

### **Golden Gate NRA Public Use Statistics (2004):**

**Purpose:** Public use statistics are part of the National Park Service's social science program. Public Use Statistics are available via the Public Use Statistics Office web site ([www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience](http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience)), and visitation reports can be pulled up for any park in the country for management questions.

**Methods:** In GGNRA there are four main visitation reporting methods:

1) Concessionaire and entrance gate counts at sites such as Alcatraz, Muir Woods, and Fort Point, 2) Inductive loop traffic counters at Fort Point, Lower Fort Mason, Fort Scott, Baker Beach, Merrie Way, Sutro Heights, Navy Memorial, Ocean Beach, Fort Funston, Fort Baker, Rodeo Valley, Stinson Beach, Tennessee Valley, Muir Beach, and Bolinas Ridge, 3) Overnight Stays at campgrounds and hostels, 4) Special use data. These statistics were compiled by the Interpretation division.

**Results:** In 2004, Golden Gate NRA had the second highest visitation in the National Park System at 13, 270, 547. Visitation has ranged between 13 and 14 million for the past five years, the Marin District ranging between 3 and 4 million, and the Ocean District (Presidio, Fort Mason and South District) ranging between 9 and 10 million. The highest visited sites for 2004 were: Marin Headlands (1,591,901), Alcatraz (1,346,395), Merrie Way/Sutro Heights (955,130), Stinson Beach (878,408), Lower Fort Mason (776,546), Fort Baker (755,471), and Fort Funston (745,254). Fort Point had the 46 highest visitation at 1,660,007. However, there are far fewer visitors entering the actual fort than sightseeing in the general area. For Point visitors have dropped from 304,795 in 1999 to 147,042 in 2004. Muir Woods had the 88 highest visitation at 778,368.

**Implications:** Although GGNRA has no official entrance stations, many park sites are literally the backyard of Bay Area residents, or their favorite recreation sites visited on a regular basis. Many park sites such as Alcatraz, Muir Woods, and the Golden Gate Bridge portion of the Marin Headlands are major tourist stops. The GGNRA is a heavily visited park with many resource impacts as well as many opportunities for interpretation of those resources and Park Service values.

### **Golden Gate NRA Visitor Survey Card Data Report (2004):**

**Purpose:** To assist the Park Service in complying with GPRA goals of visitor satisfaction and understanding of park significance, visitor surveys have been conducted in park units for the past five years.

**Methods:** 200 mail-back survey cards were distributed to visitors by Interpretation staff and interns during the peak season in August at each of five sites: Alcatraz, Muir Woods, Fort Funston, Tennessee Valley, and the Presidio. 175 respondents returned the surveys, but did not necessarily comment on every portion of the survey.

**Results:** Among the following factors, visitor satisfaction was high in all categories. Satisfaction measures combine the good and very good responses. Recreational Opportunities scored very high: Learning about nature, history, or culture (89%), Outdoor recreation (89%), Sightseeing (95%). Visitor Services were also very satisfactory: Assistance from Park Employees (93%), Park map or brochure (91%), Ranger Programs (89%), Commercial Services (76%). Park Facilities were slightly less so: Visitor Center (94%), Exhibits (87%), Restrooms (58%), Walkways, trails, and roads (82%),

Campground or picnic area (80%). Results for each individual site surveyed are available as well, but satisfaction rates were comparable for each category.

**Implications:** Restrooms seemed to be the main visitor services category that the park can improve upon. In general, the park is meeting visitor needs and excelling in categories such as visitor centers and sightseeing facilities.

#### **Mori Point and Sweeney Ridge Visitor Characteristics and Opinions (2004):**

**Purpose:** This report was prepared by Recreation Studies students at San Francisco State University for a class project. The professor, Pat Tierney, met with park planning and resources staff in advance to discuss study objectives and possible survey questions.

**Methods:** A quantitative survey was handed out, but only 31 visitors responded. A tally sheet was also kept to record all visitors (299) passing by the survey site.

