founded in 1970 when a group of local citizens organized to stop two threats to their environment. At this time the National Park System was established as administrator of the newly-created Point Reyes National Seashore. However, local citizens felt the Park's plan for extensive "recreational access" endangered areas that could remain wilderness. The two groups clashed over a proposed road up to the peak of Mt. Vision. EAC founder Jerry Friedman, State Senator Peter Behr, and Mrs. Katie Miller Johnson joined other concerned locals in staging a dramatic demonstration on the mountain that publicized their opposition to the Park System's decision to open another road to the public automobile.

This first battle was lost and the road was opened, but the action alerted the larger environmental community to the new dangers threatening treasured landscape that so many thought had been protected forever.

Soon after this, a local rancher announced plans to fill in the south end of Tomales Bay for Commercial real estate. Again the EAC acted quickly by organizing a publicized "sail-in" of local craft that caught the imagination of the press.

---

Carl Munger  
*Executive Director*

This time the action worked - the filling was stopped and Tomales Bay was protected.

In this same year the EAC was a critical voice in successful opposition to the County's "West Marin Plan" that called for a six-lane national parkway from the Golden Gate Bridge to Point Reyes, and planned for 1,300,000 additional homes in West Marin.

In the following years EAC took active positions on and encouraged more clarification and study of many issues, some of which came back again and again. A sampling of the major issues includes:

1. Tomales Bay Lodge (1970, 1973-74) EAC opposed this 60 unit condominium with a 150' restaurant north of Marshall as being too large, in the wrong location, and exemplifying "overkill" in terms of appropriate visitor enterprise for West Marin. The project was defeated.
2. Big Rock Ranch (1973-74) EAC encouraged the retention of A-60 zoning for this area to preclude ranchette development.
3. The Coastal Plan - EAC sent specific criticism at all phases of the drafting of the Plan to the Coastal Commission and to other agencies involved; such criticisms included questions about proposed straightening of Lucas Valley Road and channel improvements at the mouth of Tomales Bay and many other points.
4. Giacomini Dam (1974-present) EAC has expressed interest and concern over the years in this seasonal dam, engaging in conversation and debate with other parties and agencies about the rancher's need for the dam and the environmental questions the dam raises. Late last Spring when a new permit from the Army Corps of Engineers was under question, EAC called for either a full 10 year permit or a 5 year permit preceded by a public hearing and a focused study on the migration of salmon up Lagunitas Creek. This study should be conducted and paid for by the Corps.
5. Paradise Ranch Estates (1975-1979) EAC joined legal protests against illegal lot splits by the developer and against the developer's request to the state and county to appropriate water from Fish Hatchery Creek.
6. Local Coastal Plans - EAC has supported the development of these plans by local residents and has encouraged community growth to follow these plans.
7. Off-Shore Oil Drilling - EAC is opposed to off-shore oil drilling along our coast in any manner.
8. Cottage Industry - EAC asked for the repeal of The Cottage Industry Ordinance and called for making it legal to work in an accessory building as well as in one's home.

9. Multi-Use Path - EAC supports the concept of such a path from Seahaven in Inverness to Point Reyes and Park Headquarters.
10. MOW! - EAC has supported the formation of this organization which works against the use of toxic sprays by CalTrans.

III POLICIES: Almost all the issues dealt with by EAC break down into two large areas:

A) Land-Use and B) Protection of Tomales Bay.

A) Land-Use - Under this large topic fall such related issues as community plans, parklands and recreation areas, agriculture inside and outside the National Seashore, housing development, timbering, and predators.

