



Golden Gate National Recreation Area • Muir Woods National Monument

Robert Campbell / Chamois Moon

Dear Friends,

Last spring in *Newsletter 2* we reported to you what we learned from the public scoping efforts for the new general management plan (GMP). We received detailed information about how special Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument are to you. Your participation has helped us to begin developing a vision for the future of the two parks.

In this newsletter, you will find four concepts that explore different possible futures for both parks. Following the concept descriptions, we present the issues that the general management plan will address. We welcome your comments and suggestions on the concepts and issues. During the next six months, the GMP planning team will further develop the concepts, creating a range of preliminary alternatives.

As we move forward, exploring different ways to manage the parks for the future, I encourage you to stay connected and be an active participant in this important planning process. On page 6 of this newsletter, you will find a number of ways to contact us and access information. Look for an invitation to public workshops in early 2008 where you will be able to review the status of the plan in more detail. With your continued interest and support, we will develop a plan that enhances your experiences of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument while preserving their extraordinary natural and cultural heritage.

Sincerely,

Brian O’Neill
General Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and
Muir Woods National Monument

What Is General Management Planning?

General management planning is the broadest level of decision-making for national park system units. The primary role of this general management plan is to develop a vision for the future of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument.

It has been more than 20 years since a general management plan was completed for these parks. Since that time, Golden Gate National Recreation Area has doubled in size and visitation, and much more is known about the ecological and historical significance of the parks.

For the next 20 years, the new general management plan will guide the National Park Service as it endeavors to achieve the desired conditions for preserving natural and cultural resources while enhancing visitor experiences on park lands.

Alternative Concepts: Different Ways to Imagine the Future

In the process of preparing a general management plan, the National Park Service (NPS) develops a range of management concepts to explore different potential futures for a park. In this newsletter, we present four management concepts for your consideration. The next step is to build these management

concepts into alternatives with more detail. Once the alternatives begin to take shape, the NPS staff will issue the next newsletter that describes the preliminary alternatives and will host local workshops to test the alternatives with the public.

Concept 1: Connecting People with the Parks

The emphasis of this concept is to reach out and engage the community and other potential visitors in the enjoyment, understanding, and stewardship of the parks’ resources and values. Management would focus on ways to attract and welcome people to connect with

the resources; to promote understanding, enjoyment, conservation, and health; and to reinvigorate the human spirit. Visitor opportunities would be relevant to diverse populations now and in the future.

Rationale

The concept was developed to strengthen the parks’ commitment to the idea of “parks to the people,” bringing national park experiences to a large and diverse urban population. Because the parks serve a large and diverse urban population, improving connections to people is fundamental to achieving the parks’ purposes and to maintaining the public’s continued interest and support.



Goals

Visitor Experience

- Actively seek opportunities to respond to the needs and interests of the diversity of visitors.
- Encourage visitors to engage in a wide range of opportunities and experiences in a diversity of settings.
- Enhance outreach and access to and within the parks and make them welcoming.
- Foster the visitor’s deep personal connection to the parks and discovery of the values and enjoyment of the natural environment.
- Encourage hands-on stewardship through visitor opportunities that promote personal health and responsibility.

Cultural Resources

- Maximize adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of cultural resources to support visitor enjoyment, understanding, and community connections.
- Work with interested groups and populations to manage cultural resources.
- Manage cultural resources so that visitors can connect with park lands and their stories.

Natural Resources

- Maintain the integrity and diversity of natural resources and systems.
- Enhance the public’s access to natural resources to promote visitor understanding and appreciation.
- Integrate natural resource preservation and concepts with visitor stewardship opportunities to deepen visitor understanding.

Concept 2: Preserving and Enjoying Coastal Ecosystems

The emphasis of this concept is to preserve and promote dynamic and interconnected coastal ecosystems in which marine resources are valued and prominently featured. Recreational and educational opportunities would allow

visitors to learn about and enjoy the coastal and marine environments, and gain a better understanding of the region’s international significance and history.

Rationale

The concept creates a vision for intentionally connecting resources and systems to form contiguous habitat from the ocean to the coastal hills. The more connected the water and land base, the better the ability for ecosystems to adjust and adapt, thus increasing their resiliency to urban pressures and global climate change. The concept also responds to the public’s strong interest in having more natural wild lands in close proximity to the urban communities of the San Francisco Bay area.