**Results:** At both sites, over half of the visitors were middle-aged (age 25-50). The most common activities were beach activities (23%), dog walking (21%), spending time with friends/relatives (17%), and hiking (13%). Most visitors were in groups of two or alone (93%). Visitors were either there for the first time (27%), or were regulars who had been there at least five times (43%). Visitors arrived by car (80%), but 17% were locals that walked from home. Visitors were asked if they knew they were in a national park, and a surprising 32% did not know. Visitors were asked their opinions on the importance of different activities on the site, and ranked the following as very and extremely important: Observing Scenery (90%), hiking (68%), being with friends and family (61%), bird watching (45%), beach activities (42%), dog walking (35%), surf/skim/boogie board (29%), biking (20%), fishing (17%), jogging (14%). Visitors were asked their opinions on the quality of park services and facilities, and ranked the following as poor and very poor: info about area (45%), accessibility for disabled (42%), access road (36%), site cleanliness (26%), parking (23%). Visitors were last asked to rate their overall satisfaction, and 85% were very or extremely satisfied.

**Implications:** Mori Point and Sweeney Ridge are newly acquired lands in the GGNRA. Visitor awareness and use patterns are still developing on these sites. Understanding emerging patterns will help the park plan future services and facilities for the sites. This study was limited in both time and scope, but could be expounded on in the future.

#### **GGNRA Water Shuttle Plan (2004):**

**Purpose:** Market data was collected from Bay Area tourists and residents by a number of different research and consulting firms to determine their interest in a water shuttle service to and from Bay Area tourist spots and GGNRA locations.

**Methods:** Focus groups with residents and tourists were conducted, written surveys were disseminated and collected, and a visitor intercept survey was also conducted at Alcatraz, Fort Baker, Marin Headlands, Fort Mason, Muir Woods, and the Presidio. Two non-park sites, Jack London square in Oakland and the cable car turnaround near Union Square in San Francisco, were also included in order to yield a representative distribution of non-park visitors.

**Results:** Little visitor demographic information was collected, but valuable information regarding desires and preferences and potential economic impacts of a water shuttle running to and from GGNRA sites was gathered.

**Implications:** A water shuttle (with connecting land shuttles for certain sites) could increase visitation of already highly visited sites such as Alcatraz, Muir Woods, and the Presidio, and add visitation to less visited sites such as Fort Baker, the Marin Headlands, and Fort Mason. Proper planning for services to accommodate increased visitor ship is warranted.

#### **Muir Beach and Muir Woods Visitor VERP (2003):**

**Purpose:** VERP (Visitor Experience and Resource Protection) studies are aimed at protecting the quality of visitor experience and park resources in the face of increasing visitor use. They gather baseline data on visitor use and users, identify indicators and standards of quality, and study the relationship between use levels and potential indicators of quality, and study management alternatives for visitor patterns.

**Methods:** Visitor surveys occurred at Muir Beach and Muir Woods by trained interviewers for 15 days during August 2003. A total of 403 surveys were collected at Muir Beach, 407 entering Muir Woods, and 406 exiting Muir Woods.

**Muir Beach Results:** Muir Beach visitor demographics showed that most visitors come alone or in groups of 2 comprised of family or friends. Only 1 respondent belonged to a commercial tour, and the large majority (upwards of 90%) were visitors, and not locals part of the Muir Beach or Green Gulch communities. Visitors were primarily white (89%) and well educated. Visitors were from the United States (94%), and of those nearly three quarters were from California. Of the 6% from outside the country, they were primarily from the United Kingdom, France or Canada. When asked how they planned their trip to Muir Beach, respondents either had knowledge from a previous visit (45%), or they had previous visits (62%). Visitors arrived by car (92%), and then hung out on the beach (91%), went hiking (42%), or walked their dog (21%).

Muir Beach visitors were also asked open ended questions regarding the quality of their visit and services and facilities provided. When asked what they enjoyed the most about the site, visitors mentioned the natural beauty and views (28%) and the beach and ocean (14%). When asked what they enjoyed least about the site, they mentioned the windy and foggy weather (22%), litter (18%), and polluted water (16%). People also mentioned inadequate restrooms (9%), and dog conflicts (9%). When asked what management improvements they would enjoy, visitors mentioned more facilities such as picnic tables, trash cans, and drinking water (16%), better restrooms with changing areas (15%), and more clean up of litter (12%). When asked things that had changed for the better at Muir Beach visitors mentioned improved access through the boardwalk and bridge (30%), and the dune restoration (21%). When asked what has changed for the worse, visitors mentioned increased litter (14%), polluted water (11%), and increasing parking problems (11%). Other issues mentioned were beach crowding, lack of public transit access, and winter flooding on Pacific Way.