1. Community Plans - the following are guidelines which EAC has followed and urged on others:
  - a. We recognize the need for moderate middle income housing and rental facilities.
  - b. Any development in existing centers should take place and be encouraged, if possible, from the center-out.
  - c. Such development should be compatible with the preliminary Countywide plan.
  - d. That the Planning Department and Commission should take into account the number of already owned and undeveloped lots when planning for the future growth of the area.
  - e. That the impact of any subdivision should be analyzed with respect to its impact on the school system, related service agencies, and road systems.
  - f. That public access to all marshlands, tidelands and navigable waterways be taken into account.
  - g. That proper sewage systems be installed so as not to pollute the Bay or streams entering into it.
2. Parklands and Other Recreational Facilities - EAC has been unrelenting in urging maximum acquisition of public lands by federal and state parks. EAC has also advocated low-cost overnight facilities, deploring the cost and exclusiveness of the Olema Ranch Campground, and urging that affordable campsites or some small number of motel units be established. We also support the California Parks and Wildlife Bond Act.
3. Agriculture - EAC has always supported well-managed agriculture, which is ecologically sound. We have worked at the county and state level to

promote agriculture in Marin County and preserve the A-60 zoning. This concern for dairy ranch preservation coupled with suspicion of extravagant developments, has led EAC to oppose Big Rock Ranch and Loma Alta among other developments, and to endorse the work of M.A.L.T. and the American Farmland Trust. We are against GGNRA managing ranches on the eastern side of the Coast Highway in Olema, and support the Range Management Plans being developed by the National Park.

4. Housing Development - Based on EAC's desire to promote affordable housing, we supported the low-cost housing project in Point Reyes and have argued against the extravagant developments mentioned above. Each new specific proposal has been treated within the guidelines set out above for community planning.
  5. Timbering - This is a fairly recent issue to which EAC would apply the same guidelines of ecological use and preservation of the environment we have applied to other issues. Additionally, EAC supports the return to Marin County government of control over timbering operations.
  6. Predators and Other Wild Animals - Over the years EAC has addressed both the killing of and the introduction of various species in this area, specifically herd reduction of deer in the Park, the introduction of tule elk into the National Park, dealing with the increasing coyote problem, Throughout, EAC's position has been one of informing members of the pros and cons and, as with the deer, urging action consistent with peaceful and preservational use of park land. EAC has opposed the issuance of licenses to hunt the mountain lion in 1987-88.
  7. Trainings - EAC opposed the helicopter training runs that were being conducted within the Tomales Bay Watershed, 1987-88.
- B) Protection of Tomales Bay and Other Waterways - Under this broad heading come topics such as mariculture and other commercial uses of Tomales Bay, recreational uses of the bay and waterways, and studies of the area.
1. Mariculture and Commercial Uses of the Bay - Over the years EAC's position has changed from unqualified support to calls for questioning the maximum capabilities of the bay with regard for commercial development. EAC long supported mariculture as a non-polluting and beneficial industry; however in the last few years, the boom of oyster farms may be impacting unfavorably on other uses of the bay. This growing concern has led EAC to call for studies, described below.

2. Recreational Uses of the Bay and Papermill Creek - throughout the years EAC has questioned various recreational practices including duck hunting on the bay, and has called for an investigation of the long term effects of the hunting. EAC has opposed recreational developments along the bay such as Lawson's Landing and has encouraged further acquisition by the parks of bayside land.
3. Studies - In 1983 EAC asked for the San Francisco Foundation to fund a study by Steven Obrebski on the habitat, resources and uses of the Tomales Bay area. One of the first acts of EAC was to co-sponsor a request for a study by a conservation group in Washington. As the bay and surrounding lands become more developed and more used, both by individuals and many different, and possibly competing, agencies, it seems more and more imperative that EAC call for an integrated management plan for the bay and creeks. We have affirmed support for the goals of the Lagunitas Creek Citizen's Advisory Committee, and support a study of Olema Creek. And we once again support a Bay Study that will give us all a true picture of the health of the Bay today.

IV SUMMARY: This summary of EAC's purpose, history, and specific policies is meant to give one an overview of our organization. We are a 350 member group that is lead by an elected Board whose policies are carried out by an Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant. We are financially supported by membership fees, money from fund-raising events, and foundation grants. Our Board meetings are open to all members and our Board committees include members of the community as well as our own members.