

## **Southern Marin Equestrian Plan - Summary of Public Scoping Comments Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

The Southern Marin Equestrian Plan public scoping meeting of May 24 2006 opened a 30-day comment period in which the interested public and stakeholders were invited to submit ideas, issues and comments to GGNRA planning staff. These comments will be addressed in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment for the Plan, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

71 people signed in at the meeting, though close to 100 attended, two of whom came on horseback. The National Park Service (NPS) made a presentation on the equestrian planning process for the Marin stables. The attendees visited and reviewed tables with topical posters highlighting many issues that had been identified by the GGNRA and public prior to this meeting, which were scattered around the meeting room.

We received no comments that advocated discontinuing equestrian uses in the GGNRA. 57 individuals submitted comments that included valuable suggestions, and were generally very constructive. The commenters put in great deal of thorough and creative thought, envisioning how the Equestrian Program operations, needs, and issues should be addressed. Commenters suggested ways to promote and sustain a Program in which horses will benefit the Park and its visitors into the future.

### **Summary of the Comments**

#### BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPS)

The stables should be a model and serve as a laboratory for protecting natural resources.  
Protect water quality through increased manure management.  
Protect water quality by better controlling stormwater runoff.  
Obtain additional funding from NPS for implementing BMPs.  
Horse “diapers” are not a solution.  
Opinions vary regarding the effectiveness of weed-free feed.  
Guest horses must also comply with BMPs

#### HORSE BOARDING

Support continued boarding of horses in GGNRA and allow a slight increase in numbers.  
Encourage sponsorship.  
Use private horses in public programs.

#### HORSE PATROL

Expand the horse patrol program.  
Move the program to the Rodeo Valley stables site.  
Allow the Marin Municipal Water District horse patrol to work in GGNRA.

#### INTERPRETATION (Educational Information)

Provide interpretive programs at all sites.

Focus interpretive programs on the local history of horses (military and ranching), natural history, and sustainable practices around the stables and nursery. Provide exhibits, live tours, and live demonstrations.

Have both stables staff and volunteers, and NPS staff provide information.

#### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Preserve existing management structure.

Preserve independent management at each stable.

Unify all stables under one management.

Manage stables as non-profit organizations.

Have stables run as for-profit organizations because non-profits tend to not be successful.

Allow sales of food and drink

Do not require that fees be paid to NPS. Allow the stables to keep their profit.

Allow long-term leases (5 to 25 years).

End the military requirement for membership with the Presidio Riding Club stables in Rodeo Valley.

Retain and honor the existing waiting lists for boarding horses.

#### PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Increase public programs on the public lands.

Provide facilities to board overnight visitors, coordinate with nearby youth hostels.

Provide horse rentals for trail rides at Miwok Stables

Expand equestrian programs in all stables. The demand for equestrian programs exceeds the current level of supply.

Allow Ocean Riders to resume their therapeutic riding program.

Allow the Presidio Riding Club to resume public programs and educational clinics.

Extend equestrian programs into the State Parks.

Programming Suggestions:

Public trail rides, classes, sunset rides, overnight camping rides, pony rides.

Outreach suggestions: breast cancer survivor program, therapeutic riding, riding classes for low-income youth.

Horse shows, riding clinics, programming for non-riders such as art classes.

#### INCREASE VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

Increase opportunities for seasonal boarding and boarding for limited periods.

Provide more overnight visitor horse stalls.

Increase the number of trail rides.

Provide improved maps of areas within GGNRA that are open to equestrian uses.

Erect more and better signs.

#### EQUESTRIAN PROGRAM SAFETY

Prioritize upgrading and updating facilities, emergency plans, and safety information.

Coordinate with Firesafe Marin.

Practice fire drills.

Develop a comprehensive safety management plan for the entire Equestrian Program.

Separate visitor amenities from horse areas for visitor and rider safety.

Make site improvements to protect horse health and safety.

### CULTURAL RESOURCES

Preserve the rustic ranch feel at all sites.

