

Here is a sample letter to help you craft your own comment. PLEASE DO NOT SEND THIS LETTER AS IS – it will be considered a form letter and discounted as an important comment.

You do not need to use all of the points; use what is comfortable and important to you – and make sure your comment reflects your experiences and concerns.

This example provides some ideas that you can revise and tailor to your own ideas and values. The brackets indicate some options but these are not exhaustive, and you may have a better idea or way to express them yourself.

(DEIS is an abbreviation for “Draft Environmental Impact Statement)

Send it in before MAY 30th, 2011!!

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Date xx/xx/xx

Frank Dean, General Superintendent
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Building 201, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123-0022

Re; Draft Dog Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Superintendent Dean,

[Introduction: Introduce yourself, identify your neighborhood, say how often you use the GGNRA, and where & how often you take your dog. List the environmental organizations you belong to – to help diffuse the idea that we are anti-environmentalists. Be sure to indicate if you are a member of a minority group – to counter the argument that seniors, the disabled, and racial/cultural minority groups do NOT come to the GGNRA because of off-leash dogs].

The human animal bond is very important to me. As a responsible dog guardian, I keep my dog under voice and sight control, clean up after *her/him*, and keep *her/him* out of the fenced dunes and vegetative areas. It is important for my dog walking friends and me that areas like [name the areas that mean the most to you.] remain open for off leash dog walking access.

I do not agree with the GGNRA’s current preferred alternative as it significantly restricts and eliminates off leash dog walking in many areas within the GGNRA. The proposed

changes to the existing conditions (1979 Pet Policy) and to the new lands in San Mateo County are not based upon sound science or long-term monitoring of site specific conditions.

As presented in the DEIS, the proposed dog management plan eliminates dog-walking (on and off leash) access for all new lands (additions to the GGNRA sometime in the future) within San Mateo county lands. The GGNRA's mission applies equally to new lands as existing lands and it is essential for the GGNRA to consider reasonable and balanced alternatives for dog walking on new lands.

I am concerned about the long-term preservation of the GGNRA's natural resources and want to protect these important natural areas, but other options (besides restricting dog-walking access) should be considered first. For example, it is not clear where dogs are allowed. I think the GGNRA should provide better signage and create environmental barriers, such as the vegetative barriers surrounding the tidal marsh at Crissy Field or the restored dunes at Fort Funston.

As a responsible dog guardian and advocate for animals, I know it is crucial that our dogs are well behaved and trained in order to peacefully co-exist in an urban environment and adequate exercise and socialization is essential for a well-behaved dog. Having places where I can take long walks with my dog allows me to get the exercise I need while also meeting my dog's needs. Without access to the small amount of land in the GGNRA we currently have, I am very concerned that many dog and dog guardians will not have sufficient opportunity to exercise and recreate.

Some areas within the GGNRA also serve as a place of solitude for me and provide me with a very important peace and safe outdoor space and experience within the San Francisco Bay Area, a large metropolitan area.

Some specific problems with the DEIS include the following points. Please revise the DEIS to correct these errors.

This DEIS and Plan doesn't recognize that environmental values include both recreation and nature. In many places, the DEIS treats the environment and recreation as opposing values, i.e., that recreation only harms natural resources. The document doesn't acknowledge that people care about both and that people with dogs are often also good stewards of our environment.

The draft plan has the effect of punishing many people because a very small number are uneducated, insensitive, or irresponsible and because the current signage of off leash areas is unclear. The reasonable response to this problem is to educate visitors, improve signage and help park visitors follow the rules and learn how to respect the environment, not to ban the rest of us with dogs from the GGNRA. I wish that the DEIS would include an alternative along these lines.

The proposed “compliance-based” approach should be modified to create a baseline of current conditions, then measure impacts rather than compliance. It should include a robust public educational component and an objective, long-term monitoring program designed and carried out with the community. The GGNRA should develop partnerships with community, animal welfare, and conservation organizations to make this work. These partner groups could bring additional resources to limited federal resources. GGNRA should be a partner with the City of San Francisco and other communities, not an adversary.

The DEIS doesn’t recognize that many areas of the GGNRA are located in or next to urban neighborhoods. The DEIS excludes the quality of the urban environment from its scope, saying it’s not significant. The reality is that the GGNRA provides much needed open space in a major urban area. This omission is disconcerting because the fundamental purpose of creating the GGNRA was to provide open space for recreation (including dog walking as a form of recreation) to serve the metropolitan Bay Area. The dynamic interrelationship between GGNRA and our neighborhoods is exactly the human environment that the EIS is required to study, but failed to do so.

The DEIS notes some studies and general *tendencies* of dogs to harm natural resources, but with few exceptions, there is little documented site-specific impacts to support the restrictions of the preferred alternatives. Further, there is insufficient documentation that considers other impacts – other park visitors that disturb and impair the natural resources, other wildlife, Mother Nature, boot camps, bicyclists, huge crowd attracting events such as Fleet Week, festivals and Walk-a-thons. The proposed broad limitations in the DEIS are without site-specific science that demonstrates that problems with the quality of GGNRA’s natural resources are actually attributable to dogs and not to other factors.

The DEIS needs to provide full disclosure to the public and decision makers. If dog-related disturbances are having a significant negative effect on wildlife, for example, the DEIS needs to provide site-specific scientific evidence as documentation and undertake a scientific evaluation as to whether people or other factors are also causing or contributing to the problem noted. [*You could give examples where the DEIS says there are impacts in an area that you have not observed in that area or where the problem is does not seem to be caused by dog*]. If they are, GGNRA needs to provide an analysis that considers whether people should also be restricted from these areas. We need this documentation in order to comment meaningfully on the draft plan and DEIS. The science needs to be sound and the consequences need to be fully and fairly disclosed for everyone – so that an informed decision can be made.

And lastly, [*this is where you state your own preferred alternative*], after much consideration, I support Alternative A, the No Action alternative and would also include the “New Lands” areas (such as Cattle Hill, Sweeny Ridge, Mori Point, Pedro Point and Milagra Ridge and Rancho Corral de Tierra) in San Mateo county.

The DEIS is biased against and does not take a hard look at the No Action alternative or variations on that alternative. There are many areas in the GGNRA where the existing

1979 Pet Policy has been working, and where sensitive species are not present and visitor conflicts do not occur or are very infrequent. In addition, the DEIS does not provide site-specific information that these areas are inappropriate for continued dog walking.

Respectfully,

Your name
Address

CC:
Representative Nancy Pelosi, 8th Congressional District of California, House
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Ken Salazar, Secretary of Interior

Jon Jarvis, National Park Service Director

*[YOUR local dog group, i.e., Fort Funston Dog Walkers, Crissy Field Dog Group, Marin
Unleashed, Montara Dog Group, etc.]*

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CC addresses for your reference:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0508

Secretary Ken Salazar
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Mr. Jon Jarvis, Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Take a moment to add a personal note to the officials you are copying

