

Parks For All Forever



A Social Science Research Program for the Golden Gate National Parks

The transformative work of the Trails Forever Initiative has been the impetus to a new level of collaboration between the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, the Presidio Trust, and the National Park Service. Emboldened with this success, leaders and managers at Golden Gate want to work together to implement a more comprehensive social science research program that will enable these partners to work toward a common purpose, improve visitor/user experiences while protecting natural and cultural heritage resources, create new best practices around a culture of evaluation and accountability, and better position the parks, the partners and their programs with the community.

Parks For All Forever: A Social Science Research Strategy and Action Plan for the Golden Gate National Parks moves the existing framework for social science toward a more coordinated and comprehensive program to provide better information and more value to leaders and decision-makers. Several new parks-wide studies form the foundation of the social science research program including:

- the GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS VISITOR/USER INTERCEPT STUDY, a parks-wide, year-round Visitor/User Intercept survey to better understand the park experience,
- a BAY AREA ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS ABOUT GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS TELEPHONE SURVEY to monitor the pulse of public opinion and awareness and to estimate the percentages of users and non-users from the Bay Area,
- a BAY AREA SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS study to provide a context for understanding trends that may influence participation and support, and
- a series of STAKEHOLDER STUDIES to better understand key stakeholder groups.

In addition to the park-wide studies, the social science research program increases the frequency of program evaluation and assessment. As part of a general trend toward increased accountability, grantors' and sponsors' want to know more about the impacts of their programmatic investments. The strategy describes an innovative way to design a suite of PROGRAM ASSESSMENT TOOLS to identify program and participant outcomes and impacts.

The new parks-wide coordinated research efforts will help leaders and managers tie information together across studies and constituencies. For example, when research studies use similar categories for demographic questions and activity patterns responses can be compared to better understand the parks-wide visitor/user experience. Also when design panels are used, methodological approaches and sampling protocols are strengthened and data gaps and fragmentation are minimized. Finally, managerial implications are less likely to be isolated to particular settings. For example, clarifying and quantifying combined programmatic uses of trails by the recreation, education, interpretation, and stewardship programs of the Presidio Trust, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and the Park Service, as well as the extended network of partners and tenants in the parks, can only increase the visibility and importance of creating a world class trail system at Golden Gate. In addition, information about needs and interests of underserved and emerging user/visitor groups secured through the Bay Area telephone survey and stakeholder studies can help build the case for support for the Golden Gate trails system.

The parks-wide social science research studies can also add valuable context to issue-oriented studies at Golden Gate. For example, focus group research completed by Dr. Nina Roberts identified five broad categories of constraint to greater use of parks and protected places by racial and ethnic minorities in the Bay Area. This technical report contains a wealth of ideas on how to better connect people and parks. Data from the Bay Area telephone survey, Bay Area socio-economic indicators study, the stakeholder studies, and the parks-wide intercept surveys can help to align managerial actions and focus scarce resources across constituencies to better serve all the residents of, and visitors to, the Bay Area.

This can be accomplished in a cost-effective manner by building on previous successes that complement existing relationships and programs. The proposed strategy consists of four distinct, yet inter-related and essential components to ensure a high quality, cost-effective, and collaborative parks-wide social science research program. They include:

- The SOCIAL SCIENCE WORKING GROUP (SSWG), a team of 9 – 12 representatives from the three core partners who will: 1) guide the implementation of the social science research plan, 2) ensure that it remains clearly focused on the leaders' and managers' data needs, and 3) communicate with the wider network of professionals about the results of the social science research program.
- The DESIGN PANELS, groups of social science methodological specialists with expertise in research design, sampling strategy, and data analysis.
- The FIELD TEAMS consisting of supervisors and program managers from various Golden Gate National Parks programs and projects. The Field Teams will support day-to-day data collection and data entry for parks-wide studies and help with the implementation of the internal studies. With up to 100 interns and dozens of entry-level supervisors or program managers with supervisory responsibility working year-round and throughout the parks the field teams represent an essential strength of the social science research program.
- A FACILITATOR to coordinate: 1) the implementation of the Social Science Research Plan, 2) design evaluation and assessment protocols for smaller programs and projects, and 3) help to disseminate and incorporate research findings into the professional practice of park supervisors, managers, and leaders.

Few national parks possess the unique strengths of San Francisco and the Golden Gate National Parks. Consequently, once the social science research program is fully operational it will position the Golden Gate National Parks and programs favorably for additional research funding. That, in turn, will increase the effectiveness and visibility of all three partners. As social science becomes more embedded into the ongoing work of the partners, the Golden Gate National Parks can become a NATIONAL LEADER IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH by encouraging emerging and established social scientists to develop social science research programs in partnership with Golden Gate National Parks.

The three partners are already making a substantial investment in social science research but there is a growing desire to work together in a more coordinated manner to gain greater cross-study comparability in order to achieve the best possible data in the most cost-effective manner. The annual budget for the comprehensive social science research program described in this strategy is estimated at \$200,000 - \$250,000 annually split between the partners and their sponsors and supporters.

Since many of the site, issue, or programmatic elements are already in place, the missing parks-wide and programmatic components can be implemented with an additional \$50,000 annually from each of the three partners and specific in-kind contributions. The proposed in-kind contributions for the core partners are working/equipment space (Presidio Trust), scheduling, clerical, and graphic design support (Conservancy), and housing (NPS).