**Muir Woods Results:** Muir Woods visitor demographics showed that most visitors come in larger groups of 2-4 people, primarily in family groups (72%). Visitors were

primarily white (92%) and well educated. When asked how they planned their trip to Muir Woods, respondents either used a guidebook (50%), highway signs (39%), a friend or relative planned the trip (35%), or they had previous visits. Visitors arrived by car (92%), the majority were able to park in the parking lots (76%), but many had to park along the road (24%). Of the facilities at Muir Woods, half to two thirds of all respondents visited the Visitor Center, café, and gift shop.

Muir Woods visitors were also asked open ended questions regarding the quality of their visit and services and facilities provided. When asked what they enjoyed the most about the site, visitors mentioned the trees (31%), the natural beauty and views (15%), and the tranquility and peacefulness of the site (11%). When asked what they enjoyed least about the site, they mentioned the crowding (27%), and the noise of other visitors (11%), and the lack of parking (10%). When asked what management improvements they would enjoy, visitors mentioned more interpretive signage and materials (10%), and closer parking (10%). When asked things that had changed for the better at Muir Woods, visitors mentioned improved trails (41%). When asked what has changed for the worse, visitors mentioned that the site is more crowded (28%). Other issues that were mentioned were other visitors not obeying rules and regulation, and a lack of supervision for large groups and school groups.

**Implications:** Information about crowding and its effect on visitor experience are still being qualified, and management alternatives have not yet been put forward. Many studies are currently looking at alternative transportation to Muir Beach and Muir Woods, which may help out with parking issues, but may compound overcrowding problems.

### Pet Management Public Opinion Telephone Survey (2002):

**Purpose:** This study was conducted to garner regional representation of the public's attitudes concerning pet regulations and the proposed rulemaking occurring in the GGNRA.

**Methods:** Visitor surveys were conducted in May and July of 2002 by Northern Arizona University's Social Research Laboratory. 400 adult residents living within San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo, and Alameda counties (1600 surveys total) were surveyed. The study utilized a random-digit dial sampling technique to generate a representative sample of the four-county area, and utilized Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing.

**Results:** Out of 24 Golden Gate NRA sites listed, 96% of respondents have visited at least one park site in their lifetime. The most visited sites over time were: Presidio (76%), Cliff House (74%), Stinson Beach (71%), and Ocean Beach, (68%), and Muir Woods (67%). Sites that respondents had never visited were primarily in San Mateo county. Respondents had never visited: Phleger Estates (92%), Milagra Ridge (90%), Sweeney Ridge (88%). Out of the park sites, 74% of respondents visited at least one park site in the past year. The most visited sites in the past year were: Presidio (49%), Ocean Beach (39%), and Headlands (36%), Crissy Field (33%), and Cliff House, Fort Mason, and Stinson beach each at (32%). Over the past year, respondents ranged from 1 to 500 park visits, with the average number of 28 visits, and the median number of 8 visits. San Francisco county had the highest average number of visits with 55, and Alameda had the lowest with 9. Overall, 23% were classified as "low visitor ship," 29% were classified as

“medium visitation,” and 44% were classified as “high visitor ship.” When Alameda county residents visit the park, they are most likely to go to tourist spots like Alcatraz, the Cliff House, or Muir Woods. Marin county residents are the only ones who have visited northern Marin sites such as Bolinas Ridge and Olema Valley. 81% of San Francisco residents have been to the recreational hot spots of both Ocean Beach and the Presidio. Yet only half of San Francisco residents had made it to contiguous sites such as Land’s End or Sutro Heights. Even in San Mateo county, over 80% of visitors had not been to newer lands such as Milagra Ridge, Sweeney Ridge and Phleger Estates.

