

N16 (GOGA-PASE)

November 19, 2002

To: Director, National Park Service

Through: Regional Director, Pacific West Regional Office

From: Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Subject: Federal Panel Recommendations on Proposed Rulemaking for Pet Management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Enclosed is the recommendation for Pet Management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) that summarizes the deliberations and conclusions of the federal panel convened in August 2002. The panel convened to recommend whether GGNRA should proceed to rulemaking or whether the present regulation requiring pets to be on-leash where allowed should remain in effect.

The federal panel was composed of five senior National Park Service administrators who brought their combined education and work experience to bear when reviewing this important issue. I thank them for their willingness to be a part of this panel and applaud them for their thorough deliberation and their awareness of the importance of this issue at GGNRA.

During the panel's deliberations, they visited many of the GGNRA sites in question to see for themselves the unique circumstances that GGNRA faces regarding pet management. The panel concluded that off-leash dog walking in GGNRA may be appropriate in selected locations where park resources will not be impaired if the standards for appropriate use (as defined in NPS policies and regulations) can be met and if public safety incidents and public use conflicts can be appropriately managed. The panel's recommendation to GGNRA to pursue both comprehensive planning for pet management and rulemaking gives the park clear direction, while still allowing leeway to choose the most appropriate process for our situation.

I concur with their recommendation, which is responsive both to park users and to the National Park Service's need to protect the resources as well as the safety and enjoyment of the visiting public. In addition, it is my preliminary sense that the process of negotiated rulemaking will give us the greatest chance of achieving a successful conclusion to this management issue.

Enclosed are background documents for your review. We look forward to an expeditious decision in this sensitive public process and hope to move forward to resolve this question in the near future. In order to do so, I am available to discuss this with you or your point of contact for this matter at any time.

Thank you for your time and attention to this situation.

Brian O'Neill  
General Superintendent