In fiscal year 2008, the new funding and in-kind support will enable the partners to complete six to eight new studies, update the literature review, and complete the capacity building tasks outlined for FY 2008 in the follow section. Previously established research programs will continue to be funded from existing sources.

Key Budget Elements for the Parks-wide Social Science Research Program in FY 2008

Personnel

\$50,000 Facilitator (Contract with CSU, Chico)
\$20,000 Auxiliary Personnel (Interns or Graduate Students)

New

\$30,000 Design Panels – Intercept Survey and Telephone Survey
\$30,000 Conduct Parks Wide Intercept, Phase 1
\$12,000 Replicate Habitat Restoration Stewardship Survey
\$500 Partner Workshop To Identify Assets and Needs
\$7,500 Contingency (estimated at 5% of \$150,000)

Note. All existing research programs are managed at their current levels, estimated at \$125,000 - \$150,000 annually.

Deliverables for the Parks-wide Social Science Research Program in FY 2008

Fiscal Year 2008/Year 2: Design The Research Base

Research

- Parks Wide Intercept Survey – Phase 1
- Stakeholder 1 – Replicate Habitat Restoration Stewardship Study
- Coordinate Best Practices Research on Trails Forever Program
- Complete Research on Chico's NP Service Learning Program
- Design Panel Evaluation
- Evaluate Outcomes of FY 2008 Social Science Research Program
- Complete Four to Six Internal Studies (or Projects) To Enhance Existing Record Keeping Systems or Evaluate Projects or Programs. These would be smaller scale studies designed for implementation by existing partner's personnel. Possible topics might include evaluations of special events, targeted recruiting efforts, simple program assessments, inventories and needs assessments, pre/post installation measures on the next Community Trailhead, increasing the utility of the data collected through record-keeping systems, or formalizing systems to capture managers' or field professionals impressions.
- Compile Longitudinal Analysis of Mandatory Statistics
- Update Key Findings Literature Review With New Research

Build Capacity

- Coordinate Social Science Working Group
- Coordinate Design Panel For Intercept and Bay Area Attitudes
- Design and Deliver Training for Field Teams
- Conduct Assets Inventory of Interns and Programs
- Coordinate New Parks Wide Elements with Existing Social Science Research in Transportation, Trails, Program Evaluation, Visitor Capacity, and Mandatory Data Collections
- Develop Data Entry and Analysis Protocols for Selected Research Studies
- Present Research at Conferences
- Prepare Cost Estimates to Embed Research Elements Into Grant Proposals and Annual Plans of Work
- Interview Potential Partners To Ascertain Their Interest in Social Science Research
- Consult with Partner Personnel to Discuss Research Implications

Completed Research and Data Gaps at Golden Gate National Parks

	Completed/Contracted Research	Data Gaps/Needed Research
	What You've "Got"	Where Are The "Gaps"
Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTMP Research • Transportation Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Vis Use Profiles • Comment Cards • Visitor/user Estimates • Econ Impact Formulas • GPRA Indicators • Problem Driven SS (PS) • Philanthropic Driven SS (PC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract Info From Existing Research for Ref • Strengthen Internal Systems & Capacity • Better Integration of SocSci and NatSci • Better Protocols/New Methods for Urban Parks • Better Dissemination of Best Practices • More Insight into Collaborative Management/Managing with Partners • Integrate PT/PS/PC social science needs into one action plan • New Research Synthesis • Economic Impact/Significance
For All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcatraz VERP • Muir Wood VERP • Trail Visitor/users • Crissy Field Visitor/users • Pet Management • Park ID Survey/FG (Binder) • Water Shuttle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tourist Agency ◦ Visitor/user FG • Partner data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ FOMA, MAHE ◦ Concessionaires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Integration of SocSci and NatSci • Park(s) wide Visitor/user Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Patterns & Preferences, Attitudes & Opinions, Image and Identity • Bay Area Population Survey • Bay Area Socioeconomic Indicators • Project/Program Outcomes • Park Partners Research (or Needs) • <i>New Product Design</i>
Forever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging/Ethnic Focus Groups • Volunteers (Farrell Thesis) • Case For Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ CFC Program Evaluations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I-YEL, UTB ▪ CAP ◦ Capital Campaign • Park ID Survey/FG (Binder) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Integration of SocSci and NatSci • GGNPC Member Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Preferences/Image • Participant Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Volunteers (HRT/SS/PPS/ToT/NPN, GGRO) ◦ Programs (CFC, Park-wide) • Public Involvement/Emerging Publics • Cycle of Engagement • Case(s) for Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidio Green, Rob Hill CG • Social Science • <i>HD of Sustainability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Global Climate Change</i> • <i>Sustainable Food</i> • <i>Conservation Psychology</i>
Parks For All Forever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionate People and Partners/Potential Partners • Strong, Stable, Visionary Leadership • Park Social Science Knowledge Base/Advocate-Coordinator • Progressive Environment • Tradition of Innovation • CESU Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Integration of SocSci and NatSci • Document Best Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See recommendation 5 for topics • Strengthen Internal Capacity • Feasibility Analyses • Leverage Position To Assist • Time/Capacity for Broader SS Program • Broader multi-year Agreements with Universities/Institutions