Goals

Visitor Experience

- Connect visitors with resources and the parks through expanded and diverse science and stewardship programs that are focused on preservation and restoration of coastal and marine resources and address the implications of global climate change.
- Provide greater opportunities for visitors to explore wild areas and immerse themselves in nature.
- Manage low-impact visitor use that enhances the qualities of solitude, quiet, and naturalness in critical natural resource areas, and accommodate active recreational pursuits in other areas.
- Increase visitor understanding, awareness, and support for coastal resources through participation in stories and programs about human interaction with and dependency on natural resources.

Cultural Resources

- Emphasize sites and stories connected to coastal resources, including shipwrecks, archeological sites, agricultural lands and uses, coastal defense, and lighthouses.
- Use cultural resources as a platform to raise awareness of the importance of coastal ecosystem conservation.

Natural Resources

- Reconnect fragmented habitat within and adjacent to the parks to strengthen the integrity and resiliency of the coastal ecosystem to respond to climate change and urban pressures.
- Optimize recovery of special status species and survival of wide-ranging wildlife.
- Restore natural processes and/or allow these processes to evolve unimpeded to the greatest degree feasible.
- Promote partnerships to help the parks become a center for innovative coastal science, stewardship, and learning.



Concept 3: Focusing on National Treasures

The emphasis of this concept is to focus on the parks’ nationally important natural and cultural resources. The fundamental resources of each showcased site would be managed at the highest level of preservation to protect their value in perpetuity and promote appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment. The National Park Service presence and identity would prominently support resource preservation and educational goals. Visitors would have the opportunity to explore the wide variety of experiences that are associated with national parks — all in one area. All other resources would be managed to complement the nationally significant resources and visitor experiences.

Rationale

The concept highlights the parks’ variety of nationally significant resources. By distinguishing the nationally significant resources and promoting the National Park Service identity, the objective of bringing exemplary national park experiences to an urban population would be met. The concept would also allow the National Park Service to focus the management of the parks’ resources, visitor experiences, and partnerships, giving priority to the most significant sites.

Goals

Visitor Experience

- Provide visitors with opportunities to explore, learn, and enjoy the parks’ unique resources and stories.
- Allow the parks’ distinctive resources and associated stories to shape recreational opportunities.
- Emphasize active public participation in stewardship programs at the showcased sites.
- Provide visitors with opportunities for understanding and enjoying national park experiences.

Cultural Resources

- Emphasize the fundamental resources that contribute to the significance of each park, including national historic landmarks. Manage all other resources to complement the significant resources and visitor experiences.

- Tie all the associated cultural resources, museum collections, and stories to the showcased sites.
- Manage cultural resources to highlight the interpretive and educational values and provide, wherever possible, direct contact with the resources.

Natural Resources

- Emphasize the preservation of fundamental natural resources that contribute to each park’s significance. Manage all other resources to complement the distinctive resources and experiences.
- Protect or restore the integrity of fundamental natural resources that support each park’s significance.
- Manage distinctive natural resources to ensure their ecological integrity while providing opportunities to engage the visitors in hands-on stewardship and exploration.



Concept 4: Collaborating Regionally

The emphasis of this concept is to manage the parks as a core of public lands that connects local and regional parks, open spaces, communities, and other resources as a seamless whole. Collaboration with other land managers would complement the management of the parks with that of their surrounding natural and cultural resources and enhance visitor experiences. Recreational and educational opportunities would be provided based on site characteristics and management objectives.

Rationale

Watersheds, viewsheds, ecosystems, and trail and transportation systems extend beyond the parks’ boundaries. Their management and preservation require cooperation with managers of adjacent public lands, local jurisdictions, and private landowners. The concept allows the parks to meet the challenges of the future and be part of the network of organizations that are preserving resources and recreational opportunities in the San Francisco Bay area.

Goals

Visitor Experience

- Connect trail and transit systems between park units, adjacent open spaces, and communities.
- Provide visitor opportunities and support through shared information, facilities, and visitor services.
- Place decisions regarding visitor opportunities within the regional context.
- Provide stewardship activities that support resource management within the regional context.

Cultural Resources

- Manage the cultural landscape where systems, features, and patterns cross the parks’ boundaries.
- Identify common thematic connections — e.g., immigration, World War II, historic agriculture, and American Indian sites — across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Manage cultural sites to emphasize their unique qualities while serving as a portal to thematic connections in other locations.
- Collaborate with other organizations in museum collections management.

