



Golden Gate National Recreation Area • Muir Woods National Monument

Dear Friends,

In the spring we invited you to help us imagine the future of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument. Many of you participated in one of the six workshops that were held in San Francisco, Marin County, and San Mateo County; read the first newsletter; or returned a comment card with your thoughts and suggestions. Hundreds of you expressed very specific ideas and concerns about the parks and their future. We thank you for your many comments — they will help guide the development of a long-term vision for the preservation and management of the parks.

In this newsletter, we summarize the comments that we heard from many sources. These comments will be incorporated into the next planning step of developing and then exploring alternative visions for Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument. If you have any comments on the information contained in this newsletter, please contact us. We have a website and e-mail address for your convenience (see below). These are **your** park lands. This is **your** opportunity to help create the vision for their future. Thank you for joining us in this planning effort.

Brian O'Neill
Superintendent

General management planning is the broadest level of decision making for national parks. Developing a vision for the future of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument is the primary role of the general management plan. The plan will describe the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved during the next 20 years, and guide decisions about management and use of the parks. Several possible visions for the future of the parks (called alternatives) will be developed and analyzed before a preferred direction is selected.

What We Heard from You

The first newsletter, issued in March 2006, described the process for developing a general management plan (GMP) for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument. More than 4,000 copies of the newsletter were distributed to a mailing list; at park visitor centers, popular park destinations, and park events; and through park partners. The newsletter asked people for their opinions on what they value and enjoy most about the parks, their concerns, their suggestions for management, their ideas for the future of the parks, and for any other comments they wanted to provide to the GMP team.

The park staff held six public open houses in April to gather additional input from the public. A scoping roundtable was attended by repre-

sentatives of many local and regional jurisdictions, resource and regulatory agencies, and other public land managers. Discussion groups with environmental, historic, and community organizations, as well as meetings with American Indian tribal representatives, park partners, and park founders were held to gather information. Also, meetings with NPS staff were conducted as part of the scoping process.

The GMP team has benefited from your thoughts about the park. We have learned a great deal and have been challenged and inspired by your thoughtful comments and willingness to share your insights. Although space in this newsletter does not allow us to print every comment we received, we would like to share with you the most frequently heard con-

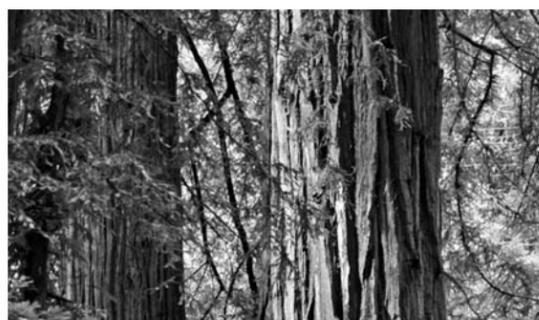
cerns and issues. If you are interested, the full record of comments can be reviewed at park headquarters, and a thorough summary is available online at the NPS planning website, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/goga>. This is also where you can find updates on the plan over the next few years.



What do people value about the parks?

Not surprisingly, since the majority of newsletter respondents and open house attendees were from the San Francisco Bay area, most people believe the parks are special because **they are close by - people live close to them**; people appreciate the parks being close to the city. In addition, respondents said they value the **undeveloped open space near a metropolitan setting**, especially since the parks make the area more “livable,” and provide opportunities to “unwind.”

Many also noted how much they value the amazing **natural beauty**, wide open views and the **variety of scenery** in and around the parks. They emphasized the need to protect the parks’ **natural scenic character** to maintain the natural beauty. **Muir Woods National Monument** was highlighted as a major contributing element to the area’s natural beauty. Many also thought the park was special because it protects **unique fauna and flora**, providing a lasting legacy of our natural heritage. They noted how much they enjoy having opportunities for **watching**



wildlife and viewing native plants. Respondents also noted how much they value the **cultural and historic resources** in the parks and said these outstanding resources need to be preserved and interpreted. They also talked about the value of **resource stewardship** and the opportunities in the parks for “getting connected” locally.