**Implications:** This study gathered visitor information for a wide variety of sites, including many that are not included in other studies. It also gathered important information about public opinion on pet issues, finding that nearly three quarters of respondents (71%) support the current dog walking regulation. Whether there should be additional limits or reduced limits on off leash dog walking of course varied significantly based on whether the respondent owned a dog or not. The fact that such a large number of surveys were completed across all four neighboring counties lends valid direction to management strategies.

### **Marin Headlands and Fort Baker Transportation Management Plan Visitor Intercept Surveys (2002):**

**Purpose:** This report looked at visitor movement and transportation preferences in the southern Marin Headlands (Rodeo Valley, Fort Baker, Fort Cronkhite) and Fort Baker.

**Methods:** Visitor surveys were conducted over a three day period in April of 2001 and September of 2000 by Nelson and Nygard Associates.

**Results:** Visitors to the park represent a more privileged socioeconomic position than the Bay Area as a region. Given the absence of strong transit connections in the Park, the overwhelming majority of visitors are those with access to an automobile. There is no direct transit into the park except for the Muni 76 on Sundays and Holidays, and the road systems were created for vehicular and not bicycle circulation. Visitors to the park confront difficulty finding park entrances and navigating its road network. Over half of the visitors had been to the sites before, 13% headed to Rodeo Beach, 10% headed to Point Bonita, and 9% headed to Battery Spencer. Other popular same-day destinations were Fisherman’s Wharf, Golden Gate Bridge, Golden Gate Park, and Sausalito. Most of the visitors interviewed were between the ages of 21 and 39, and 68% of them were college educated. 94% of them were not there for an organized program, but instead identified recreational and sightseeing activities as the reason for their visit.

**Implications:**

### **Parks Conservancy Members and General Public Focus Groups and Random Surveys (2002):**

**Purpose:** This report looked at Conservancy member and general public preferences and support for the Conservancy’s involvement with Golden Gate National Parks.

**Methods:** Three focus groups were conducted for Parks Conservancy members (Marin

<p>members, New members from San Francisco and San Mateo counties, and Recently lapsed members from all three counties). There was also a random sample of 300 members and 800 registered voters from the three counties.</p>
<p><b>Results Conservancy Members:</b> Members were universally favorable towards the Conservancy (90%), and the National Park Service (87%), but were not as supportive of the Presidio Trust (32%). Members felt that the top priorities for the Parks Association should be preserving and restoring park habitats (56%), protecting endangered species of plants and animals (48%), and offering nature education to schools (35%). Members identified maps and activity calendars as important communication tools. 69% of members felt that the Parks Conservancy should take a more active role in asking local, state, and federal legislators to provide additional funding for parks.</p>
<p><b>Results General Public:</b> 54 % of respondents felt that parks were in need of funding, but most of these were frequent park visitors. If asked to choose between organization to give donations to, 44% would give to those that protect open space, and 37% to those that improve parks and recreational areas. 83% of respondents have made a financial donation or been a member of a non-profit organization. Caucasians are most likely to make donations (87%), followed by Asians (75%), and Latinos (64%). Similar to Conservancy members, 62% of general public were favorable towards the Conservancy, 75% towards the National Park Service, and 34% towards the Presidio Trust. Caucasian respondents had a median 10 number of visits to the Golden Gate Parks per year, Asian respondents 4 per year, and Latino respondents 6. Of those interviewed, 85% had visited San Francisco sites, 72% had visited Marin sites, and only 13% had visited San Mateo sites. Respondents use Golden Gate Parks for four main activates: sightseeing, hiking or walking, quiet time for reflection, and picnicking.</p>
<p><b>Implications:</b></p>