Natural Resources

- Protect and manage habitat corridors that sustain native biodiversity.
- Ensure that management and monitoring of resources is ecosystem-based with strong collaboration among partners.
- Preserve and connect key wildlife and plant communities across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Manage threats through coordinated best management practices and shared stewardship responsibilities.



Planning Issues

The first GMP newsletter and public open houses asked people what they valued and enjoyed most about the parks and what were their concerns and suggestions for the future management of the parks. The information was analyzed and reported in *Newsletter 2* and can be found on the website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/goga>). In addition, the GMP planning team used this information to assess the parks’ fundamental resources and values.

Visitor Access: Transportation and Trails

The general management plan will identify the vision for visitor access to and within the parks for improving visitor experiences, for improving connections among park sites and the larger community, and for protecting the resources.

Although the parks have complex land and water transportation systems, the current transportation options do not fully address the needs of many visitors, do not adequately protect some natural and cultural resources, and do not address congestion related to visitors’ travels. Further, the condition of trails and their lack of connectivity do not meet many visitor and resource protection needs.

Recreation Opportunities and Conflicts

The general management plan will develop a vision for recreational opportunities in different areas of the parks by identifying the appropriate types of use and experiences at park sites in response to visitor demand and resource sensitivity. The plan will also provide guidance to promote, evaluate, and manage appropriate and desired types and levels of use in the parks.

Recreation in the parks is an opportunity to promote public enjoyment, understanding, stewardship, inspiration, fitness, solitude, and social connections. To achieve these positive outcomes, recreation management must address competing uses, demands for incompatible activities, and levels of use that may overwhelm resources and infrastructure.

The following section summarizes the major issues that the new general management plan will address. Exploring different ways to address the issues is the basis for developing the range of management concepts and will help create the preliminary alternatives.



Sustainable Natural Resource Preservation and Management

The general management plan will develop a vision to understand, sustain, and steward the fundamental natural resources for each park.

The natural resources, and the threats and influences upon them, extend beyond the parks’ boundaries. The adjacent urban landscape results in persistent threats and influences on these resources and presents major challenges for sustainable resource preservation, management, and restoration. Improving the capacity of the parks to address resource preservation and management requires regional collaboration.

Sustainable Cultural Resource Preservation and Management

The general management plan will develop a vision to preserve and manage the parks’ historic structures, cultural landscapes, archeological sites, ethnographic resources, and museum collections.

The parks have extraordinarily broad collections of historic properties, and managing these properties according to NPS standards is well beyond the internal capacity of the parks. The challenge of identifying adaptive reuse options, funding the high cost of preservation treatments, managing environmental influences, and integrating with natural resource management goals presents obstacles to effective cultural resource management.



Climate Change

The general management plan will provide guidance on how the parks will assess, respond to, and interpret the impacts of global climate change on fundamental resources, including objectives for reducing the carbon footprint.

The effects of global climate change may include changes in temperature, precipitation, evaporation rate, local weather patterns, coastal vulnerability, plant communities, and sea level. Proactive planning and management actions will allow the parks to adjust to climate change and interpret changing conditions while reducing the impacts from NPS operations and visitors.

Land and Water Protection

The general management plan will provide a vision for future land protection and boundary changes.

Regional growth pressures and urbanization have influenced land acquisition and resulted in diverse types of park lands. The increase in acreage has presented challenges for land and boundary management. The current boundaries may not include key areas necessary to protect the integrity of the resources. The parks must strengthen their strategic approach to land and resource protection by identifying guidelines and priorities for land acquisition, including a coordinated regional approach to land and resource management.

Better Communication and Reaching New Audiences

The general management plan will provide guidance to help the National Park Service better connect with all audiences, including the underserved communities and emerging audiences.

The diversity of the San Francisco Bay area and the international prominence of San Francisco provide unparalleled opportunities to bring national park experiences to a diverse and urban population. Despite these assets, the parks are not meeting the needs of a diverse and changing population. Reaching these audiences is essential to ensure relevant and effective management of the parks and to achieve NPS civic engagement and stewardship goals.

Operational Facilities

The general management plan will present a vision for locating operational facilities.

Maintenance and public safety facilities are scattered throughout the parks in structures that were not intended for these operational uses. The site and facility conditions do not adequately meet maintenance and public safety requirements for space, security, functionality, and mobility.





