

August 22, 2005



Secretary Gale Norton
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Director Fran P. Mainella
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Regional Director Jon Jarvis
Pacific West Region
National Park Service
One Jackson Center
1111 Jackson Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Superintendent Brian O'Neill
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Fort Mason, Building 201
San Francisco, CA 94123

Dear Secretary Norton, Director Mainella, Regional Director Jarvis, and Superintendent O'Neill:

I am writing to express the American Humane Association's support for the adoption of regulations requiring dogs to be leashed, or otherwise humanely restrained, while in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, as described by the petition, submitted by a broad coalition of groups that includes Action for Animals; Guide Dogs for the Blind; Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth; Environmental Quality for Urban Parks; Center for Biological Diversity; Golden Gate Audubon Society; Sierra Club, San Francisco Bay Chapter; California Naïve Plant Society, Yerba Buena Chapter; San Francisco League of Conservation Voters; and Dune Ecological Restoration Team.

As the oldest national organization dedicated to protecting children and animals, our main concern in having unrestrained pets in a place like Golden Gate National Recreation Area is the increased potential it poses for injury and harm to the animals themselves, as well as to the human visitors.

A companion animal is susceptible to a number of diseases – including rabies and bubonic plague – and parasites that can be carried by wild animals. Many of these diseases can be a threat to human health as well. A person has no way of keeping their unrestrained dog from chasing wildlife, consuming the remains of wild animals, or coming in contact with fecal matter, all potential vectors of contagions.

2005-08-22 10:00 AM
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Regional Director Jarvis, and Superintendent O'Neill

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Additionally, the majority of dogs will chase any species of wildlife if given the opportunity, regardless of whether they are hungry or aggressive/protective, or if they've been bred or trained for hunting. Without being able to physically restrain their dogs, owners have no way of preventing injury or death to their pets when their animals are free to interact with wild animals or race across dangerous terrain. Unrestrained dogs interfere with the enjoyment and safety of human visitors to Golden Gate National Recreation Area. A horse approached by a dog may buck its rider or flee from the trail and become lost. Humans may be frightened, tripped, or even bitten by dogs that are out of their owners' control. Dogfights may break out. Meanwhile, unleashed dogs can also cause damage to trails, public facilities, and the ecosystem.

We understand the joy of sharing outdoor adventures with our pets and want to ensure those opportunities continue to be available at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. However, without leash requirements in place and enforced, the potential for adventure is too close to being the potential for accidental injury for both dogs and people.

Thank you for your consideration of this important petition.

Sincerely,



Marie Belew Wheatley
President & CEO

MBW/br

cc: Brent Plater, Staff Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity
San Francisco Bay Area Office
1095 Market St., Suite 511
San Francisco, CA 94103