

Alternative 3: National Treasures

Question #1: Describe the visitor experience

Under this alternative, the emphasis at Muir Woods National Monument would be on showcasing the park's most nationally important natural and cultural resources to a large number of visitors. Resources would be managed at the highest level of preservation in order to protect the natural and cultural resources in perpetuity and also to promote appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of those resources by a large number of visitors.

The visitor experience would begin with an "anticipation" stage, in which visitors could use the park's website and other informational sources to help plan their visit to Muir Woods. Visitors would have a range or continuum of experiences to choose from during their visit at Muir Woods. These experiences would include visits of various durations, difficulty/accessibility, transportation modes, and access points.

Visitors could access the park via multiple portals such as Muir Beach, the lower parking lot, Mountain Home Inn, and the current main entrance, all of which would be served by public transportation options such as shuttle buses. The visitor experience approaching Muir Woods would be as organic and natural as possible, so that visitors understand that they are approaching a national treasure and are not distracted by heavy congestion or infrastructure such as parking lots.

Visitors would have opportunities for solitude, contemplation, inspiration, education, and discovery in a dynamic natural environment at Muir Woods National Monument and in the Redwood Creek watershed. Best management practices would provide a high level of resource protection while providing the best possible visitor experience to large numbers of visitors. Infrastructure such as trails, bridges, and benches would be appropriately located and sized, and would be designed to both protect the natural resource and enhance the visitors' experience. These infrastructure elements would be as flexible as possible, in order to respond to changing conditions such as trees falling. High visitor use would be expected and would be effectively managed rather than limited.

Visitors would also have opportunities to learn about the park's cultural history and the role of Muir Woods National Monument and associated figures such as John Muir, William Kent, and Gifford Pinchot in early conservation history by visiting sites such as the cluster of historic C.C.C. era buildings near the superintendent's residence.

Repeat visitors or those who wish to have an in-depth, hands-on experience would have opportunities to get actively involved by prior arrangement through activities coordinated through a volunteer and education campus located at Conlon Avenue. This would promote civic engagement and citizen science, as well as support the park's volunteer program.

Visitors who wish to picnic or engage in other activities that are not suitable for the redwood forest environment would be directed to less sensitive resource areas such as Muir Beach or Camp Alice Eastwood.

Large groups of visitors would be able to gather in a location such as the upper parking lot or the footprint of the current concession building for official park programs or other events.

Question #2: Respond to each visitor experience goal

A. The national treasures alternative will provide visitors with opportunities to explore, learn, and enjoy the showcased resources and stories.

Enabling large numbers of visitors to explore, learn, and enjoy Muir Woods National Monument is a primary component of this plan. Visitors would be able to select from a range of experiences depending on the duration of their visit and other factors. The park would be managed in such a way that heavy visitation would not impair sensitive natural and cultural resources.

B. The national treasures alternative will allow the showcased resources and associated stories to shape (and constrain) recreational opportunities.

Muir Woods National Monument and the Redwood Creek watershed would shape and constrain recreational opportunities. Best management practices would protect the integrity of the park's natural and cultural resources while also providing for a high level of public use and a range of visitor activities. Trails would be realigned and facilities relocated as needed in order to allow for high use while protecting sensitive natural and cultural resources. A cleverly designed public transit system would facilitate directing various recreational opportunities to the most appropriate parts of the Redwood Creek watershed.

C. The national treasures alternative will emphasize active public participation in stewardship programs focused on showcased sites.

Active public participation in stewardship programs would be encouraged through the park's volunteer program and through opportunities for visitors to participate in hands-on activities. These programs would be coordinated through the park's education campus at Conlon Avenue.

D. The national treasures alternative will provide visitors with opportunities for understanding and enjoying a national park experience and associated traditions.

More than most parts of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument feels like a traditional national park experience. The park would be managed in such a way that many people could enjoy memorable national park experiences in the redwood forest at Muir Woods National Monument. Visitors could learn about early conservation history and figures such as Muir, Kent, and Pinchot, and could continue that tradition by becoming actively involved themselves in park stewardship programs.

Question #3: Zone changes and map corrections

Mia will work directly with the mapmaker on this issue.