

# Help Make the GGNRA Safe and Accommodating for People, Wildlife, and Dogs

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) was formed to bring the “national park experience” to the densely urban San Francisco Bay Area. Bay Area residents and visitors get to enjoy the park’s remarkable scenic vistas, habitats, and wildlife, which include more federally-listed endangered and threatened species than any other National Park in the United States.

Unfortunately, some recreational activities in the park can have negative consequences for other park users, wildlife, and their habitats. Dog walking, especially off-leash dog activities, is a popular recreational use of the GGNRA that can also:

- put other park users at risk from dog bites or unwanted approaches by dogs;
- disturb and even directly harm wildlife; and
- alter the soils, water, and vegetation in the park due to trampling and dog waste, leading to a permanent degradation of habitats.

These impacts could be significantly reduced if dog-walking occurred only in certain portions of the park and if visitors obeyed leash requirements. Unfortunately, approximately one-third of dog walkers at the Crissy Field Wildlife Protection Area continue to walk their dogs off-leash despite signs asking them to leash their pets to avoid disturbances to the federally threatened snowy plover. The rates of non-compliance are even higher on Ocean Beach and at Ft. Funston.

The National Park Service has issued its draft Dog Management Plan to accommodate dogs in the park and strike a balance of dog owners’ interests with those of other park users and the natural ecology of the park. The plan allows for extensive off-leash and on-leash recreation in San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties. No other National Park allows off-leash dog recreation or even on-leash activities to the extent proposed by the National Park in its plan.

The hope is to create a place where dogs, dog owners, other park users and native plants and wildlife can coexist. The status quo is unsustainable. Though the proposed plan isn’t perfect, we’re generally supportive of the GGNRA’s effort to better regulate this activity.

We encourage everyone to provide comments to the National Park Service before May 29, 2011. Let them know what your concerns are about dog management in the GGNRA and share your perspective on how dog-related recreation has changed your experiences in the park. We are focused on five main points:

1. Off-leash areas should be fenced or well-marked to provide a clear boundary for off-leash activities.
2. The Park Service’s proposed requirement of 75% compliance is too low. The Park Service should require a minimum of 95% compliance or should initiate measures to improve compliance.
3. Commercial dog-walking should not be permitted in the GGNRA.
4. At least some trails in San Francisco should be entirely closed to dogs. Under the current plan, nearly every trail in San Francisco is open to at least on-leash dogs, meaning no trails are available for people who prefer to enjoy the outdoors without interacting with dogs.
5. While they are important parts of our families and communities, dogs are just one species that is having a significant negative impact on thousands of other animals and plants that rely on the park to survive and many other human visitors. The parks should be maintained to be safe and accessible for all users and to protect their natural and cultural resources for future generations.

**To submit comments, visit <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?documentID=38106> or submit comments in writing to: Frank Dean, General Superintendent, GGNRA, Building 201, Fort Mason San Francisco, CA 94123-0022**

# SAMPLE LETTER

*Below is an example of the kind of written comments you may want to submit to the National Park Service about the Dog Management Plan. We encourage you to review the plan and develop your own, individual comments (even if they disagree with Golden Gate Audubon's official position!). Let the Park Service know about your own experiences in the parks and how interactions with dogs or impacts from dogs have changed the parks for you. If you would like help developing your comments, please do not hesitate to contact us*

Via U.S. Mail

Frank Dean  
General Superintendent, GGNRA  
Building 201, Fort Mason  
San Francisco, CA 94123-0022

RE: Dog Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Superintendent Dean:

I am writing as a concerned citizen regarding the draft Dog Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. I use and enjoy the GGNRA lands and am concerned about impacts from dog-related recreation on the wildlife, habitats and other park users at the park.

I strongly encourage you to improve the plan by implementing the following steps:

1. All "Regulated Off-leash Areas" should be fenced, at least in areas where fences do not pose risks to wildlife and habitats. Fences provide more security for all park users and create clearer boundaries so that dog owners are aware of how to comply with park rules.
2. The Park Service's proposed requirement of 75% compliance is too low. The Park Service should require a minimum of 95% compliance before initiating measures to improve compliance.
3. Commercial dog-walking should not be permitted in the GGNRA. This is a commercial activity in the park and the Park Service cannot legally permit it.
4. At least some trails in San Francisco should be entirely closed to dogs. Under the current plan, nearly every trail in San Francisco is open to at least on-leash dogs, meaning no trails are available for people who prefer to enjoy the outdoors without interacting with dogs.
5. While dogs are important parts of our families and communities, they are just one animal that is having a significant negative impact on thousands of other animals and plants that rely on the park to survive and many other human visitors. The parks should be maintained to be safe and accessible for all users and to protect their natural and cultural resources for future generations.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Dog Management Plan. I encourage you to adopt the best measures to protect the National Park's valuable resources for everyone and for future generations.

Thank you,

Your Name