Other special values of the parks included the following:

- Opportunities for visitors to enjoy **open space and clean air**, especially in the midst of an urban area. It was noted that the parks

serve as the “backbone” of a corridor of public open space that preserves ecological systems and provides recreational opportunities.

- **Quiet and opportunities for solitude**. Visitors value being able to “get away” from the noise and intrusions of daily life and enjoy being able to “slow down” and be close to nature. The parks provide a place of serenity, peace, and relaxation.
- **Abundant opportunities for recreation and physical fitness**. Respondents noted how much they enjoy the hiking, biking, and equestrian opportunities in the parks, as well as the overall diversity of recreation opportunities.



SIGN UP FOR THE E-NEWSLETTER

Please sign up on the park website, www.nps.gov/goga, to receive future information via e-mail.

You also can contact us by e-mail at goga_gmp@nps.gov;

by **phone (message only)** at **(415) 561-4965**;

or by mail at

National Park Service, General Management Planning

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

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What concerns do people have about the parks?

The most frequently mentioned topic of concern was related to **transportation**. Parking, traffic, and congestion were often cited as frustrating factors, especially at Muir Woods National Monument. Many people identified the need for public transportation options and connectivity to park sites. Access to park sites is difficult from many communities within the Bay area, especially for visitors that are dependant on public transportation. Residents of adjacent communities dislike the congestion that park visitors bring to area roads, as it affects local traffic.

Crowding and visitor use conflicts were frequently mentioned as problems. Many people felt that overuse is occurring in some areas and is leading to crowding and visitor use conflicts at certain park sites, especially Muir Woods National Monument. Conflicts among mountain bikes, dogs, and horses were most frequently identified, especially on trails. **Resource impacts from visitor use**, particularly from those activities that involve bikes, dogs, and horses, was another topic of concern. People

often cited concern over the balance between visitor access and resource preservation.

Some people identified a concern with the **level of maintenance** of visitor amenities, including park facilities, trails, and structures. Comments noted that some “inherited” trails were not designed appropriately for their uses, which leads to maintenance problems.

The **level of new development and added commercialization** of the parks was another concern. Some respondents fear that future development could diminish open space and that more commercial activities would detract from their experience.

Maintaining public access and ensuring a variety of recreation opportunities were of interest to many, particularly mountain bikers, horse riders, and dog owners. Mountain bikers and horse riders were concerned about the availability of trails for their use and dog owners wanted to preserve their ability to walk their dogs off leash.

Some mentioned concerns with the level of funding dedicated to staffing and maintenance. They observed declining numbers of park interpreters, protection rangers, and maintenance personnel as an impact to their park experience. Respondents also noted a decline of available park programming in San Mateo County and other less developed park sites.



What issues do people believe the general management plan should address?

The most frequently mentioned topic was **improved alternative transportation** opportunities. Specifically, respondents mentioned the need for easy, convenient, and predictable public transportation services that connect primary park entry points and disperse visitors to the wide variety of recreational and educational opportunities throughout the parks. It was suggested that a comprehensive approach to transportation services would increase non-automobile access to the parks, help reduce parking and traffic impacts, and enhance resource protection.



Respondents would like to see the plan address **protection of the parks' unique natural and cultural resources**. Many specifically mentioned that the diversity of natural landscapes and processes needs to be protected with a strategy for **prioritizing preservation and restoration** activities. There also was a suggestion that the parks need a long-term strategy to address the potential effects of global warming on park resources.

Some people wanted to see more **trail connections** (for all types of use) in the parks to increase the diversity of recreation and access opportunities. In addition, some asked for new or different opportunities for **mountain biking**, including establishing new routes and opening more existing trails to mountain bikes. Equestrians were most interested in preserving their current riding opportunities. There also were numerous comments on **improving the design and maintenance of trails**, particularly mountain bike trails, although the approach to this varied among respondents: some felt that mountain bikes should be allowed only on wide, fire road-type trails, while others felt they should be allowed on narrow, single track trails. **Off-leash dog walking** was also mentioned as a topic to consider in the GMP, with some respondents in favor of increasing off-leash dog opportunities and others in favor of further restricting existing opportunities. Some people expressed the need for better way finding. People also expressed an interest in a greater number of **interpretive/education programs** about the parks' history and cultural and natural resources.

