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Congress of the United States
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May 27, 2011

Superintendent Frank Dean
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Fort Mason, Building 201
San Francisco, CA 94123.

Dear Superintendent Dean:

I am writing to express concerns that I have with the draft rules for dog management at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. As you know, when Congress created the GGNRA nearly forty years ago, it intended to not only preserve and support the unique park space but also maintain the historic recreational and educational opportunities that residents of the San Francisco Bay Area had traditionally enjoyed. This park is unique from others in our nation as it is truly an urban space. As you move forward with the proposed rule, I urge you to not only address the concerns that my constituents have raised, but make every effort to protect both the environmental characteristics that are unique to this park and the historic recreational uses that the residents in this region rely on.

As you know, two of the communities in my district, Montara and Moss Beach, border Rancho Corral de Tierra, a wonderful property that spans more than 4,000 acres which many of my constituents visit on a daily basis. For decades, residents of the region have been stewards of the land and truly consider it to be part of their own backyards. The area is regarded as dog friendly, largely because of the numerous trails available for dog walking. I understand that because ownership of the land is only now in the process of being transferred to the GGNRA, the draft dog management rules do not address the region. Therefore, the space will be classified as "new lands" when the proposed rules takes effect and dogs would be prohibited, absent a compendium from you determining otherwise. I urge you to consider all options available for this land after the transfer is complete and reject the default dog prohibition. Further, just as the public has had an opportunity to comment on all property affected by the dog management plan, so too should the residents who frequent this property. Thus far they have been denied the option to contribute to the public process because the land has not been under GGNRA ownership. They must be afforded the chance to actively participate in the process and a solution must be crafted which both protects the unique environmental aspects of the park while preserving recreational usage.

I am also concerned about the severity of the Ocean Beach preferred alternative. As you know, the proposed policy would only permit dogs off leash in the one mile area north of stairwell 21.

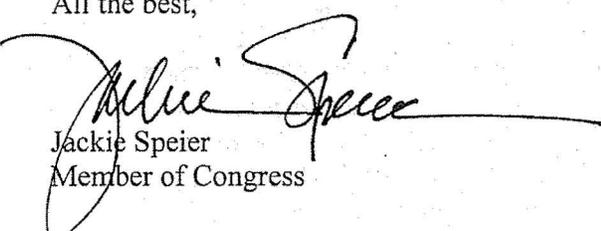
Dogs will be completely restricted from the entire beach which is south of this marker – a 2-mile stretch that many of my constituents regularly visit with their dogs. I appreciate the rationale that the Snowy Plover frequent this area and have been disrupted by the dogs, but ask that you consider all less restrictive means that would still protect this endangered species. Might you designate an area within this zone where birds are not as prevalent which can be set aside for off leash use? Please evaluate this and any other plausible alternatives that would both accommodate the dog walkers who utilize this stretch of beach while protecting the Snowy Plover.

Lastly, many of my constituents regularly visit the Fort Funston beach area with their dogs and are concerned with the preferred alternative restrictions. While I join them in commending the fact that the proposal would maintain the beach area as off leash, I ask that you reexamine the plateau area restrictions. Specifically, commercial dog walkers and non-commercial dog walkers alike have shared with me that they would like the open field area just north of the drinking fountains to remain off leash, rather than prohibited to dogs altogether, as the plan proposes. As you know, dogs would benefit most from the span if they are able to run around off leash and this space has been historically used for that purpose. In addition, many of my constituents are concerned that the preferred alternative would require dogs to be on leash on both beach access trails, and that this could impose a safety risk due to the steep decline. I urge you to reevaluate this proposal so that it is more logistically sound.

The issues that I have raised are certainly not exhaustive of those presented by my constituents but are rather those of greatest concern. I am pleased that you have promised to review and adequately respond to the comments you have received from the public during this period and I expect that my constituents will have their voices heard through that process. Furthermore, I view this as only the first step in what is a very important democratic exercise. To that end, I look forward to reviewing the draft rule later this year, including any revisions extracted from the submitted comments.

As you know, the lands that make up the GGNRA are invaluable to the people of our region. I commend you for taking steps to protect the endangered wildlife and the precious environment. I also thank you for your fair and full consideration of the issues my constituents have raised.

All the best,



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress