



The Evolving Plan for Park Lands in San Mateo County

PROCESS and STATUS

This description of the preferred alternative for National Park Service lands in San Mateo County is taken from the working draft GMP/EIS. The draft is now under review for compliance with federal laws, regulations, and NPS policy. The planning team anticipates completing internal review and making the draft plan available to the public in 2011. Following public review and comment, the plan would be finalized in 2012 along with a Record of Decision authorizing implementation of the selected alternative.

OVERVIEW

The emphasis of the preferred alternative is *“Connecting People with the Parks.”* The park lands and ocean environments in San Mateo County would be managed as part of a vast network of protected lands and waters, some recognized as part of the UNESCO Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve. This network includes San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) peninsula watershed lands, California state parks, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, county parks, and other land held by regional land trusts. Park managers would emphasize connectivity, preservation, and restoration of the area’s vital ecosystems through collaborative partnerships with other land management agencies.

In the spirit of the *“Parks to People”* movement that created the park four decades ago, this alternative would focus on the importance of improving access, recreation, and community engagement in these newest park lands. Given the significant addition of park land in the county in recent years, a series of actions would be taken to accomplish these goals.

Park trails would be improved to create a sustainable system that provides opportunities to enjoy park sites, connects with local communities, and contributes to an exceptional regional trail network. A comprehensive trail plan would be prepared to achieve these goals. Park managers would work with county transit providers to improve transit connections to local trailheads and east-west transit between bayside communities and Highway 1. The addition of signs and trailhead parking would help visitors find their way to various park sites and help them gain an understanding of the park’s diverse natural and cultural resources. Equestrian needs would be incorporated in trail and trailhead design.

Providing facilities to welcome visitors to the park would be equally important. This alternative would promote visitor information and orientation centers in Pacifica and in the Coastside community south of Devil’s Slide. These facilities could be shared with San Mateo County Department of Parks, California State Parks, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, local governments, and other organizations. Park improvements would be consistent with preservation of the distinct character of the coastal communities.

PARK AREAS

Thornton State Beach to South of Mussel Rock

Natural Zone

Park managers would preserve and enhance the natural and scenic values of the area; allow for natural coastal geologic processes to continue; and provide modest visitor access facilities (trails, trailheads) to beaches, scenic overlooks, and along the California Coastal Trail, where feasible. The beach, dunes, and cliffs extending from San Francisco’s Ocean Beach south to Mussel Rock (a stretch of almost 5 miles) would be managed to protect shorebird habitat, allow natural shoreline processes to continue unimpeded, and provide improved or new trails for visitors to enjoy and view nature. Park managers would work with neighboring communities to mitigate concentrated urban runoff and landslide threats.

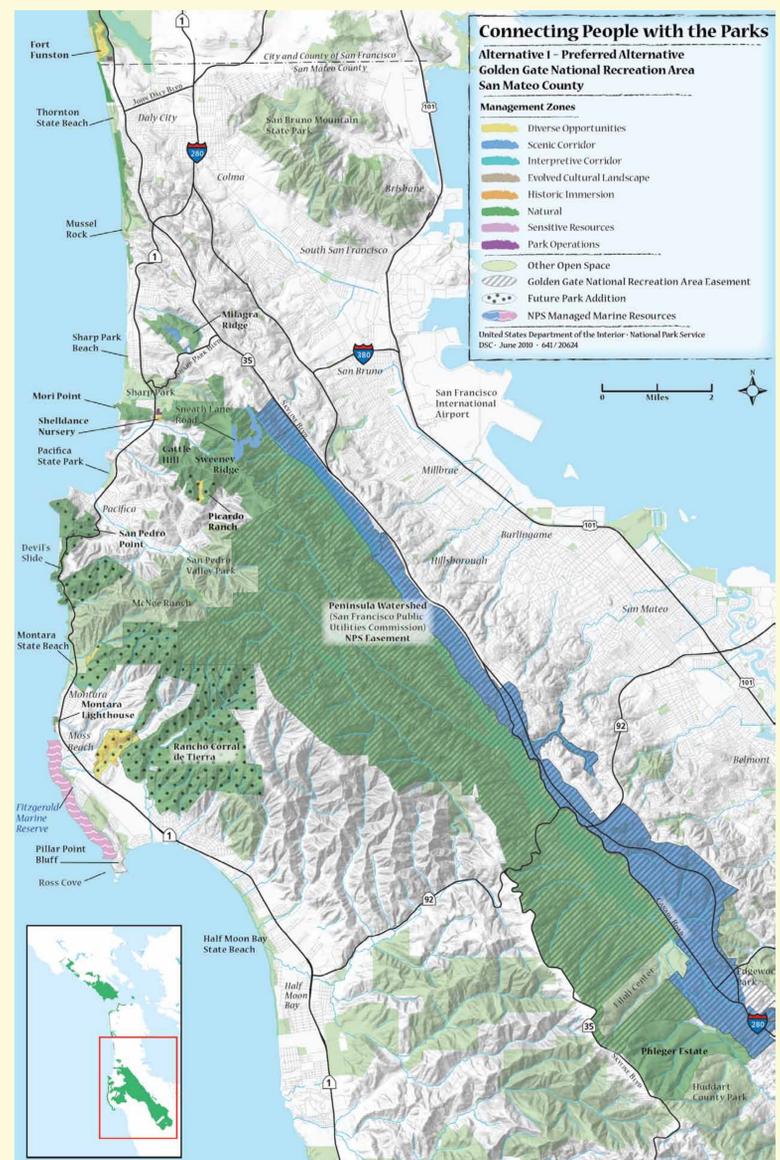
Milagra Ridge

Natural Zone

The area would be managed to preserve its wild character and protect habitat for endangered species. Heavily disturbed areas would be restored. Coordinating with other land managers, the park would also make trail improvements that could include connections to Oceana Boulevard, the Pacific coast, Skyline Boulevard, and Sweeney Ridge. Historic structures would be preserved.

Scenic Corridor Zone (Center of ridge)

Additional amenities would be developed to support visitors and stewardship volunteers. These could include accessibility improvements, trailhead parking, restrooms, and picnic facilities.



Shelldance Nursery Area

Diverse Opportunities Zone and Park Operations Zone

The site would transition from a commercial nursery to an area that provides a variety of visitor services that could include enhanced trailhead parking serving Sweeney Ridge and Mori Point, restrooms, park orientation and information, and a community stewardship/education center. Access from Highway 1 and the trail connection to Mori Point would be improved. A portion of this park site would be dedicated to park operational needs possibly including a satellite facility for maintenance and public safety, native plant nursery, and ranger workforce or volunteer housing.

Sweeney Ridge and Cattle Hill

Natural Zone (Majority of the area)

The area would be managed to protect endangered species and the large contiguous natural landscape extending into the SFPUC watershed. Visitors would experience the area through stewardship activities, improved trails, and primitive camping. Connections to the regional trail network and the surrounding public lands (SFPUC lands, San Pedro Valley County Park, McNee Ranch, and Rancho Corral de Tierra) would be developed in coordination with other land managers.

Scenic Corridor Zone (Sneath Lane and part of Sweeney Ridge)

Trail amenities would be developed, and connections would be enhanced to the Bay Area Ridge Trail and the Sawyer Camp Trail in the SFPUC watershed. The San Francisco Bay Discovery Site National Historical Landmark would be preserved, enhanced, and interpreted. Limited vehicular access by permit to the discovery site would be permitted. A hikers’ hut could be developed as part of a system of huts proposed for the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

Diverse Opportunities Zone (Developed portion of Picardo Ranch, if acquired)

The existing facilities could be adapted or replaced with new facilities to support visitor activities, potentially including continued equestrian use, an environmental education program, trailhead improvements, and park operations. Management priorities would include strong protection for the creek corridor and other natural habitats.



Concept Sketch:
The trailhead to Sweeney Ridge could be enhanced as the site transitions from commercial to park uses.