

OHA Annual Meeting

9.13.20 Via Zoom 11 AM

Item 1 – EBMUD Presentation

Kerry Blackwell, EBMUD Ranger, provided a Powerpoint presentation regarding EBMUD's land management goals. She thanked and congratulated OHA on its long-term, successful stewardship of a very special property. With a remarkable diversity of plant life, unusual soil types, springs and the hard work required to keep the property in excellent condition, OHA is a real success. She noted that hard work and sweat equity are what keep it intact. She provided special thanks to Erica Braun as a vital resource and knowledge base, and expressed the hope that others are learning from her.

KB noted that EBMUD's mission statement is 1/3 water and 2/3 habitat. This orientation is reflected in the various management plans EBMUD adheres to, specifically the East Bay Watershed Master Plan (3.15.99).

EBMUD believes biological diversity is key to protecting water quality. The word horse or equestrian only appears once in the plan. EBMUD needs grazers, but horses are not high in EBMUD consciousness, though Kerry champions them and OHA in particular within EBMUD.

KB outlined the Range Resource Master Plan and the Fire Master Plan as similarly important guidance documents. By the numbers:

56,605 total acres

26,605 in Mokulumne watershed

10,000 grazed acres in East Bay (28,000 total)

OHA is 571 acres with 317 grazeable

KB provided an overview of patrol needs. Pre-pandemic a ranger might have 20 contacts a day. Now it is approximately 100 even on weekdays. Workload is increasing with no staff increase, so OHA should expect less assistance from EBMUD staff.

KB shifted to range management and AUM overview. She stated that goal is to maintain healthy plant community based on soil type, and not to strip to bare dirt as historic cattle lessees did. She cited a recent example of a horse lease where the herd number was reduced at significant inconvenience due to overstocking.

****From EBMUD perspective, rotational grazing is working and balances animal health with range condition. Adaptive management is now incorporated into management policies, but organizationally horse health is not a priority for EBMUD. EBMUD is committed to keeping horses on the pasture, but does recognize that horses are the least efficient and most challenging animals to manage.**

WM opened the meeting up to questions:

Caitlin Evans asked for an explanation of the Tier system.

KB explained its origins with the old-school, down-to-bare-earth cattle ranchers. The tier system was a way to incentivize those ranchers to rotate their stock. Not a single lessee remains in Tier 1 (no credit), all horse pastures are at Tier 3, and the last Tier 2 cattle rancher is gone with all ranchers at Tier 3. Accordingly, there are rumblings at EBMUD to do away with the Tier system altogether because everyone is on board with the practices anyway. At the very least, EBMUD may shift to mandatory Tier 3.

Megan Holmes asked about lease termination and how it might be communicated.

KB explained that termination is a last resort, lots of communication (oral and in writing) would happen first. In one instance it was a 15 year process.

Sarah Cohen asked for clarification on pastures and pasture conditions, particularly the pasture behind the Red Barn.

KB suggested a meeting with Erica to visit, review and discuss.

Marina Pugliese-Moretti asked about other grazing options such as whether OHA could reduce its land in the lease.

KB noted that OHA is a large, contiguous lease, and does not have adjacent leases so carving off pasture isn't an option, but that there might be other options like goat grazing in some areas, subject to discussion with EBMUD about how that would be managed.

The Board expressed OHA's appreciation for Kerry's strong support and information. KB left at 11:40.

Item 2 – Spring Grazing Committee

Megan Holmes and Erica Braun co-presented on the results of the Spring Grazing Committee. EB began with an overview of climactic conditions and strong probability of another drought year with late Spring rains and a prolonged Spring. Accordingly the focus of the committee is grass peaking conditions from mid March to mid May. EB concluded at 11:50 MH requested review of PDFs circulated by committee with proposed changes to rotation. The two key changes are: 1) Different rotations, and; 2) Reducing or eliminating rapid rotations to fresh grass. Finally, for horses that can't be on grass the whole year, the committee requested a special paddock where horses could move quickly on or off pasture. The two new proposed modified spaces are: 1) an enlarged Beer Can paddock, and; 2) Modified Lower Pear paddock. The board has accepted the proposal, and WM noted that final decision will be up to EBMUD in the contest of the Annual Grazing Plan negotiation.

