

General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement Newsletter 5 • Summer 2009

Golden Gate National Recreation Area • Muir Woods National Monument

PHOTO...

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to send you this brief update on the general management planning process and share part of the preferred alternative as it is evolving. Perhaps most importantly, I want to let you know how helpful your comments have been, and show you how we've incorporated them in the plan. Inside this newsletter you will also find a link to a summary of the public comments, and an updated schedule with an outline of the next steps in the process of creating the GMP.

Our planning team encourages you to stay involved with the planning process through our email notification list, by attending our regular GGNRA open houses, and by continuing to visit these remarkable lands preserved for your enjoyment.

Sincerely,

Frank Dean
Acting General Superintendent

WHERE WE ARE IN THE PLANNING SCHEDULE

Planning Process for the General Management Plan		
Estimated Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
Spring 2006	Scoping — Identify concerns, expectations, and values related to the park with the public, park partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	Review Newsletter #1 and send us your ideas and concerns using the response form. Attend public meetings and voice your ideas and concerns.
Fall 2006 to Spring 2007	Data and Resource Analysis — Identify planning opportunities and constraints.	Review Newsletter #2. Stay informed at open houses.
Spring 2007 to Summer 2008	Develop Preliminary Alternatives — Outline different possible futures for the park and provide opportunities for review and comment by the public, park partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	Review Newsletter #3 (concepts & issues) and #4 (preliminary alternatives) and send us your ideas and concerns using the response form. Attend open houses and public meetings. Send your comments on the preliminary alternatives.
CURRENT STAGE Fall 2008 to Winter 2010	Prepare and Distribute a Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement — Review comments on the preliminary alternatives. Revise the	Stay informed at open houses. Once the Draft is published, attend public meetings and voice your ideas and concerns.

	alternatives and create the preferred alternative. Complete environmental analyses. Conduct internal reviews. Design, print, and distribute the document.	Review the <i>Draft GMP/EIS</i> and provide written comments to be included in the final document.
Spring 2010	Revise the <i>Draft Plan</i> and prepare a <i>Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> — Respond to and publish comments. Print and distribute the document.	Review the <i>Final GMP/EIS</i> .
Winter 2011	Implement the Approved Plan — Prepare and issue a “Record of Decision” and implement plan as funding allows.	Work with the park to help implement the plan.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

In the early summer of 2008, the park distributed more than 8,000 copies of Newsletter 4 which summarized the planning process and described the GMP preliminary alternatives. In addition, Chinese and Spanish language summaries were posted on NPS websites. In June 2008, six public meetings were held in the local area. They were attended by over 400 people.

We were delighted to receive many excellent comments and suggestions from a variety of individuals, organizations, and agencies. Overall, about 700 respondents provided more than 1,500 substantive comments on the preliminary alternatives. Each comment was read and discussed by the planning team. They led to many substantial changes in the alternatives and guided the creation of the preferred alternative. Newsletter 4 and a thorough analysis of the comments, broken down by geographic area and topic, is posted on the NPS “*Planning, Environment, and Public Comment*” (PEPC) website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?parkId=303&projectId=15075>.

The park also received several comments about areas and topics that the GMP will not address. For example, the new plan will not revise decisions made in recent management plans for the Presidio, Crissy Field, or Fort Baker. The new GMP will coordinate with other ongoing planning processes such as the Marin Equestrian Plan, San Francisco Municipal Railway Historic Streetcar Extension, and the Dog Management Plan. Links to these planning processes can also be found on the PEPC website or accessed from the park’s planning website:

www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/planning.htm.

