

ALTERNATIVE 2: PRESERVING AND ENJOYING COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

Muir Woods National Monument

Overall Vision

Muir Woods National Monument is restored to its primeval forest condition where visitors are immersed in the natural, wild elements of the monument and the message of conservation is paramount. The fog-shrouded old growth forest is nurtured by unimpeded natural processes including natural flooding, fallen trees, canopy gaps and multi-layered canopy, fire, etc. Floodplain function and stream processes are restored and sustain improved conditions for coho salmon, steelhead and other aquatic life in Redwood Creek. Natural quiet and natural light and darkness predominate and sustain spotted owls, rare bats and other old growth forest inhabitants.



Summary of Management Zones

Sensitive Resources Zone – The majority of Muir Woods National Monument is managed for the highest resource preservation strategy in order to restore and allow, unimpeded, the natural conditions of the preserved Redwood forest.

Natural Zone – The area known as Upper Conlon Avenue and a portion near the entrance to Muir Woods National Monument contain natural resources that contribute to the contiguous corridor of sensitive habitat. This area would retain its wild character. All facilities that do not support the visitor transit hub are removed from this zone.

Park Operations Zone – The current park operations area located north of Panoramic Highway is retained. All other operational facilities throughout the park are removed.

Summary of Visitor Experience

Visitors would be immersed in the natural, wild elements of the monument, where the message of conservation is paramount. Visitor programs would explore the anticipated, yet unpredictable, future changes that will result from human-induced influences on the earth's climate, challenging the forest's, and our own, abilities to adapt. Park leadership in restoration, resource stewardship and climate change research would be key messages for visitors. The visitor experience to the woods serves as an active agent of change, inspiring visitors to help preserve the places they cherish and to become more civically engaged.

Visitor use levels, activities and access are managed to accommodate restoration of a naturally functioning ecosystem. Historic trails and Civilian Conservation Corp era structures would be utilized or preserved where appropriate. Seasonal viewing areas for salmon would be established while minimizing impacts to the stream and forest environment. Fallen trees would be left intact and trails relocated over or around the fallen giants. Off trail travel would be prohibited in all areas of the Monument except for approved stewardship and research activities. Some trails may only be available seasonally. Visitors arrive on foot, bicycle or via park shuttle buses. No tour buses are accommodated, in order to enhance the intimate feeling and solitude evoked by a quiet walk in the woods. Visitor use levels are guided by a reduction in carbon emissions of 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, beginning with a 20% reduction below 1990 levels by 2012.

Only basic visitor amenities are provided – restrooms, shelter and water, and those are outside of the redwood forest. The trail system would be redesigned to accommodate fewer visitors in a more intimate and appropriate setting. Redwood Creek Trail would be realigned and extend from the ocean to the redwood forest (and beyond?), highlighting watershed restoration and the connections between the ocean and the uplands. The primary trail within Muir Woods is relocated out of the floodplain, other trails and bridges may be removed, more sensitively located, or designed to be modular/flexible/adaptable to changing conditions as more natural processes are restored. Paved surfaces would be removed, although the main trail would provide universal access to the heart of the woods.

Summary of Resource Conditions

Muir Woods National Monument is restored to its primeval forest condition. Natural processes are unimpeded and include natural flooding, fallen trees, canopy gaps, fire, etc. Floodplain function and stream processes are restored and sustain improved conditions for coho salmon, steelhead and other aquatic life in Redwood Creek. The soundscape and lightscape conditions are as close to natural as possible. Redwood forest and riparian habitat would be expanded onto the re-established floodplain. All major infrastructure would be removed (except water and sewer systems, and essential small office or shop space preserved at the Muir Woods Inn location) within the monument boundaries, including Camino del Canyon, Conlon Avenue and the native plant nursery.

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