

TALKING POINTS

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PRESERVING AND ENJOYING COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS – Preliminary Alternative 2

Muir Woods

Overview

This alternative restores the primeval character of the old growth redwood forest. Visitors are immersed in the forest – experiencing the natural sounds, smells, light and darkness of the forest. The experience is more primitive than today with the majority of the built environment – buildings, parking lots, paved trails – removed. The landscape is ‘messier’ than today but functions more naturally as Redwood Creek is allowed to meander across the flood plain, flooding the valley bottom, uprooting trees and opening gaps in the canopy. Woody debris accumulates in the creek and on the forest floor. Floodplain processes and riparian habitat are restored by removing, re-aligning or re-designing trails, bridges and other impediments to natural processes, including CCC era ‘improvements’ like bank stabilization structures. Where not in conflict with natural resource goals, historic trails and structures are adapted for contemporary uses.

All visitors arrive by shuttle bus, or under their own power. A light-on-the-land accessible trail reaches into the heart of the forest. Visitors engage in participatory stewardship, education and science that further preservation of the forest and all its parts – the creek, salmon, spotted owls, bats, natural sounds – as part of the continuing history and evolution of the land preservation and conservation movement.

- The history and evolution of the conservation movement is the primary interpretive story.
- Visitor access is highly controlled in the old growth forest and the riparian corridor (zoned sensitive).
- The Muir Woods Inn is re-used for limited park operations.
- Visitor services are moved out of the prime resource to the transit hub.
- Most park operations and stewardship support facilities are re-located to more suitable areas lower in the watershed.
- The Dipsea Trail is retained along its historic alignment.
- Restoration of the Redwood Creek watershed is accelerated in collaboration with other land managers including removal of unneeded roads and development (Camino del Canyon), stabilization of sediment sources, and removal of invasive vegetation.

Marin County

Overview

GGNRA’s lands and waters in Marin County form the southern core of a vast network of protected lands and waters (many recognized as part of the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve), including Pt. Reyes National Seashore, several State Parks, Marin Municipal Water District, County Open Space lands, and 3 national marine sanctuaries (Cordell Banks, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay NMS). This alternative strives to further preservation and restoration of these dynamic, interconnected coastal ecosystems through collaborative regional partnerships with common goals to sustain the area’s native bio-diversity, re-connect fragmented habitats and migration corridors, minimize the impact of invasive species, manage for changing fire regimes, and restore naturally functioning ecosystems. Pro-active management builds resiliency to climate change.

Marin’s park lands and waters serve as living laboratories, engaging visitors in participatory science, education and stewardship that nurture personal connections with nature and inspire advocacy. Exploration of trails and beaches further highlights the park’s coastal natural and cultural resources. Cultural resource sites and stories emphasize human occupation of the coastal environment – archeological sites, agricultural land uses, coastal defense and lighthouses.

- The South Parking lot at Stinson Beach would be removed and former wetlands restored.
- All facilities at Slide Ranch would be removed and coastal bluff habitat restored.
- The park would promote abandonment of Highway 1 from Muir Beach to Stinson Beach in the event of a catastrophic landslide.
- Along lower Redwood Creek, the Banducci site would continue to be restored by removing buildings and non-native vegetation in the flower fields and adjacent uplands.
- Tennessee Valley is zoned natural. The volunteer horse patrol and native plant nursery would be re-located to the main trailhead area, and the site restored. The main trail would be downgraded, riparian habitat expanded, and remaining dams and manmade ponds would be removed.
- Marine reserves (zoned sensitive) would be established at Bird Island and Point Bonita cove to protect seabirds, marine mammals and inter-tidal habitat.
- Fort Cronkhite (zoned evolved cultural landscape) would serve as the hub for expanded science, education and stewardship programs.
- Capehart housing (zoned natural) at Marin Headlands would be removed and riparian and upland habitat restored.
- Access to endangered mission blue butterfly habitat in the Marin Headlands (zoned sensitive) would be highly restricted. Removal of invasive non-native vegetation would continue, further expanding butterfly habitat.

Alcatraz

Overview

This alternative highlights the Island's inhospitable and isolated – yet strategic – location at the entry to the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay. The island's past and present significance to colonial nesting birds, and its layers of human history – the civil war fortress, the lighthouse, the prison and penitentiary – all derive from its position in the bay. The abandoned and escaped cultural landscape would continue to evolve, further enhancing habitat for nesting birds. Only those buildings and features required to maintain the island's National Historic Landmark status would be preserved; benign neglect would reclaim other features as part of the wilding of Alcatraz.

Visitors would be immersed in more park experiences – showcasing the island's isolation, its natural resources, and all the layers of history in the Cell House. Visitor experiences would include eco-tourism, outdoor learning, and overnight stays in support of natural and cultural resource stewardship programming delivered in partnership with Bay Area non-profits. While island access would be managed to protect sensitive resources, visitors would more freely explore, discover and experience nature reclaiming Alcatraz, and understand the role the island plays in the broader marine ecosystem (from San Francisco Bay to the Farallon Islands) as a result of its strategic location.