Item 3 – New Member Welcome

Sarah Cohen, Membership Coordinator, provided an overview and welcome of new OHA members:

Proprietary: Linnea, Gianni, Carla, Elise Torres, Paul, Tanya Ericcson, Theresa Priestley, Nichole, Caitilin Evans.

Associate: Thomas, RJ, Rachel Zak, Bill, Julie and Carolyn Bourbon

Riding Partners:

Lost or Changed Status Members: Lisa McLaughlin (Left), Robin Cooper (Left), Liz Fowler (Now associate), Linda Furtado (now Honorary)

Item 4 – Annual Recap

Wakean MacLean provided a recap, good and bad of the year that was:

Bad:

- Discord and Dispute
- Member calling animal control on another member
- Membership Termination to Litigation to Reinstatement
- Lawyers Fees galore
- Temporary Restraining Orders (2) between contentious members
- Loss of Insurance due to turmoil
- Resignation of three board members
- Half herd off pasture with various ailments
- COVID, Fiddleneck, Tarweed and 19' hemlock
- 8 horses died: Riva, Cisco, Indio, Diablo, Tessa, Kisa, Granite, ???others
- Dues increase

Good:

- Many excellent new members
- Review of arcane rules
- Grazing committee
- Conflict makes us stronger?

Nichole asked if current conditions (e.g. smoke) will enable lenience on due date for work hours. SC pointed out that they are prorated for new members. N then noted as a new member excited about CoOp aspect of OHA that she felt that at OHA sometime comment crosses over to judgmental behavior that is unhealthy. She hopes to see more cooperative attitude, and less judgment.

Item 5 – Fire Prevention and Safety

Anna Johnson provided an overview of safety. Vital need to work together in a command-and-control setting in case of emergency. Her guidance included the following (get her slides).

Item 6 – Treasurer's Report

Kate Razo, Treasurer, presented a financial report. She introduced the presentation with her goal of ensuring a firm financial footing for OHA including an 18-month cash reserve.

Currently, OHA has a \$30,000 annual budget with \$14,000 in checking and \$10,000 in savings. On a cash basis, OHA is currently \$7,400 in the red so next board may opt to raise dues to meet financial goals.

Kim Zvik asked if the organization was considering financial relief for COVID related stress. The board was unaware of any such effort.

Dues are due now. KR concluded by noting that we have each chosen to be good stewards of the land at OHA, and that we should all strive to be kind to one another.

Item 7 – Annual Grazing Plan Priorities

30 hours of mowing were completed for '19-'20.

Some tasks remain from prior year:

1. Upper Sullivan Gate (*Must be completed for the '19-'20 year*)

Some tasks were identified for '19-'20, but never completed

2. Painting pond barn
3. Pavillion Roof Repair (currently leaking; should be repaired before rains)
4. Rat proofing white shed (or replace)
5. Hay Structures (no credit, but high priority)

Proposed new items include:

- Prior items
- 30 hours mowing
- Interior fencing as needed under new grazing plan
- Dredging pond
- Replacing perimeter fence between Pond Pasture and El Toyonal (?)

Sally Weare reiterated priority of hay structures at Forest Meadow and Upper Sullivan – Anna and Carla offered to assist with grant writing.

Caitilin and Patrick reiterated offer to build Upper Sullivan gate, but EB urged applying for credits now since it was a last year item in the AGP.

Item 8 – Election

Wakean provided an overview of the election process for three available slots, and candidates, to wit:

Heather McHugh

Alix Quay

Marina Pugliese-Moretti

Kim Zvik

Harvey Smith (Decline to Serve)

Suzette Curran (Decline to Serve)

Doug Ross (Decline to Serve)

Megan Holmes (Decline to Serve)

Those eligible and running provided an overview of their candidacy and were encouraged to submit those in writing to the membership if they so choose. A discussion of process given the pandemic was held with a final decision that members would:

1. Rank their votes from 1-4 (one highest priority)
2. Place ballot in a blank envelope and place blank envelope in another envelope
3. Write name on outer envelope to validate vote;
4. Send ballot postmarked by 9.16, or place in election box in Tuff Shed at Pav.

Upon receipt of ballots, probationary members Gianni, Linnea and Carla will tally votes and report the results to the board. The board will report the results to the new board and membership. Michael Bowen outlined the process, and inquired if there were any objections to the election process. Hearing none, the process was approved.

The 2020 annual meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M.