

# ***Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates***

*Opinion Research &  
Public Policy Analysis*

**TO:** Sharon McNamee  
Director and General Manager, Marin County Parks and Open Space

Ken Massucco  
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**FROM:** Dave Metz and Sueanne McNeil Biotti  
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**RE:** Proposed Scope of Work for Marin County Voter Survey

**DATE:** November 17, 2006

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This memo outlines FMM&A's recommended methodology for a survey to evaluate voter support for a finance measure to fund parks and open space and wildland fire protection efforts in Marin County. We will be happy to work with you and your colleagues to refine this proposed approach to the survey to ensure that it meets both your budget and your research needs.

**Sample Selection:** Because of the complexity of the survey and the desire to have data that can be analyzed at the supervisory district level, we recommend a sample of up to 1,000 likely November 2008 voters. The sample will be drawn from voter registration lists, and will include only voters whose past voting behavior suggests that they will be likely to cast ballots in the next November election. The overall margin of error for the survey will be +/- 3.1%; demographic and geographic subgroups will have a higher margin of error.

**Questionnaire Design:** FMM&A recommends a survey that would take the average respondent no more than 20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire development process will begin with a brainstorming meeting with the project team. The meeting will provide a comprehensive discussion about major issues that should be explored in the survey, including both open space and wildland fire protection issues. A schedule for the project will also be finalized at this meeting but will include least 3 meetings to

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brainstorm, design, review and finalize the survey, and 1-2 meetings to review the results and present the report.

After the initial meeting, FMM&A will compose an initial draft of the questionnaire, maintaining close phone and e-mail contact with the project team to follow up on issues discussed during the kickoff meeting. FMM&A will then present the first draft of the survey questionnaire for review and comment. After collecting feedback, we will revise and refine the survey questionnaire.

We foresee proceeding through several drafts of the survey, incorporating feedback from the client before each revision, to arrive at a final questionnaire that obtains the information desired. Before commencing interviewing, FMM&A will secure the County's approval on the final version of the questionnaire.

While the final questions will be developed in conjunction with you and your colleagues, based on our initial conversations we envision that questions to be asked might include the following:

- Perceptions of County agencies, including the Parks and Open Space Department and the Fire Department;
- Evaluation of the seriousness of a variety of problems facing Marin County, including need for park improvements, protection of open space and wildland fire protection;
- Perceptions of the effectiveness of current park, open space and fire prevention programs;
- Support for a joint ballot measure to provide funding for parks and open space and for fire protection, both combined and as individual measures;
- Support for a variety of funding mechanisms for park and open space preservation and fire protection, including sales taxes and parcel taxes;
- Support for such funding mechanisms given a variety of rates and per-household cost impacts;
- A ranking of the importance of different issues, messages and needs related to these services;
- A ranking of the importance of different specific services that could be funded;
- An evaluation of the impact of various positive and negative arguments on support for a potential ballot measure; and
- Comprehensive demographic characteristics.

While most survey questions should be asked of respondents countywide, we also envision that the survey could include a "zone polling" component, in which the list of questions varies slightly depending on the geographic area in which each respondent lives.

The survey questionnaire will also isolate the responses of property owners, which should make it possible to estimate support for a benefit assessment district requiring the support

of a simple majority of local property owners, with votes weighted by the amount of their assessment.

**Pre-Testing:** Once approved for fielding, the questionnaire will be pre-tested with a sufficient number of respondents to assure ease of administration and flow. Such testing will also verify the length of the questionnaire and the survey questions' clarity and comprehensibility. The results of the pre-test will be reviewed in order to determine if any adjustments need to be made before interviewing proceeds.

**Interviewing:** FMM&A has well-established procedures to supervise the interviewing process and to verify that interviews were conducted according to specifications. Among these procedures are the monitoring of actual interviews by on-site supervisors, identification of each interview by interviewer, and the use of a regularly-employed staff of professional, full time interviewers. There is an established protocol for callbacks of busy or "not-at-home" numbers designed specifically to maintain the randomness of interviewee selection. FMM&A retains all interviews as part of its data processing procedures described below.

**Data Analysis:** Response data will be analyzed by FMM&A's Data Processing and Analysis Department staff using Survey System and SAS software, both well-documented and widely used data analysis software packages. As needed, FMM&A may augment Survey System and SAS with its own custom-designed statistical analysis program to report the tabulation and cross-tabulation of data. The Data Processing and Analysis Department staff employs a data checking and editing system to eliminate errors and document the handling of data received from the interviewers.

The day after all the interviews have been completed, FMM&A will e-mail "topline" results of the survey. These results will present the overall percentage of respondents that chose each answer to each of the survey's questions.

Within a few days, FMM&A will provide a comprehensive set of cross-tabulated results. The cross-tabulated results will include a table for each question or demographic variable in the survey, with a series of up to 200 columns indicating how various subgroups of the population responded to that question. The cross-tabulated results will make it possible to detect differences in responses to each survey question among different subsets of the electorate: for example, it will be possible to compare men and women; residents under age 50 and age 50 and over; property owners and non-property owners; long-time area residents and more recent arrivals; and many more subgroups of Marin County voters.

Finally, FMM&A's custom-designed data processing software package can convert the raw electronic data to ASCII format or virtually any other format commonly used, so that the actual results of the survey can be transmitted electronically to the County at the conclusion of the study. All data entry and tabulation is performed on IBM-compatibles.

**Reports and Presentations:** Results of the survey will be presented both in-person and in writing. The written report will also present key data in tabular and graphic form. After FMM&A's report and presentation have been completed, FMM&A will remain available to answer follow-up questions. We view the responses to the survey as an ongoing data resource; if the need arises, FMM&A can do further analysis to provide answers to follow-up questions that may be posed by County staff.

**Deliverables:** In summary, upon conclusion of the survey project, the County will have received from FMM&A all of the documents listed below. All documents can be provided in hard-copy and electronic form, depending on the client's preference.

- ✓ **Final survey questionnaire**
- ✓ **Topline survey results** (the survey questionnaire with response percentages for each response code)
- ✓ **Cross-tabulated results** (responses to all survey questions segmented by demographic, geographic, attitudinal and behavioral subgroups of the electorate)
- ✓ **Comprehensive written report** (a written summary and analysis of the survey's results – including tables and graphs – with conclusions and recommendations)
- ✓ **In-person PowerPoint presentation of key findings** (color slides highlighting important findings and conclusions)
- ✓ **Raw data from the survey in electronic form** (delivered in a file format chosen by the client)

We propose to conduct the survey for a price not to exceed \$35,000, including up to 1,000 respondents at a length of up to 20 minutes. This price is comprehensive, and reflects all costs for sample acquisition, questionnaire development, interviewing, data entry, cross-tabulation, data analysis, and preparation and presentation of survey results. We do not foresee any travel expenses associated with this project.

Please let us know if there is any further information we can provide. We look forward to working with you on this project.

