

# Center for State of the Parks



## MUIR WOODS NATIONAL MONUMENT

### SNAPSHOT

One of the last remaining coast redwood forests in the world is nestled within Muir Woods National Monument, just 15 miles from San Francisco, California. The park's location provides an accessible respite for Bay Area residents and makes for a great day trip for visitors to San Francisco. In 2009 the park hosted 779,880 visitors who had the opportunity to admire the towering coast redwood trees, renew themselves with a stroll along the park's trails, run along the country's oldest cross-country trail, take in a ranger-led interpretive program, learn about the history of the park and surrounding area, or perhaps even volunteer on a habitat restoration project.



Coast redwoods tower over visitors along Muir Woods' Main Trail.

### CHALLENGES

- **Park staff fight invasive non-native plants.** Invasive non-native plants can dramatically alter ecosystems by outcompeting native plants. The most prolific invasive non-native plant species within Muir Woods National Monument include panic veldtgrass, forget-me-nots, thistles, bluegum eucalyptus, and cape-ivy. Park staff and volunteers keep an eye out for invasive species and often remove them by hand when they are spotted. They have been able to control forget-me-nots in some areas,

but the plants are more difficult to remove from steep slopes. The park has also worked to eradicate cape-ivy and several other invasives.

- **Cultural resources planning documents and additional staff are needed.** The park is in need of several additional cultural resource baseline reports, studies, and plans. These documents would ensure resources are identified and protected, help staff manage the park's cultural resources, and could be used to enhance interpretation. In addition, as the monument relies on Golden

Gate National Recreation Area staff who are shared among several park areas, the addition of a cultural landscape specialist and an assistant archaeologist stationed at Golden Gate and working across park areas, including Muir Woods, would benefit the monument.

- **Park managers concerned about climate change affecting redwoods.** The park's native plant and animal species will have to adapt to the future environmental impacts of climate change. For example, climate change could affect the amount of fog along the Pacific Coast, which coast redwoods rely on for growth. How climate change will affect fog, and therefore the future of the red-



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wood trees, is a subject of climate modeling and study.

- **Sudden oak death threatens several tree species.** Sudden oak death is a major threat for the park's oak and tanoak trees, which provide habitat and food for a host of animal species. Staff distribute literature to visitors and have posted signs to educate them on ways they can avoid spreading this water-carried mold. The park installs boot-washing stations at special events and during certain volunteer projects to minimize the chances for spreading the pathogen.

#### WHAT'S BEING DONE

- **Restoration efforts benefit park resources.** The park is a sanctuary for the federally listed coho salmon (endangered) and steelhead (threatened), species that require both healthy freshwater and marine habitats during their lives. These species have declined because of habitat degradation and destruction. The Park Service is partnering with other federal, state, and local government agencies as well as nonprofit organizations and private landowners to improve ecosystem health and habitat for these fish and other species.
- **Ongoing infrastructure changes aimed at conserving park resources.** The National Park Service is working to better protect Muir Woods' cultural and natural resources while also improving visitor experience. Recent projects include realigning roads and parking areas, removing inappropriately placed structures (e.g., a restroom within an old-growth redwood grove), deconstructing revetments from streams to restore natural flow

and movement, and renovating and replacing boardwalks. The National Park Service has also regained occupancy of historic buildings within key areas.

- **Shuttle system has helped to alleviate crowded parking lots.** A park-and-ride shuttle service was established in 2005 to transport visitors to and from Muir Woods. Buses transport visitors from parking lots and public transportation stops in Sausalito and Marin City. The shuttle has been extremely popular and eases congestion, reduces illegal parking along roadways, and improves air quality. The shuttle runs on weekends and holidays from early May through September.
- **Park recognized in the National Register of Historic Places.** In January 2008, Muir Woods was listed as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of historic places worthy of preservation. This listing allows the park to apply for additional preservation funding and ensures that an appropriate level of review and adequate mitigation are achieved for projects with the potential to harm park resources.
- **Park is working to preserve soundscape and improve visitor experience.** The National Park Service has recognized that the natural sounds that visitors hear while in national parks can be as important to their experience as landscapes, wildlife, and cultural resources. At Muir Woods, staff are working to provide quiet areas for visitors by designating times and places for silence and managing vehicle noise within the park.

#### ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks® program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policy-makers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

#### CONTACT US

For a copy of NPCA's full report on Muir Woods National Monument, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks) or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at [jnations@npca.org](mailto:jnations@npca.org).

For more information on Muir Woods National Monument, contact NPCA's Pacific Regional Office at 415.989.9921, or visit the park online at [www.nps.gov/muwo](http://www.nps.gov/muwo). For media inquiries, please contact Shannon Andrea, NPCA media relations director, at 202.454.3371 or [sandrea@npca.org](mailto:sandrea@npca.org). To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of national parks, visit [www.npca.org/take\\_action](http://www.npca.org/take_action).