

## **Muir Woods GMP—Wildlife/Food Interaction**

### **Meeting notes from 3/05/2008**

In attendance: Mia Monroe, Tamara Williams, Bill Merkle, and Rachel Townsend (GGNRA wildlife intern).

#### **Brief description of problems associated with park visitors:**

People feeding wildlife—could easily monitor instances of people feeding wildlife  
Increased corvid abundance—could be monitored through some sort of standardized counts. Would be more involved to monitor, and it was decided that this probably doesn't directly link to the number of visitors in MUWO as other indicators as there are regional factors involved.

Trash/food waste in park—could easily monitor trash items observed

Changes/disruptions to animal movements—this would be very difficult and involved to study, and would be difficult to tease out effects

Wildlife feeding on human food or waste—this could be easily monitored

Wildlife begging or approaching people for food—this would also be relatively easy to monitor

Species involved: chipmunks, deer, jays, crow, turkeys, fox, raccoons, skunks, fish, and river otter.

Note that the GMP Alternatives may be concentrating use in new areas, or bringing new types of uses into areas (e.g. picnicking, camping and night use). Also seems to be an indication that length of stay is expected to increase under each alternative, which may mean issues associated with need to eat, rest, and access to restrooms. We will need to continue to be aware of the potential for new sources of impacts to wildlife, some issues that have recently been identified is impacts of flash photography on spawning fish and high pitched tones.

Outside the monitoring program, best management practices should be established for trash management, IPM, and evaluating the concession menu. In addition, we should identify staff/contractor trainings that should occur to inform about wildlife/food problems (e.g. construction contractors need to be informed not to feed wildlife and how to deal with food waste).

Note that impacts to endangered species in the larger sense will be picked up through ongoing monitoring.

#### **Monitoring goals:**

Identify a couple of important indicators that can be used to track changes in wildlife/food interactions that are specifically related to human use.

Develop simple methods for data collection and analysis that require little training, and will be easy to implement, continue over time, and will not require additional funding or staff to implement.

Develop a simple protocol to standardize the monitoring for each indicator.

**Indicators proposed for monitoring:**

Animals eating human food or waste

Animals showing habituation behavior (e.g. begging, or approaching people)

Humans feeding wildlife

Trash items observed

Basic ideas for monitoring: most of these could be covered through observations from set locations (e.g. Mia's office) or by identifying standard transects. Record amount of time observing or out on a transect to allow for comparison. Either have surveys on standard days/times such as weekday morning and weekend afternoon, or have variable surveys where we will have to account for differences in when surveys were conducted. Most of the monitoring could be covered by volunteers. Standard data forms would be developed. Volunteers could be set up for data entry. Park staff would generate periodic reports (quarterly and annually?).

Record:

Weather

Number of occurrences for each indicator

Location

Wildlife species involved.

These indicators would not vary by zone (such as with soundscapes). We are still concerned about wildlife/food interactions out on more remote trails equally with by the Visitor Center. These issues may be focused around the Visitor Center because that is where food service is and where most people congregate. However people may also feed in more remote areas where they are less likely to be seen by others.

Monitors would be encouraged to inform/interact with people observed not following regulations. Although this may change monitoring numbers, we feel that are real goal is to minimize these problems.

**Tool Box/Step-ups**

Targeted outreach.

Staff awareness and focus on certain recurring issues.

Signage.

Focused research, if needed.

Change in use designations, for example areas where food can be eaten.

Roy, we would like more information on the SP no crumb left behind program We would also like to see it implemented at Camp Eastwood. We would also like more information on any plans for changing usage at Camp Eastwood.