Provide interpretive information about history.

### SITES AND FACILITIES

#### All Stables

Allow full time caretakers at all stables; either a contractor or NPS staff

Modify the stable grounds so they are ADA compliant.

Enhance horse amenities such as trail-head troughs and tie-ups.

Provide ample space for storage of equipment and gear at each stable.

Provide infrastructure to supply fresh water

Provide infrastructure to handle sewage.

Allow horses to resume grazing in pastures in GGNRA.

#### Miwok Stables

Install horse mounting ramps.

Install ADA accessible toilets.

Create a museum and/or classroom in the Lopes house.

Restore the red barn as a classroom.

Improve signage for parking.

Add parking spaces for ADA compliance.

Allocate parking space to support more large rigs.

Improve horse trailer parking at Tennessee Valley parking lot.

Add a Warming Hut-style visitor facility.

Add municipal water hydrants at Miwok Stables and in Tennessee Valley.

Restore natural spring connections to provide more water

#### Golden Gate Dairy (GGD) Stables

Preserve the much-photographed mail boxes.

Do not allow the Marin Volunteer Fire Department to occupy the hay barn.

Restore and model the residence on the site after the West Point Inn.

Expand and improve the site. Increase the number of stalls as some of the paddocks

will be forfeited as part of the habitat restoration at Big Lagoon.

Restore turn-out space at upper end of the GGD grounds.

Relocate parking off-site. Do not upgrade parking on-site.

Allocate space for horse trailers, and for visitors or emergency contingencies.

Do not have a NPS Visitor Center at GGD as site size cannot handle that use.

#### Prospective Banducci Site

This prospective new location for GGD stables received mixed reviews. Those who supported the idea note that the facilities must be large enough to house both the horses currently at GGD along with those at Green Gulch. This allows the Ocean Riders group to stay together.

Those opposed are concerned that the move would be too expensive due to the cost of building the required facilities.

#### Presidio Riding Club (PRC) / Rodeo Valley Stables

Preserve the Balloon Hanger as a riding ring with public access.

Allow the PRC to raise money to restore the Balloon Hanger.

Do not allow these grounds to be used as a NPS maintenance facility.

Build a cover over the large outdoor ring and return the Balloon Hanger to the NPS for storage uses.

Renovate the outdoor ring.

Provide a mobile home for an on-site resident/caretaker.

Expand and improve trailer parking, road surface, and signage.

Allow the Rifle Range "Hunt Field" to be used for horse jumping and grazing.

Provide a break room for NPS staff and volunteers.

NPS received a variety of ideas about C-Ranch, located west of Miwok Stables on Tennessee Valley Road. These will be addressed in a separate planning process.

#### MAINTENANCE

Allow fundraising to repair stable facilities

#### TRAILS

Prohibit bicycles from using narrow trails.

Evaluate and incorporate changes to the trail system in the Equestrian Plan.

Increase efforts to enforce the rules.

Do not link NPS-protected trails with outside trails because of the risk of spreading invasive weeds within GGNRA. OR

Promote connecting NPS trails to regional trails.

Horses do not spread invasive weeds.

The stables should control the Scotch or French broom growing along the trails.

Increase trail maintenance.

Create a trail for use by horses along Highway 1.

Ban or reroute bicycles from the Miwok stable area. Separate bicycles from equestrian users at the Tennessee Valley trail-head.

Provide bridges, and improve access to the Redwood Creek area.

Rhubarb Trail- Coordinate with the Community Services District to improve this trail for horses.

Support seasonal closures as a BMP. Alternate routes should be well-signed.

There should not be seasonal closures on loop trails.

Provide signs that clearly explain routes, rules of etiquette and right-of-way.

Trails should be positioned and constructed so that equestrian use will not result in degradation of the banks of creeks.

Bridges should be maintained for multiple users, and specifically, built wide for horses.

PLANNING

Have a public site walk-through during the planning process. Include the Banducci site if it is under consideration for stables.