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RECEIVED
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SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

May 26, 2011

Frank Dean, General Superintendent
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Building 201, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123-0022

Re: Draft Dog Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Superintendent Dean,

My reaction to receiving the Draft Dog Management Plan was overwhelming sadness. We were promised a "Section 7" to legalize off-leash recreation in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, something that should have been done correctly when the 1979 Pet Policy was adopted. The Park Service insists that all the areas under its jurisdiction must be managed in exactly the same way, but Golden Gate National Recreation Area was established in order to provide recreation to an urban population. When the GGNRA was in the planning stages, many San Franciscans were hesitant: why should we give up all of our beaches to the Park Service? They will try to turn the land into a National Park! "Oh, no, this is something entirely different," we were reassured. Off-leash recreation is a favorite activity for thousands of people in the Bay Area. The Park Service take on this? Too many people are participating in this recreation, so we must limit the areas where it is allowed. Basic economic principles teach us that when demand increases, so does supply! The Draft Dog Management Plan should be looking at additional areas to permit off-leash access, not reduce it!

I can't believe this is the Management Plan that Brian O'Neill envisioned. I think he truly recognized off-leash recreation as legitimate recreation and was honestly seeking a Plan that was inclusive.

I will concentrate on Fort Funston, since that is the primary area that I walk in nearly every day. I first visited Fort Funston on October 1, 1961, the first day it was open to the public after it was turned over to the City of San Francisco from the US Army. I rode my bike, camera in hand and have Kodachrome slides from that day. (October 29, 1961 was the first official "open house"—I was there that day as well). I went off to college & didn't live in the Bay Area again until 1969. When the GGNRA was established in 1972, we were delighted. Fort Funston was where we went every week-end (often also heading for Marin Headlands as well with our two children (born 1972 & 1974) and always our Taffy dog (1967-1984). In the mid-70's, I was always amazed at how many people at Fort Funston seemed to

know each other. It wasn't until 1995 when I retired that I was able to visit Fort Funston with my standard poodle Liza on a daily basis. When Liza unexpectedly died, I was overwhelmed with the sympathy extended by my new Fort Funston friends. Keli Poodle joined our family soon after, and for 12 years she and I were at Fort Funston nearly every day. She and I both made lifelong friends....we walked from the parking lot to the last bench or down to the beach. By the time Keli joined our family, there were some other reasons to walk: doctor's orders! I have asthma; walking is one of the best "treatments". I have arthritis in both thumbs, making holding a leash for extended time very uncomfortable. My husband Bob walks with a cane...and actually walks very little (but will walk not at all if the dogs are forbidden from the Sunset Trail), so dogs are my primary walking partners. I now have Jorja and Guinness, two standard poodles. Walking with them on-leash is tedious. Walking with them (and watching them play together as well as interact with lots of other dogs) off-leash is a joy. It is something I look forward to every day. Would I walk every day (as I have been instructed to do...) if I didn't have dog coaches? Probably not. There are rainy days, windy days, cold days, foggy days, busy days; there are lots of reasons to not go. But when four big brown eyes are looking at me, it is pretty hard to say "we are not going today" to them!

Fort Funston has been described as Mecca for dogs. Indeed, people from all over the Bay Area drive to Fort Funston to enjoy a real walk with their dogs. They do not come to watch their dogs play in an ice plant patch (incidentally, the ice plant will not last two months if the Park Service succeeds in corralling all the off-leash play into an area that no one plays in now.) Park Service representatives have stated that "we want the people who aren't coming now to come." Why? Fort Funston is at capacity now—and probably over capacity on nice week-end days. The Forest Service learned a long time ago that dispersing recreational use over a larger area (or areas) reduces impact. If the Sneath Lane entrance to Sweeney Ridge were available for off-leash walking, that would probably divert some of the Fort Funston use to San Mateo County (a notoriously dog unfriendly county). The New Lands in San Mateo County (where people have walked dogs off-leash for decades) need to be considered for off-leash recreation. The rationale that adjacent San Francisco Water District Lands don't allow dogs is hardly a reason to forbid off-leash recreation. The San Francisco Zoo is close to Fort Funston; the Zoo doesn't allow dogs; therefore, dogs shouldn't be at Fort Funston. Doesn't make much sense, does it?

I served on the committee that was supposedly charged with "negotiated rulemaking". I agreed that there might have to be compromises, as did the representatives of all the other dog friendly groups. Apparently, that requirement (compromises) was not a requirement for many of the other folks that served on this committee. I went to each and every area that the GGNRA manages. I walked/hiked. I photographed each area. I assumed we'd be talking about specific areas and how they were being used currently and how to manage them better. I thought we might be able to discuss access (Milagra Ridge, for example, is basically a neighborhood park because the parking is extremely limited & the access without an automobile is difficult). We suggested discussing timed use (successful in a number of areas). We were told that timed use was too difficult for people to understand! We suggested a tag system, similar to one being used by Boulder Open Space in Colorado (with people actually going to Boulder to investigate the use). That, too, was dismissed. So, in two years almost nothing was accomplished. I was disappointed in the facilitators and disgusted that a few people made sure that

nothing was ever really discussed. And yet the Park Service managed to come up with a huge plan that is NOT a result of any negotiated rulemaking.

I would like to see "no action" for all of the GGNRA lands...codifying the 1979 Pet Policy (and not stating that it is not valid; a federal judge has declared that it is indeed valid). I want to see off-leash areas (and on-leash trails) in all the areas in San Mateo County, including the New Lands that are being added to the GGNRA.

After working on off-leash dog politics for nearly 20 years, I was so disappointed by the Draft EIS/Dog Management Plan that I became physically ill. Reading through the Park Service proposals and finding nothing positive about off-leash recreation (or even on-leash walking!) was sickening. Walking every day and meeting other dog walkers, most of whom are not only responsible dog owners, but also avid environmentalists and discussing the obvious disregard the Park Service has for a big percentage of the GGNRA visitors has been an eye opener. I am very proud of the off-leash community. People with new energy have stepped up to the plate. People have spent thousands of hours crafting thoughtful responses to the Draft EIS/Dog Management Plan. I trust that the Park Service will be as diligent in really examining the comments that so many people have worked so hard to produce. These are people who are out in the GGNRA every day and want a plan that is fair, a plan that can succeed, a plan that balances preservation and recreation. In reading the Plan, it looked as if it were written mostly by people who'd never actually set foot in the areas they were proposing either banning dogs or allowing them (e.g.: the area between the parking lot and surrounded by trails at Fort Funston being proposed for the only off-leash access. It is an area that no one plays in now! People walk across it to get to the trail from the parking lot!).

I've written a thousand letters in my head, but found that the anxiety that went along with contemplating the draconian changes that the Park Service has proposed made it impossible to actually continue to participate in a meaningful way with groups that are working very hard to make proposals that will work.

Thank you for your attention to this matter! What a time to assume the role of Superintendent!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne Farrow". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Anne Farrow

First Time at Fort Funston Last Time at Fort Funston



photo by Anne Farrow

October, 2006. My mother, Betty Carman (age 84), my daughter Ellen Farrow, and my granddaughter, Sydney Ematrudo (age 3 weeks), and Keli poodle. This was Sydney's first walk at Fort Funston. She is now nearly 5 and loves nothing more than bringing her Portuguese Water Dogs to Fort Funston with her Mom and little sister. This is probably the last photo I have of my Mom on a walk. She died in May of 2007. Her take on the Park Service proposals to leash the dogs? "I hope they leave it alone" I hope that when Sydney is a Mom, she can bring her dogs and kids to Fort Funston to play.