Scenic Beauty and Natural Character

The general management plan will provide guidance in the preservation and enhancement of the parks’ most valued scenic resources.

The scenic beauty and natural character of the parks provide opportunities for visitors to experience dramatic landscapes that deeply contrast natural and urban settings. NPS staff, in collaboration with adjacent landowners, can work to enhance and protect scenic resources from degradation due to human impacts, including new development and surrounding uses of land, air, and water.

Regional Cooperation

The general management plan will provide guidance to improve communication, coordination, and participation with public and private stakeholders with a goal of protecting ecosystems, watersheds, viewsheds, and visitor opportunities that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Visitor experience, public safety, and resource protection in the parks are affected by a variety of complex, outside influences. The parks are not islands. They are within an urban and suburban setting, part of a mosaic of various landownerships. The parks cannot meet their goals without recognizing and embracing the complexities and interrelationships between local and regional land uses.



Park Identity

The general management plan will provide guidance on improving and promoting the National Park Service’s identity at Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area does not have a strong identity as a unit of the national park system. This makes it difficult to promote behavior consistent with national park status. The many points of entry with minimal or no identifying entry features, the lack of NPS staff presence in many locations, and the lack of clearly marked boundaries present challenges in building community support.

Partnerships

The general management plan will provide guidance for partnership development and management that enables NPS managers to make effective decisions and foster flexible, productive relationships.

Partners are fundamental in helping the parks manage natural and cultural resources, providing programs, reaching new audiences, and remaining relevant and inclusive. Despite the many commonalities and shared objectives, such a diverse set of partners may give rise to goals and objectives that are not always mutually compatible. Further, the capacity of the parks for partnership oversight is limited.

American Indian Values

The general management plan will develop a vision for incorporating Ohlone and Coast Miwok values into the preservation, management, and interpretation of the parks’ resources.

In the late 1990s — due to evolving NPS policy and to the rekindling of California Indian tribal life —NPS staff initiated efforts to involve Coast Miwok and Ohlone communities, the traditional peoples associated with park lands. The general management plan provides an opportunity for the National Park Service and the tribes to strengthen the bonds that have developed over the past decade.

Sign up for the E-Newsletter

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

You can also 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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San Francisco, CA 94123

You can also visit the National Park Service’s Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/goga> where you will find more information on the general management and other planning efforts currently underway at Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument.

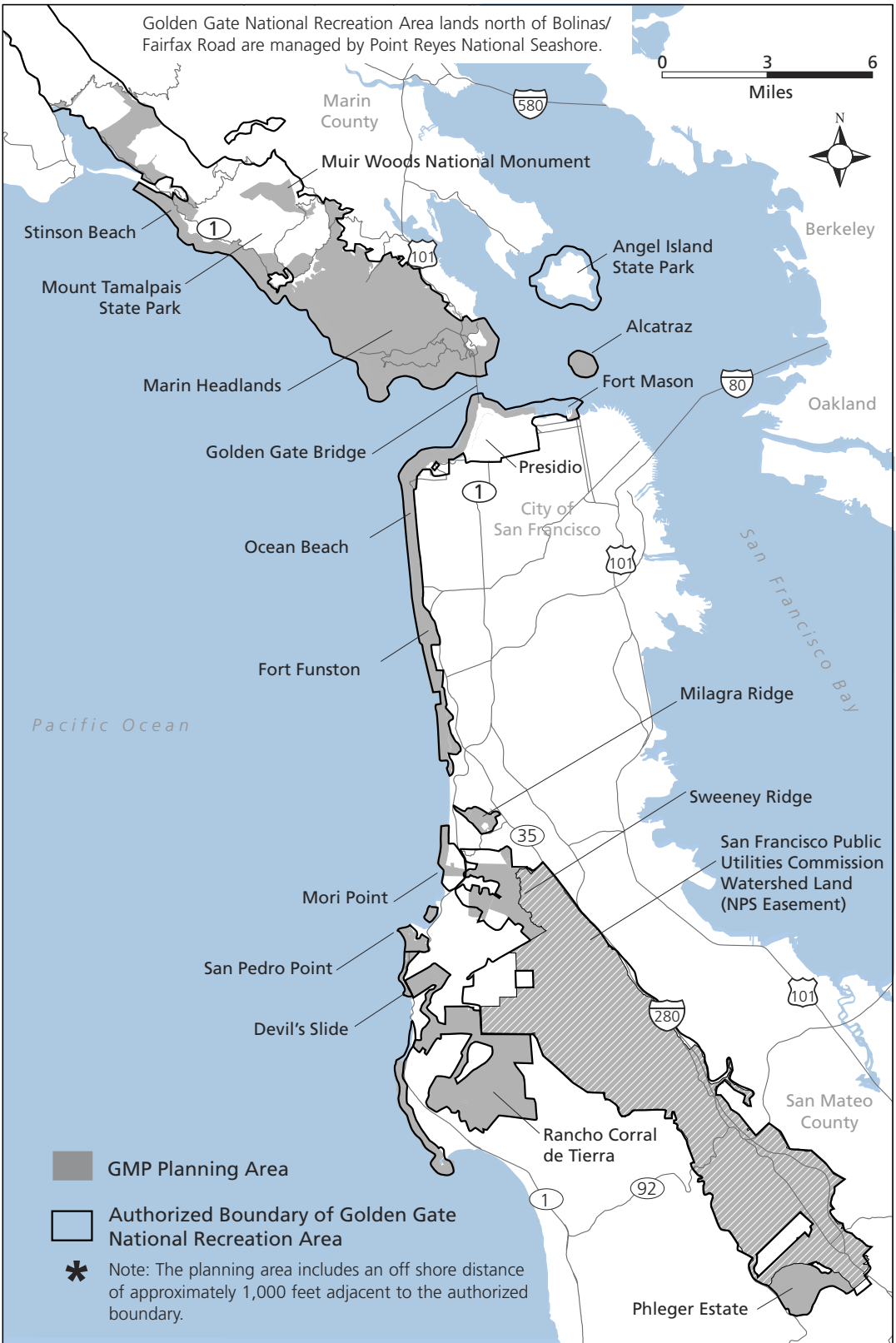
Where Are We in the General Management Planning Schedule?

