

From: (b)(6)
To: Chris_Lehnertz@nps.gov; karen_washington@nps.gov
Subject: Protecting recreation in the GGNRA
Date: Tuesday, May 27, 2014 10:06:28 PM

Emily Church
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Mill Valley, CA
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Christine Lehnertz
The Pacific West Region Director of the National Park Service

May 27, 2014

Dear Ms. Lehnertz,

Re: GGNRA Dog Management Plan

I lived in the Marina in San Francisco for nine years and I now live in Mill Valley in Marin County. I am the owner of two Vizslas. I walk my dogs three times a day and send them out with a dog walker twice a day while I am at work. Every day after work I take my dogs on a walk on GGNRA land for 30-45 minutes. On Saturday and Sunday I usually walk them at Chrissy Field in the morning and in the Presidio or Marin in the afternoon. In addition, my dog walker takes the dogs to GGNRA trails in Marin daily Monday through Friday.

I am from the East Coast and have lived in the Bay area for 15 years. I consider myself fortunate to live in such a beautiful and historical city. Some of the areas I treasure are Chrissy Field and the Presidio, and the GGNRA hiking trails in Marin. There are few cities anywhere in the world where one can walk with their dog in a National Park or along a beach. Chrissy Field and the Presidio are two special places in that they are bursting with natural beauty and yet are also grounded in rich history. The trails in Marin are gorgeous and allow one to get out into nature on multi-use trails with hikers and other dog owners.

Chrissy Field, the Presidio and Marin are perfect places to walk your dog off leash. At Chrissy Field the dogs can run on the beach and romp in the field. Few other places provide such diverse terrain and excellent play areas. The Presidio is also an excellent place for dogs to walk off-leash as there are few people, no cars and ample trails. Other excellent off-leash dog walking areas are the Marin Headlands, Fort Funston and Baker Beach. These are all ideal spots for us dog owners to walk and exercise our dogs safely away from traffic and other hazards.

At least 10,000 dogs visit the GGNRA every day. San Francisco city parks are much, much smaller than the GGNRA and will be unable to absorb the impact of all those

dogs if they are forced out of the GGNRA. The negative impact on parks and other recreation areas in San Francisco and Marin far outweighs any potential negative impacts in the GGNRA.

One of the nice things about Chrissy Field, the Presido and GGNRA trails in Marin is that they are multi-use areas. So on any given day one is apt to encounter joggers, walkers, hikers, school children, botanists, photographers, people picnicking, etc. One of the charms of the area is that it attracts and supports such as diverse group of people and wide range of activities. The community of people recreating with off leash dogs represents a tremendous cultural resource in San Francisco, Marin and the GGNRA. Where else can you see people from nearly every ethnic background and race, all socio-economic levels, seniors, families with kids, etc. all getting together every day and every week to socialize together while their dogs play off leash. Walking and playing with off leash dogs brings together people who otherwise would rarely see or interact with one another.

It deeply troubles me that the staff of the GGNRA is proposing to use our federal taxpayer dollars to keep people from recreating in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Currently the GGNRA is pushing forward with three separate plans that seek to limit access to areas like Fort Funston, Rancho Corral de Tierra and the Marin Headlands. Two of those plans could be signed off on as soon as this week—the General Management Plan, which would establish zones where the GGNRA could actually prohibit people from doing things like picnicking at most of Ocean Beach; and a rule that would create restrictive and expensive permits for professional dog walkers who people count on to make sure their pets receive appropriate exercise.

Friends in the Bay Area have no idea what's being planned (there has been very little effort by the GGNRA to reach out to the public and gather input). That's why the National Park Service absolutely should not sign off on these plans right now. We need a real meaningful public process that involves the people who are going to be affected. And we want a process that really takes our input into account. The entire community should have the opportunity to participate in this important discussion.

Unlike some staff members at the GGNRA, we do not believe people and nature are incompatible. We believe we can balance both so that we can protect recreational opportunities and be responsible stewards of our environment like we have been doing in the GGNRA for decades.

We live in one of the most densely populated urban areas in America. San Francisco is the second most densely populated city in America after New York City. And the people of the San Francisco Bay Area fought hard to establish and protect the area that was founded to provide recreational opportunities to the people of this region. Now the National Park Service, which was entrusted to protect public access, is trying to eliminate those recreational opportunities one by one.

These are beaches and trails where people have been welcomed for 40 years into the GGNRA. There is no credible reason to start denying access now.

I beg you to take action on our behalf to save public access, and access for those of us with dogs, to these wonderful places that should be enjoyed as recreation areas by everyone.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Emily Church