Other topics included the need to **increase NPS funding**, increase overall **maintenance of facilities**, and increase **levels of staffing**—especially rangers in the field. The need for **ranger presence** around the new park lands in **San Mateo County** was frequently mentioned.

Respondents also mentioned that the NPS should **not over-develop or commercialize the parks**, especially as a means to generate revenue. The protection of open space should be paramount.

The GMP team also learned about a number of other issues through internal meetings with park staff, park partners, and other key stakeholders. Many participants in these meetings noted that there is a need to **reach out to new and different audiences** to make them aware of and connected to the park, and that current park visitation does not reflect changing demographics in the region and nation. The need to make the parks recognizable and to clarify their **identity** as part of the national park system, as well as to provide consistency among the regulations of adjacent public lands was also expressed.

Other concerns include the need to establish a long-term strategy in the general management plan for **park partnerships and stewardship opportunities**. These opportunities need to support complementary park and partner objectives and facilitate a mutual concern, care, and commitment to park resources. The park staff also needs to **improve coordination** with adjacent landowners, local communities, and area agencies in order to fully protect park resources.

Here's What Comes Next

Over the next six months, NPS staff will be defining the issues that the GMP will address. With that information, conceptual alternatives for long-term management of the parks will be developed. Conceptual alternatives are different scenarios on how the parks could be managed over the next 20 years. Park staff will be sharing these conceptual alternatives with you in the summer/fall of 2007 through a newsletter and series of open houses, at which time you will have an opportunity to review and help improve them. With your feedback, the GMP team will refine and detail the alternatives and release them for additional public review in 2008. Next, the park staff will begin to develop a draft management plan that incorporates these alternatives.

For more information on the remaining steps required to complete the plan, please see the GMP planning schedule on the next page. Your involvement is critical to the success of this effort. You will have opportunities to comment and contribute ideas along every step of the way!

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.
NOW! Fall 2006 to Spring 2007	Data and Resource Analysis — Identify planning issues, opportunities, and constraints.	Review this newsletter #2 and send us your comments. Sign up for a digital version of the next newsletter to stay informed about the GMP process!
Spring 2007 to Fall 2007	Develop and Present Conceptual 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 and send us your ideas and concerns using the response form. Attend public meetings and comment on the preliminary alternatives.
Fall 2007 to Spring 2009	Prepare and Distribute a Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement — Review and comment by the public, park partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	Attend public meetings, and voice your ideas and concerns. Review the <i>Draft GMP/EIS</i> and provide written comments.
Spring 2009 to Fall 2009	Revise Draft Plan and Prepare a Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement	Review the <i>Final GMP/EIS</i> .
Winter 2010	Implement the Approved Plan — Prepare and issue a "Record of Decision" and implement the plan as funding allows.	Work with the park to implement the plan.

Park Purpose and Significance

In our first newsletter we presented a set of draft purpose and significance statements for your review and comment. These statements, based on each park's legislation and an analysis of its resources, articulate the reasons Congress established the park and why each park is distinctive. Purpose and significance statements form a foundation for general management planning. Any proposals considered in the plan must be consistent with the planning foundation.

We received many comments that generally agreed with the draft statements, but we also received ideas for improving the statements. The revised statements are presented below. Purpose and significance statements will not be finalized until the general management plan is approved, so some evolution of them could still occur through this planning process.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Park Purpose

The purpose of Golden Gate National Recreation Area is to offer national park experiences to a large and diverse urban population while preserving and interpreting the park's outstanding natural, historic, scenic, and recreational values.

