



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Board of Supervisors



Date: June 11, 2014
Board Meeting Date: July 1, 2014
Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Don Horsley

Subject: Opposition to Golden Gate National Recreation Area's Draft Dog Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement's Preferred Alternative F

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution:

- A) Opposing Golden Gate National Recreation Area's Draft Dog Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement's "Preferred Alternative F" which prohibits access to off-leash dogs and greatly restricts access to on-leash dogs on Golden Gate National Recreation Area's park lands throughout the County of San Mateo; and
- B) Requesting Golden Gate National Recreation Area adopt a more inclusive and communally acceptable preferred alternative

BACKGROUND:

In 1972, President Richard Nixon signed into law "An Act to Establish the Golden Gate National Recreation Area". The Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) was established with the purpose of providing a national park experience to a large and diverse urban population while preserving the area's outstanding natural, scenic and recreational values. In 1978, at the request of the dog owner community, GGNRA developed a pet policy. Known as the "1979 Pet Policy", the policy provided general guidance for dog management in park lands owned and managed by GGNRA. Despite the fact that the "1979 Pet Policy" was out of compliance with the National Park Service's (NPS) dog management policy, it was adopted by GGNRA.

In January 2001, GGNRA unilaterally made the decision to amend their dog management policy and start enforcing the NPS's dog management policy. In 2005, a lawsuit opposing the change in dog management policy was filed by local dog owners.

A U.S. District Court Judge for the Northern District of California ruled that GGNRA could not amend their dog management policy for lands managed by the “1979 Pet Policy” until a proper public notice and comment period was conducted. This led GGNRA to initiate the Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement process.

In January 2011, GGNRA published the Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement aimed to identify various alternatives for a dog management policy while providing for a variety of visitor experiences, improving visitor and employee safety and preserving and protecting natural and cultural resources. Due to the proposed prohibitions and tight restrictions on access for dogs throughout GGNRA’s park lands, the Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement immediately generated significant negative feedback and over 4700 comment letters from the public. In addition to the public, elected officials from San Mateo, Marin and San Francisco counties publicly opposed the Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. To address the overwhelming concerns expressed by the public regarding the Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, in 2012 GGNRA published a Draft Dog Management Plan/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Draft Plan/SEIS).

Using additional data and public comment from the Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, the Draft Plan/SEIS evaluated the impacts of six alternative dog management practices (Alternatives A-F) for GGNRA’s park lands. The Draft Plan/SEIS was immediately opposed by the local dog owner community and elected officials as Preferred Alternative F proposed minimal changes from the Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. For San Mateo County, the alternatives evaluated in the Draft Plan/SEIS range from allowing leashed dogs on all park lands in San Mateo County to banning dogs from all park lands.

DISCUSSION:

In 2012, GGNRA published the Draft Plan/SEIS which proposed amendments to its current dog management policy. GGNRA manages five parks in San Mateo County: Mori Point, Milagra Ridge, Sweeney Ridge, Pedro Point and Rancho Corral de Tierra (Rancho). As proposed in the Draft Plan/SEIS, GGNRA’s preferred alternative (Alternative F) greatly reduces the miles of trails accessible to on-leash dogs throughout the County of San Mateo. The County of San Mateo is also the only county in GGNRA’s jurisdiction that has no off-leash park lands. Additionally, Alternative F would reduce park lands available to off-leash dogs at Fort Funston, which is frequented by many San Mateo County residents.

GGNRA Park lands in San Mateo County will see some of the strictest prohibition against dogs on trails in the GGNRA park system. It will also be the only county that has no off-leash access for dogs. Mori Point, Milagra Ridge, Sweeney Ridge and Pedro

Point will see strong restrictions against on-leash dogs on approximately half of the trails currently open to on-leash dogs.

Rancho, almost 7,800 acres of open space on the San Mateo County Coastside, is the most recent addition to GGNRA. Rancho has been a popular destination for residents and their dogs both on-leash and off-leash for decades. The Draft Plan/SEIS proposes to prohibit access to off-leash dogs on all Rancho lands and restrict access for on-leash dogs to a limited number of trails.

Restricting people from accessing GGNRA's lands with their dogs will have negative impacts on many of the County's residents. The strict restrictions will limit people's access and experience deterring people from visiting and enjoying their local national parks. People from nearby cities and counties may also now choose to visit other parks that grant greater access to on-leash dogs and have designated off-leash dog areas.

To express a unified opposition to GGNRA's Draft Plan/SEIS, on June 5, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, the presidents of the San Francisco and Marine County Board of Supervisors and I participated in a press conference to ask GGNRA to preserve current recreational uses.

Currently, the County of San Mateo permits access for on-leash dogs at various parks and trails. The last three County Parks to open— Devil's Slide, Pillar Point Bluffs and Quarry Park— all permit on-leash dogs.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the Resolution as to form. Adoption of this Resolution contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of a Healthy Community by supporting the sustainability of outdoor recreation on GGNRA lands.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.