THE EVOLVING PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The planning team began to identify the draft preferred alternative through a formal process that considers the “advantages” each alternative provides to the park. Five factors considered how each alternative:

- Strengthens the integrity and resiliency of coastal ecosystems
- Strengthens the integrity of resources that contribute to National Register of Historic Places properties and National Historic Landmarks
- Supports a diversity of recreational opportunities and national park experiences, including stewardship
- Improves and promotes public understanding of park resources and National Park Service values, and

- Provides visitors with safe and enjoyable access and circulation to and within the park

Public comments, capital costs, and operational costs were also included in the evaluation. Following the initial decision, the park consulted with numerous organizations, and completed additional analyses of important proposals in the alternatives. The draft preferred alternative is shaping up to be a hybrid of all three preliminary alternatives that is based on “National Treasures” for Alcatraz Island and Muir Woods, and “Connecting People” for the rest of the park. It will not be fully developed until the Draft GMP/EIS is completed in 2010. An overview of the draft preferred alternative is provided below, with a short list of the key changes the planning team is considering as a result of public comments, further consultations, and continued analysis.

San Mateo County

Park lands and marine 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.

In the spirit of the “Parks to People” movement that created the Golden Gate National Recreation Area more than three decades ago, this alternative would focus on the importance of improving access and community engagement in preserved park lands. Given the significant addition of park land in the county in recent years, a series of actions would be needed to enhance visitor access, enjoyment, appreciation, and stewardship. Park managers would emphasize preservation and restoration of the area’s vital ecosystems through collaborative partnerships with other land management agencies and the community.

Key efforts would include increasing the visibility and identity of National Park Service sites. 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 will help visitors find their way to various park sites and will help them gain an understanding of the park’s diverse natural and cultural resources. Equestrian needs would be incorporated in trail and trailhead design. Equally important would be providing facilities to welcome visitors to the park. 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, and other organizations.

Key changes being considered:

- Pacifica – state that the park would coordinate with the city to promote visitor center in the city.
- Sweeney Ridge – state that the park would permit vehicle access to the San Francisco Bay Discovery Site by special arrangement, and would consider a hiker’s hut that is consistent with the concept being considered by the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

- Rancho Corral de Tierra – clarify that the area would continue to accommodate equestrian facilities. Refine the range of proposed visitor facilities to exclude a visitor center or overnight accommodations, except a horse camp, in the Diverse Opportunities zone.
- Phleger Estate – clarify the desired regional trail connections and multi-use trail/trailhead improvements.
- Highway 1 – highlight the need for safe trailheads and trail crossings.
- Offshore Marine Environment – withdraw proposed restrictions on motorized boating in most park areas.

San Francisco

The national park lands of San Francisco provide opportunities to experience nature, explore our heritage, and enjoy the company of families, friends, and fellow community members. Under this alternative, these areas would be managed to preserve and enhance a variety of settings, and improve and expand the facilities that welcome and support visitors to the “National Park Next Door.”

The visibility and identity of National Park Service sites would be improved in settings from military to “wild,” and visitors would be introduced to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the national park system through facilities, information, and programming at popular arrival nodes and recreational destinations.

This alternative would also emphasize the importance of education, civic engagement, and healthy outdoor recreation, including offering nature experiences to city children and their families. Existing and new facilities would support visitor enjoyment, learning, and community-based natural and cultural resource stewardship. Recreational and stewardship opportunities would promote healthy parks and healthy communities. Similar to Crissy Field, this alternative would engage the community to revitalize coastal park areas such as Ocean Beach, Fort Funston, and the northern area of Lands End.

The park would continue to improve trails and trailheads throughout its San Francisco park lands to make the park accessible to the broadest array of visitors. Sites would be connected to each other and to communities by the trail system and the city’s transit and multi-modal access systems.

Reflecting the long tradition of partnerships, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area would continue to collaborate with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, The Presidio Trust, and the City and County of San Francisco. Together these partners would build on the accomplishments of ongoing community outreach, engagement, education, and Trails Forever programs.

Key changes being considered:

- Fort Miley and Lands End – emphasize protection of natural habitat values including the areas used by migrating birds.
- Ocean Beach – change zoning south of Stairwell 21 from Diverse Opportunities to Natural in order to better protect natural processes while continuing to support recreational uses.
- Fort Funston – reorganize zoning pattern to better identify areas for diverse recreation and to establish corridors of natural landscape.

Marin County

In this alternative, park managers would preserve the natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational qualities that are enjoyed today and would improve access to the park for all visitors. The park would enhance the facilities that support visitors' experiences in what has been called "the wilderness next door." A stronger national park identity and message would welcome people as they arrive, and improved orientation and information services would inform them of the variety of recreational experiences available in the park.

The park lands in Marin County are an outdoor recreationist's paradise, with an extensive network of trails for walks through fern-filled canyons, over windblown coastal bluffs, along rocky shores, and among redwoods and oaks. Sustainable approaches to rehabilitating facilities that are in place today would improve a number of trailheads and trails as well as roads, parking lots, campsites, picnic areas, restrooms, and other structures at popular destinations. Some new facilities would be developed to improve visitor services and support the growing stewardship programs. Park partners would continue to play important roles in preserving resources and offering programs and services to visitors. Public transportation and multi-modal access to park sites would be improved. Important park operational uses would remain in the Marin Headlands, and the facilities at these sites would be improved.

Key changes being considered:

- Fort Cronkrite – state that the park would reinforce the existing "Center for the Environment" created by park and partners. Clarify the intent to continue to accommodate equestrian uses in Rodeo Valley.
- Tennessee Valley – clarify intent to improve the main trailhead without introducing major new uses. The park would remove non-historic structures in lower Tennessee Valley and restore the landscape, retaining camping and rustic overnight accommodations.
- Homestead Hill area – state that the park would consider creating an expanded trailhead and parking area off Panoramic Highway to better support visitors to state and national park trails.
- Lower Redwood Creek (former Banducci flower farm) – state that the park would focus on creating a native plant nursery and stewardship center while recognizing water limitations in the watershed. The park is still exploring the best long-term arrangement for equestrian activities in the watershed.
- Golden Gate Dairy – rezone the area from Diverse Opportunities to Evolved Cultural Landscape in order to reduce the scope of public uses and focus on a mix of park and community functions on that small site.
- Slide Ranch – clarify that the program would remain.
- Highway 1 and other major roads – highlight the need for improved safety of trail crossings.
- Stinson Beach – recognize the importance of responding to effects of global climate change, like sea level rise, while continuing to support beach recreation. This will be included in a statement related to all alternatives and all park lands.

Muir Woods National Monument

One of the last old-growth forests in the world, Muir Woods National Monument is a window into the complex world of nature and conservation. This alternative would present Muir Woods as a contemplative outdoor museum where visitors would discover the primeval redwood forest and the Monument's place in the early US conservation movement.

A system of trails would lead visitors into the forest to touch, see, and learn, in different ways, about its essential qualities. These include its iconic giant trees, the ecology of Redwood Creek, and William Kent's generous donation of the forest to the American public. Rather than continue to concentrate visitation along a main trail, visitors would be encouraged to take different thematic interpretive trails, some new and some existing, to experience the different parts of the park. Other trails would continue to link the Monument with the surrounding Mount Tamalpais State Park.

Visitors would continue to be drawn to the Monument to see the trees, but they would leave with a richer understanding of this precious ecosystem and how these few acres helped spark conservation across the United States. They would be motivated to return and learn more of the story.

Building on the interagency "Redwood Creek Watershed: Vision for the Future" (2003), and a cooperative management agreement with California State Parks, the National Park Service would continue to collaborate with the public and other land managers to address watershed restoration, stewardship, and recreation.