- The Main Prison Building is zoned historic immersion to provide visitors with access to the widest range of resources in historically accurate conditions from the military period through the Indian occupation.
- Building 64 (Barracks) would be rehabilitated to support science, educational and stewardship programs with classroom space, food service and overnight accommodations to support program functions.
- The Laundry and Model Industries buildings are zoned natural and would be not be stabilized or rehabilitated, but would provide expanded habitat for nesting birds.
- The coastal cliffs and offshore waters are zoned sensitive and would be managed as a marine reserve to protect colonial nesting seabirds.
- The island would be a demonstration site for sustainability and the relationship between climate change, sea level rise, humans and the built environment.

- Off-island and web-based programming highlighting the island's strategic location and its evolving natural and cultural landscape would be expanded to reach new audiences.

San Francisco City and County

Overview

Like Alternative 1, San Francisco park lands welcome visitors to the “National Park Next Door” and engage visitors, communities and partners in participatory science, education and stewardship within the coastal environment. The local impacts of global climate change and rising sea level provide a focal point for individual and collective action and advocacy. The park, in collaboration with community partners, demonstrates leadership in pro-active adaptation and management in face of climate change and sea level rise. These interpretive messages would reach visitors enjoying the coastal environment along the Bay Trail and the Coastal Trail. Cultural resource sites and stories would also highlight the human connection of the coastal environment – archeological sites, European exploration, maritime history, and coastal defense.

- Black Point at Fort Mason is zoned sensitive to protect the last remaining natural shoreline in San Francisco inside the Golden Gate. An overlook and would be developed in the evolved cultural landscape zone to allow visitors to experience this small site and its views.
- Native habitat and natural processes would be restored within the coastal corridor between Lands End and Eagle Point (zoned natural).
- The seacoast fortifications at Fort Miley are preserved and the Marine Exchange Lookout Station is adaptively reused to engage the public in the natural and human history of the marine environment. Vistas of the Pacific Ocean and Golden Gate would be re-established.
- The waters from Seal Rocks to Eagle Point would be designated a marine reserve to protect seabirds and marine mammals.
- The northern end of Ocean Beach would provide diverse opportunities for visitors to engage in a range of beach related activities. Visitor amenities would be improved in collaboration with the City of San Francisco, including a redesigned promenade.
- Approximately 5 miles of beach, dunes and cliffs from central Ocean Beach south to Mussel Rock would be zoned natural to protect shorebird habitat, allow natural shoreline processes to continue unimpeded, and provide visitors opportunities for self-discovery while enjoying and viewing nature.
- The park would continue to work with neighboring landowners to address coastal erosion through managed retreat – facilities would be actively relocated out of vulnerable locations.
- Fort Funston’s islands of native habitat are expanded to form a continuous habitat corridor that supports recovery of native dune habitat including endangered San Francisco Lessingia. Diverse visitor activities – hang-gliding and dog-walking –continue near the main parking lot. Park operations and stewardship and education support facilities remain.

San Mateo County

Overview

GGNRA’s lands and waters in San Mateo County are also part of a vast network of protected lands and waters (some recognized as part of the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve), including San Francisco watershed lands, State Parks, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and other county and regional parks lands. This alternative strives to further preservation and restoration of these dynamic, interconnected coastal ecosystems through collaborative regional partnerships with common goals to sustain the area’s native bio-diversity, re-connect fragmented habitats and migration corridors, minimize the impact of invasive species, manage for changing fire regimes, and restore naturally functioning ecosystems. Pro-active management builds resiliency to climate change.

San Mateo’s park lands serve as living laboratories, engaging visitors in participatory science, education and stewardship that nurture personal connections with nature and inspire advocacy. Exploration along the vast network of trails further highlights the park’s coastal natural and cultural resources. Cultural resource sites and stories emphasize human occupation of the coastal environment – archeological sites, European exploration, agricultural land uses, coastal defense and lighthouses. Most cultural resources are stabilized as discovery sites where not in conflict with natural resource restoration.

- Land protection efforts would target unprotected lands that fragment endangered species habitat (San Francisco garter snake, California red-legged frog and mission blue butterfly) impede movement or migration of species, or disrupt ecological function.
- Shelldance Nursery and the Montara Lighthouse complex would provide basic support facilities for science, education and resource stewardship. Shelldance would also provide for trailhead parking and visitor orientation. Both sites would support small-scale park operational needs.
- Mori Point is zoned sensitive with highly controlled visitor use to protect the San Francisco garter snake and ongoing habitat restoration.
- Sweeney Ridge and Cattle Hill are zoned natural and are part of a large contiguous natural area connecting with the San Francisco Watershed. Sneath Lane would be downgraded to a trail. Visitors experience the area through stewardship activities, hiking, horseback riding and primitive camping.
- Most of the San Francisco Watershed would be zoned sensitive, with highly managed public access, to support the values that designated this area as the core of the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve. The multi-use trail on the eastern edge is zoned scenic corridor.
- Most of Rancho Corral de Tierra is zoned natural; native habitat and natural processes are restored. The 4 equestrian facilities, all located along streams, would be removed or consolidated in one more suitable location over time. The NPS would partner with surrounding land managers to restore the creek corridors (zoned sensitive) and re-connect them to the ocean and restore anadromous fish passage. Visitors engage in stewardship activities, hiking, horseback riding and primitive camping.