

PEPC Project ID: 15075, DocumentID: 43168

Correspondence: 116

Author Information

Keep Private: No
Name: Janet Kessler
Organization:
Organization Type: I - Unaffiliated Individual
Address:
San Francisco, CA 94114
USA
E-mail: jannyck@aol.com

Correspondence Information

Status: Reviewed Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 11/11/2011 Date Received: 11/11/2011
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Topic Question 1:
I'm not very happy with it. See my comments in the COMMENTS box below.

Topic Question 2:
Yes. Please keep it open to all users as a recreation area, rather than limiting its use and design to that desired by the narrow interests of those who would like to turn it into a native plants museum landscape. See my comments in the COMMENTS box below.

Topic Question 3:
Yes, please read my COMMENTS below.

November 11, 2011

Superintendent, GGNRA Attn: Draft GMP/EIS Building 201 Fort Mason SF, CA 94123

SUBJECT: COMMENT FOR GGNRA

Dear Superintendent:

I am opposed to the GGNRA's new plan of turning recreation areas, used by people, into basically museum gardens of native plants, which will be off-limits to most uses by people and their pets. The process did not include input from the users of these areas, but is based on a single-minded interest group. The legislative mandate was to "preserve the area for public use and enjoyment", when SF deeded Ocean Beach and Fort Funston to the federal government.

I am a long-time resident of San Francisco. I live in the center of the city in a house which I am actually proud of for not having a view. We decided early on that a view might keep us indoors. Instead, I get out to our parks every day to capture the wonderful scenery that SF has to offer. I am a naturalist and wildlife photographer. I observe our wildlife, frequently taking hundreds of photos in a day. I frequent all the parks located in San Francisco.

For years I took my own dogs to the beaches and parks, but since my dogs have passed away, I still enjoy going to the areas where dogs are walked, where I meet new people and dogs constantly, and where I enjoy watching the dogs interact with other dogs, and the people interact with their dogs. It's pure joy for everyone. I have noticed that wildlife disturbs other wildlife more frequently than dogs disturb birds on the beaches.

I oppose closing areas which are currently loved and used by a large portion of the public -- these parks belong to the people who use them, not to the few self-appointed people who have taken over influencing your policies here. In a dense urban area which is growing, it does not make sense that you will be turning our parks into artificial planted museum gardens which will be put off-limits to many users. The native plantings will require constant replanting because these plants, we have learned, are not sustainable in the area: they die all too often, they require a huge number of human maintenance hours to keep them alive, and they require the use of poisons to keep other growth down -- all of which speak badly for the program.

The "native plant" programs, we have learned from various ecology professors, are not based on science, and, in fact, we have learned that native plant programs are actually hurting the environment: By removing trees you are reducing carbon sequestration. At a time of global warming, this doesn't seem to be a very good choice.

The diversity we now have was brought into the city by people who wanted more in their environment than sand dunes and dune grasses. It is because these plants were brought in that wildlife was attracted to the area and now flourishes here. The environment has slowly evolved into an ecosystem which is very balanced. So-called "natural areas" seek only to protect species on "endangered" lists -- but what about all the other creatures who now live in these areas? The system has evolved over the last several hundred years -- change is the norm, stasis is not -- yet you want to return to an imaged "golden age of the past". There is nothing inherently "better" about "native" plants than "non-native" plants.

These parks are vital to the health and well-being of many people. Nowadays, because of the expense, many people have opted not to have children, and instead live their lives around their dogs. These, nonetheless, constitute families. And these families enjoy the parks as they now are, immensely. In addition, dog-walkers are almost always some of the earliest early-morning visitors to our parks: their presence insures a degree of safety to all of us who use the areas at early hours.

The "natural areas" and "native plant" programs that are being carried out are deceptive, both in their use of language and in their gardening techniques. NO ONE KNEW, originally, that huge amounts of EXISTING wildlife habitat would be removed for such a program -- we all thought that some native plants would be ADDED to what we already have. That is the first deception. The second is in using the terminology "natural area". We all have learned that there is NOTHING "NATURAL" about this program: it involves KILLING all sorts of trees and plants, it involves huge amounts of human maintenance time, it involves the use of toxic pesticides to keep other growth down, it involves removing EXISTING ANIMAL HABITAT. And now you are planning to close these areas to family use. . . .

Your term "aggressively administer" means instituting a much higher maintenance cost -- isn't this bad at a time of economic downturn? Making people DRIVE further away to find parks not only eats into the limited time most people have, but also requires more use of cars, more traffic congestion and definitely more pollution to the atmosphere -- it is definitely not a green solution.

The GGNRA has not been designated a wildlife refuge because this designation is not needed. Coexistence with the birdlife and wild animal life works well. It should also not be designated an "artificial museum garden of plants that might have existed here in historical times". Isn't the stated purpose of the park to connect people to parks? One of the major ways so many people connect is to bring their pups along. How did anyone allow a single-visioned group -- "native plant" group -- to get control of and dictate how our parks are going to be run and used? What happened to scientific studies and monitoring programs for recreation and local existing ecosystems -- not just species on endangered lists and species that are non-native?

Management decisions should be based on conclusive science, not on preference or on anecdotal evidence. Any recreational closures should be supported by detailed and clear evidence that is immediately available to the public and, if challenged, must be independently reviewed. The GGNRA should not be allowed to use arbitrary decisions to displace recreation or existing wildlife and their habitat, without a public comment process and scientific evidence supporting the need for a change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Janet Kessler
jannyck@aol.com
www.urbanwildness.com