Park Significance Statements

1. The convergence of the San Andreas Fault, San Francisco Bay at the Golden Gate, and the California coastline creates a dynamic environment of exceptional scientific value.
2. The remnant undeveloped coastal corridor of marine, estuarine, and terrestrial ecosystems supports exceptional native biodiversity and provides a refuge for one of the largest concentrations of rare, threatened and endangered species in the national park system.
3. The park includes one of the largest and most complete collections of military installations and fortifications in the country, dating from Spanish settlement in 1776 through the 20th century. These installations served as command post for the Army in the Western United States and the Pacific. This long period of military presence has yielded one of the most extensive collections of historic architecture in the national park system.
4. Alcatraz Island, the site of pre-Civil War fortifications, was the nation's first military prison; later it became the most notorious maximum security penitentiary in the United States and subsequently was the site of the occupation that helped ignite the movement for American Indian self-determination.
5. Parklands are within the traditional homelands of Coast Miwok and Ohlone people. They contain indigenous archeological sites with native heritage, historic, and scientific values.
6. The continuum of park resources at the doorstep of the San Francisco Bay area provides an abundance of recreational and educational opportunities.
7. The coastal headlands of the Golden Gate are internationally recognized for their outstanding scenic quality. They serve as the panoramic backdrop to the metropolitan San Francisco Bay area and contribute to the quality of life for area residents and visitors.

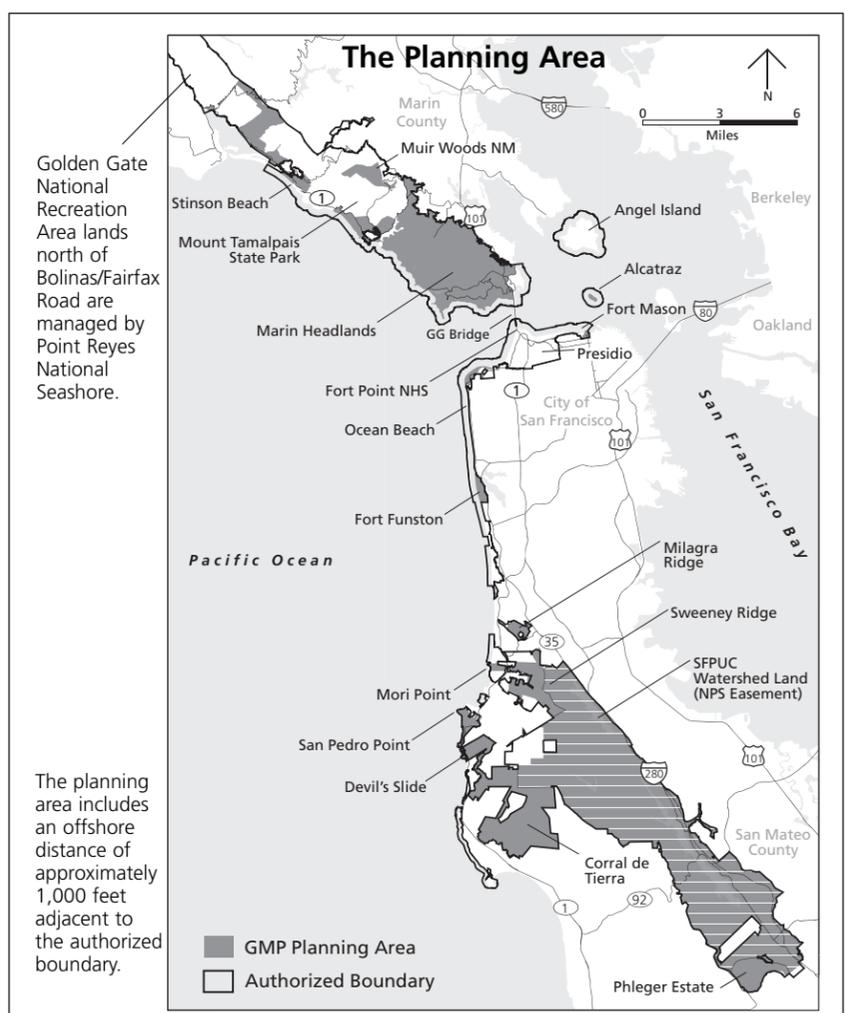
Muir Woods National Monument

Park Purpose

The purpose of Muir Woods National Monument is to preserve the primeval character and ecological integrity of the old-growth redwood forest for scientific values and inspiration.

Park Significance Statement

Muir Woods National Monument preserves the last remnant old-growth forest close to metropolitan San Francisco that retains its primeval character. The establishment of the monument is an important manifestation of early 20th century conservation history.





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Summary of Public Comments



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