<p><b>Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan Visitor Intercept Surveys (2001):</b></p>
<p><b>Purpose:</b> This report looks at visitor movement and transportation preferences between 5 park sites in Marin County: Muir Beach, Muir Woods, Stinson Beach. Mt. Tamalpais, and Tennessee Valley).</p>
<p><b>Methods:</b> Nearly 4,000 visitor intercept interviews were conducted by GRA and DKS Associates at these sites.</p>
<p><b>Results:</b> Most people surveyed were between ages 25 and 55, with few children or senior citizens, and 74% of those surveyed were college educated. The most regularly visited site was Tennessee Valley, 60% with 5 or more visits per year. Muir Woods was the least regularly visited, 5% with five or more visits per year. 63% of those interviewed were from the Bay Area. Within the Bay Area, 26% of visitors were from San Francisco, 15% from Mill Valley, and 7% from Oakland. 37% of those interviewed were visitors from outside the Bay Area, 21% from other places in California, 17% from other countries (primarily Great Britain, Germany, and Canada), and 5% from other states. The site that had the most visitors from outside the Bay area was Muir Woods. Most visitors were only going to one of the five sites that day, but those that were doing a combo trip were primarily doing Bridge Overlooks and Muir Woods or Stinson Beach and Mount Tamalpais. Visitors were also asked the purpose of their trip, and activities included:</p>

hiking/jogging 35%, see redwoods 28%, visit beaches 27%, see mountains 10%, general rest and relaxation 16.5% and picnicking, mountain biking, pleasure driving, and surfing all had less than 5%.

### **Implications:**

#### **San Francisco Recreation and Parks Assessment Study (1998-99):**

**Purpose:** This assessment was to provide a baseline review of existing facilities and programs, and to survey community needs and desires, creating a demographic profile, community outreach report, program analysis, and facility assessment going forward with the perspective that “parks and open spaces are the common backyard of every citizen and the focal points of our neighborhoods.

**Methods:** There were a number of different survey methods. In 1997 there was a postcard survey released at the Tenderloin and Sunset Recreation Centers which received 270 respondents. There was also a distribution of surveys through Child Development Classes at San Francisco City College which gathered another 465 surveys. Then beginning in January 1998, the Recreation and Park Department enclosed a survey in all San Francisco resident's water bills. Approximately 1,300 surveys were returned. During May and June of 1998, there were also a series of nine community workshops conducted throughout San Francisco, where a questionnaire was distributed and conversations surrounded around specific neighborhood issues were convened. Substantial outreach for these meetings was done through media outlets and leafleting. The Community Questionnaire was also distributed at public events, fairs and festivals, libraries, and through partner group mailing lists. Overall, 4,202 questionnaires were returned. Then in February 1999 consultants conducted a citywide Telephone Survey to determine residents opinions about park and services and facilities and confirm earlier finding in the Community Outreach process. The City's population was divided into eleven geographical districts and translated to Spanish and Cantonese and administered by Spanish and Cantonese-speaking callers. The survey was administered by random, with a total of 885 surveys completed.

**Results:** San Francisco is one of the most diverse cities in the nation, but will become increasingly so in the coming decades.. The long term trend has been that the portion of white (persons of European descent) and African Americans are declining while Asian and Hispanic populations rapidly increase. Whereas Asians composed 23% of the population in 1980, they will be the majority ethnic group in the year 2003 with 37% of the population. Asian groups themselves are very diverse including Chinese, Philippine, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Pacific Islander, and others. Additionally, there are significant communities of Irish, Italian, Russian persons in the white category, and communities of Central and South American organ in the Hispanic category. Population projections show that San Francisco will add 30,000 new residents and 12,000 new households in the next five years. Population density will also increase a full 1000 persons per square mile, although current densities are already second only to New York City for major U.S. cities. Much of that growth will be of youth (under 18) and seniors (over 55), which again tend to be focused in the Asian or Hispanic populations. Relevant programming may need to be targeted at this group, taking into account that most youth are second generation immigrants and that senior groups might span a 40-

year age spectrum, with older and younger seniors having different recreation needs. San Francisco is gradually approaching bi-linguacy with 40% of households speaking two primary languages. There will also be growing income disparity. By 2003 the wealthy enclaves in Pacific Heights, Laurel Heights, and Cow Hollow will have twice the average household income of the six southern districts of the city. San Francisco is a city of renters, with only about 40% of units owner occupied. This translates to a large transient population, especially of ethnic populations. Thus, outreach and communication of the City's parks and programs to new residents and immigrants becomes critical for the system's use and support.

Implications: