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EBMUD updated Watershed Master Plan available for public view

By Nick Marnell



Siesta Valley in Orinda Photo courtesy EBMUD

Each Lamorinda community presents a unique challenge to the East Bay Municipal Utility District as it manages the 29,000 acres of land and water under its jurisdiction. Many of those challenges are outlined in the EBMUD 2017 Watershed Master Plan, released for public scrutiny in December. Here are examples of district management directives for each local municipality.

Lafayette

EBMUD manages not only the water in the Lafayette Reservoir but also the land in the watershed surrounding it. An ongoing district goal is to "continue to modify as necessary and implement the Lafayette Reservoir watershed fire management plan" and to maintain the fire roads in the watershed. According to the district Lafayette Reservoir Vegetation Management Plan, accessible watershed areas are mowed, and "goats and sheep, supplied by Goats-r-Us, may also be supplemented into the treatment regime, if they are available." The district occasionally employs hand crews supplied by the CALFIRE Delta Camp.

"When using CALFIRE, it's a cheaper resource, they do great work, we interact with their agency and provide good training for their personnel," said Ed Gonzales, assistant fire chief of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, which responds to fire and other emergency calls in the Lafayette watershed area.

Moraga

EBMUD states its goal of "coordinating with the town of Moraga on the planning and development of the Larch Avenue area to limit water paragraph quality effects, risk of wildfire, and degradation of views on the Upper San Leandro Reservoir watershed." The Larch Avenue area lies in the drainage of Moraga Creek, which drains to the reservoir.

According to Interim Town Manager Jim Holgersson, EBMUD "made a broad PR presentation about new water infrastructure system-wide which was in response to inquiries about why EBMUD rates were going up. Otherwise we are not aware of the details yet."

Orinda

Just about the entire city of Orinda lies within either the San Pablo Reservoir or the Upper San Leandro Reservoir basins. The potential for development anywhere along the watershed interface has implications for EBMUD and the district lays out a management directive for the El Toyonal area "to limit the effects of development on water quality, fire and fuels management, public encroachment, degradation of views, and street extensions and to improve public access and egress and emergency access to this area."

However, the concern of north Orinda residents over the inadequate water flow from many of the hydrants is not addressed under fire and fuels management. "That directive regarding coordination with Orinda is not a new goal but continues the type of coordination we have had in the past regarding shared boundaries, interface areas, rights of way, etc. Upsizing the water distribution system to increase hydrant flows is not the type of item that would trigger this provision," said Richard Sykes, EBMUD Director of Water and Natural Resources.

Larry Theis, Orinda director of Public Works and Engineering, had no comment on the Watershed Master Plan as his department had not yet reviewed the document.

Regarding a recreational directive that affects all of Lamorinda, EBMUD had proposed a two-year trial for allowing mountain bikes on a limited number of its trails, but the trial period was not specifically mentioned in the master plan. "The watershed document now proposes about seven miles of trails in the Pinole Watershed which will be open to bicycles and about one mile from Tilden down to San Pablo Dam Road. Given the limited size of this, we decided to not call for the trial but to just change the signage and trail configuration to make it happen," Sykes said.

The public has until Jan. 29 to submit comments to the district regarding its 2017 Watershed Master Plan. The document is available on the EBMUD website.

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