



30 March 2022

Subject: Public Health Emergency in West Marin. Next steps on protecting Tomales Bay from human waste and trash.

TO: Supervisor Dennis Rodoni
Sam Rankin, California Department of Public Health

FROM: The Tomales Bay Watershed Foundation

The Tomales Bay Watershed Foundation is very grateful for your efforts, as well as the work of the Interagency Group, to protect Tomales Bay. Some progress is being made and we applaud your continued work. However, another summer of overwhelming use by the public is almost upon us, with no tangible improvements to address the substantial public health problems.

The recent and very helpful letter from the Marin County Public Health Officer, Dr. Matt Willis, clearly articulated the public health problems around Tomales Bay and laid out essential action areas. Unfortunately, the complexity of land ownership along the shore of the Bay, combined with the difficulty of enforcement and permitting, have perpetuated the ongoing and increasing problems. Coordination and tenacity will be required to overcome these complexities.

As a NGO concerned about the health of Tomales Bay and the people who use it, we would like to offer our suggestions. We stand ready to assist your group in whatever way we can. Specifically, we would be glad to help with coordination of the actions we suggest below. We remain committed to our own programs which support clean water in Tomales Bay and its tributaries.

Leadership

The infrequency of the meetings of the Interagency Group is problematic. Progress is glacially slow and follow up limited. We appreciate the recent offer of Supervisor Rodoni to form a community working group. However, we believe that the community itself has little ability to address these problems, and that the

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leadership and ongoing commitment of your agencies to a long-term effort is the only avenue to solve these problems. We would be happy to participate in a working group along with the appropriate representatives of your agencies. We recommend that a working group also include representatives of State and National Parks and the Sheriff's Department. Liaisons with the Coastal Commission and Caltrans will be essential as well. The Environmental Action Committee and East Shore Planning Group would also be excellent partners in this effort.

We also encourage the Interagency Group to continue to meet periodically to support and oversee the implementation of these urgent efforts. Without regular coordinating meetings the effort will be at risk of fading away over time, as complexity will no doubt cause delays.

Mapping and a working list:

A comprehensive list of problem parcels should be created and mapped, noting land ownership/and jurisdictions involved in the parcel's management, including road rights of way. The California Department of Public Health maps are an excellent start. To assist you, we are providing a spreadsheet of the sites that most urgently need to be addressed along with specific recommendations. These are based on our site visits and intimate knowledge of these problematic areas.

Construction of Vault Toilets is the only real solution to pollution from human waste:

It is essential that vault toilets be installed at key sites. Many visitors will simply drive past portapotties or will use the bushes instead. It is about a 17 mile drive from Point Reyes Station to Tomales. Overly used public toilet facilities exist in Point Reyes Station. There is a toilet at the park in Tomales and clean vault toilets at Millerton Point and at the Miller Boat Launch but they are not obvious and there are few signs along the highway indicating such a public facility. In order to provide more convenient toilet facilities for the public and protect the beaches and the thriving aquaculture we recommend the following actions:

- Place restroom signs with an arrow in each direction on Highway 1 indicating the Millerton Point and Miller Boat Launch public toilets.
- Install a vault toilet at the Tomales Bay Trailhead just north of Point Reyes Station. This should be in a prominent location next to the parking area. Being close to town it would hopefully take some of the pressure off the overly used toilet facilities in town.
- The boat access near Marconi is a good midway point for a vault toilet but it appears to be on private property so it might be difficult to put anything there. In the long term the parcel should be acquired by a public agency for the benefit of the public. The adjacent parcel to the south is State owned so it might be possible to put a vault toilet there. We urge California State Parks to revive a past proposal for facilities there, consistent with the Tomales State Park Plan. The East Shore Planning Group needs to be consulted on this since there could be

some resistance by the residents. Sensitive design and screening may be helpful.

- Grassy Point gets a lot of use and a portapotty could be useful. However, space is limited by the highway and the portapotty could be subject to vandalism unless it is within an enclosure. We believe that with careful siting there is room for a pad and screening vegetation.
- MMWD's Keyes Creek Public Fishing Access is a good place to replace the single, seldom used portapotty with a clean vault toilet. Keyes Creek is located about a mile and half from Tomales and has good parking and picnic tables. With signs along Highway 1 this would be a good stopping point for tourists. We will be contacting MMWD directly about this site and urge you to do the same.
- Chicken Ranch Beach urgently needs a clean vault toilet as has become a very high use area.

Given the urgency of the situation and knowing that installation of vault toilets takes time, we recommend the immediate installation of portapotties as temporary measures at the Tomales Bay Trailhead, the boat launch near Marconi and at Grassy Point.

Responsible jurisdictions must commit to funding, installing and long-term maintenance of increased facilities. It is possible that federal funds for infrastructure may be available for this type of project. All facilities should be supported by directional signage and trash bins.

We recognize that neighbors will likely have concerns about installing facilities near homes and we recommend that the East Shore Planning Group be brought into this conversation. We note two successful examples of portapotty installations in Olema and Point Reyes Station which were carefully sited and attractively screened and are almost invisible. This will take sensitivity, good communication with neighbors, and most likely extra funding, but will be worth the effort to achieve long term solutions. Any toilet projects or new signage between and including Millerton Park and Miller Park should be presented to the East Shore Planning Group before permits are sought.

Signage

We recommend that the working group begin as soon as possible to address signage, in partnership with Caltrans. The priority is "no camping" signage and directional signage to restroom facilities. We believe that signage should include language necessary for enforcement including applicable citations, based on signage location and property ownership, and should cite the highest fees possible. We also recommend that you make use of rights of way for signage. The working group should support any required formal permit applications. Ideally this signage program would fall under a single permit application, with one jurisdiction being the lead applicant for a joint, multi-agency program. The Committee should also work with private property owners to install no trespassing signs at appropriate locations.

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The Environmental Action Committee may have insights as they are already working on educational signage in the community, such as the “pack-it-out” language recommended by Dr. Willis. If funding is needed for such a program, we would be happy to support efforts to seek grants through the West Marin Community Fund or the Marin County Community Service Program.

Enforcement

Our Foundation recognizes the difficulty of enforcement. While the National and State Parks can enforce on their lands, private property and road rights-of-way remains a challenge, even with proper signage. We respectfully request that Supervisor Rodoni seek expanded deputy support in West Marin. Some years ago the County successfully expanded traffic officer hours by creating a comprehensive signage program and increased fines in Bolinas and Stinson Beach. Revenues from traffic citations were earmarked, in cooperation with the Traffic Authority, to support the cost of a new traffic control officer. Perhaps a similar effort could be done to increase deputy support in an expanded area in West Marin. As an alternative, perhaps the responsible agencies could enter into a cooperative contract with the County to fund and provide extra-hire deputies, as is done by MMWD.

Cooperative Management

We recognize that maintenance of individual and remote portapotties and/or vault toilets is costly. We encourage a cost-sharing program, perhaps with the County as the lead, to hire a single contractor to maintain all the facilities. Perhaps this could be combined with a shared enforcement program. It may also be appropriate to share costs for signage, versus each agency making its own individual signs.

We appreciate that the California Department of Public Health, given its regulatory responsibility, has taken leadership in conducting these meetings so far. Given that much of the coming work will fall on the shoulders of the County of Marin, we especially appreciate the coordinating role of Supervisor Rodoni and his aide Rhonda Kutter.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. Please let us know if we can be of assistance in your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Gaman". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tom Gaman, Chair
The Tomales Bay Watershed Foundation