Key changes being considered:

- Redwood forest along Redwood Creek – rezone the area as an "Interpretive Corridor" to clarify that any development would be minor and that resource protection would remain strong. The zone would support the same moderate-high levels of visitor use as the previous Scenic Corridor zone.
- Shuttle – propose to operate during all peak periods, not just the summer.
- Muir Woods Addition – rezone the area as a Natural zone (not Evolved Cultural Landscape) and remove all non-historic structures in Druid Heights and along Lower Conlon Avenue to restore natural processes.
- Parking along the road – state that the park would address safety and access in cooperation with Marin County and State Parks.
- Maintenance facilities – state that the park will seek to co-locate operations with State Parks in a facility at Kent Canyon.
- Redwood Creek Watershed – express stronger direction for public and interagency collaboration and management at this scale as reflected in the 2003 "Vision for the Future".

Alcatraz Island

For more than 150 years, Alcatraz Island has been reworked and altered by human activity. This alternative would immerse visitors extensively in all of Alcatraz's historic periods, including the Civil War military fortifications and prison, federal penitentiary, and American Indian occupation. Alcatraz's history would be interpreted, first and foremost with tangible and accessible historic resources, including the buildings, ruins, cultural landscape, archeology, and museum collection. These resources contribute to the island's national historic landmark status and its recognition as an international icon.

The visitor's immersion in Alcatraz history would begin on a ferry from one or more embarkation points that could include the original Alcatraz dock at Fort Mason. Passing a line of historic warning buoys, the experience would continue at the island's arrival dock, with greater access to restored portions of Building 64, the historic barracks. Visitors would ascend to the Main Prison Building through a landscape of preserved historic structures and features. While the

primary visitor experience would focus on the federal penitentiary, visitors also would be exposed to the other layers of history, literally and programmatically, on “The Rock.”

This alternative would require extensive stabilization, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic resources, as well as creative interpretative and educational programs and visitor services. It would create opportunities for cultural resource volunteer stewardship programs.

Visitors would have opportunities to learn about the natural history of San Francisco Bay. The colonial waterbird habitat that has grown in regional importance would be protected, enhanced, and interpreted. Visitors would explore the island perimeter on a Discovery Trail, managed to protect sensitive bird populations while providing opportunities to observe them. The large population of gulls would be managed to reduce conflicts in primary visitor use areas like the Parade Ground.

Key changes being considered:

- Hotel – clarify that a new hotel would not be built on the island. Building 64 (the historic barracks) could include a modest number of dorm-like overnight accommodations that would support stewardship and education programs.
- Restoration – clarify the scope of historic restoration to better reflect funding possibilities.
- Birds – increase protection for seabirds by creating a “Sensitive Resource” zone around the island, limiting reuse of the Model Industries Building, rehabilitating the Parade Ground (rather than restoring it), along with careful management of the New Industries Building (rezones as “Evolved Cultural Landscape” from “Historic Immersion”).
- Sustainability – incorporate within the GMP the current initiatives to bring sustainable infrastructure technologies to the island.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next year the planning team will prepare the Draft General Management Plan and an accompanying Environmental Impact Statement. This requires completing the draft and preferred alternatives. The team will identify, evaluate, and document the environmental impacts that would occur if each alternative was implemented. The Draft Plan/EIS will then be reviewed for consistency with National Park Service policy by the Pacific West Regional Office in Oakland, and the Park Planning and Special Studies Division in Washington, D.C. With approval from the regional director and the park superintendent, we will print and distribute the Draft Plan/EIS for public review. We anticipate publishing this draft in 2010. As we did with the preliminary alternatives last year, we will hold a series of public meetings to present the Draft Plan/EIS and collect public comments that will help shape the final plan.

To stay informed, we recommend that you to sign up for GGNRA’s email notification service. We will send updates as we make progress toward the Draft Plan/EIS, and an invitation to the public meetings. You can sign up by following links on the park’s website – <http://www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/planning.htm>.

Numerous documents, including the previous newsletters, are available on the project website – <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?parkId=303&projectId=15075>.

As always, if you have questions for the planning team please send them by email to goga_gmp@nps.gov, by regular mail to Building 201-Fort Mason, California, 94123, or leave a telephone message at (415) 561-4965.