Earlier this year, the GMP planning team defined the issues that the new management plan will address, guided by the public comments we received. Using this information, the planning team developed four management concepts, each exploring a different possible future for the parks. During

the next six months, the planning team will further develop the management concepts, create preliminary alternatives, and then review them with the public.

Status	Estimated Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
Completed	Spring 2006	Scoping — Identify concerns, expectations, and values related to the parks with the public, NPS staff, partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	Review <i>Newsletter 1</i> and send us your ideas and concerns using the response form. Attend public meetings and voice your ideas and concerns.
Completed	Fall 2006 to Spring 2007	Data and Resource Analysis — Identify planning issues, opportunities, and constraints.	Review <i>Newsletter 2</i> and send us any comments.
In Progress	Spring 2007 to Winter 2008	Develop and Present Preliminary Alternatives Outline management concepts and develop preliminary alternatives (different possible futures for the parks) and provide opportunities for review and comment by the public, the cooperating partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	Review <i>Newsletter 3</i> (this newsletter) and send us any comments. Review <i>Newsletter 4</i> (which will describe the preliminary alternatives) and send us your ideas and concerns using the response form. Attend public workshops and comment on the preliminary alternatives.
	Winter 2008 to Summer 2008	Complete Development of the GMP Alternatives Based on public input, revise and complete the range of alternatives that will be analyzed in the <i>General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> ; select the NPS preferred alternative.	Stay informed about the process by visiting the website and reading periodic postcards and e-newsletters.
	Fall 2008 to Summer 2009	Prepare and Distribute a Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement	Attend public workshops and voice your ideas and concerns. Review the <i>Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> and provide written comments.
	Fall 2009	Revise Draft Plan and Prepare a Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement	Review the <i>Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> .
	Winter 2010	Implement the Approved Plan Prepare and issue a “Record of Decision” and implement the plan as funding allows.	Work with the NPS to implement the approved plan.

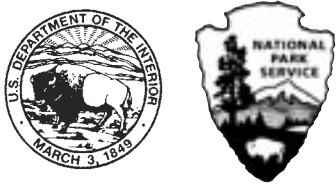
The Planning Area



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Park Purpose

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

offers national park experiences to a large and diverse urban population while preserving and interpreting the park’s outstanding natural, historic, scenic, and recreational values.

Muir Woods National Monument

preserves the primeval character and ecological integrity of the old-growth redwood forest for scientific values and inspiration.

**General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement
Newsletter 3 • Fall 2007**

National Park Service
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