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December 21, 2005

Secretary Gale Norton
Department of 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 you on behalf of Guide Dog Users, Inc. (GDUI) an international organization dedicated to advocacy, peer support, public education and all aspects of training, working and living with dogs specially-trained to guide blind and visually-impaired people. GDUI does not train or place guide dogs; but acts as an independent resource network; providing information; support and advice concerning guide dogs; guide; dog training and access laws to its members; the media and the public at large.

GDUI urges you to support the adoption of regulations requiring dogs to be leashed while in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, as described in the petition dated August 16, 2005 and submitted by a broad coalition of groups.

In a 2003 GDUI survey, 89% of guide dog handlers reported incidents of interference from unleashed dogs, placing these visually impaired individuals in serious danger. Even when an interfering pet dog simply wants to play, the team's attention to important elements of safe travel is distracted making the blind person vulnerable to the dangers of traffic and other environmental challenges. 42% of respondents have been the victims of attacks by unleashed dogs causing physical and psychological injury to both members of the team and even death or premature retirement of the guide dog which can cost more than \$50,000 to replace.

GDUI supports the enforcement of leash laws in general because such laws provide important safeguards for people, our pets, wildlife, and parks. Enforcement of the National Park System's leash law would insure dogs have reasonable access to the Park without jeopardizing the safety of disabled individuals partnered with specially trained assistance dogs, pet dogs, wildlife, or park visitors.

The petition explains cogently why a system of voice commands has been ineffective in protecting dogs from harm, leaving guide dogs who are bred to be gentle and unlikely to defend themselves particularly vulnerable to attack. Therefore, GDUI again urges support for the promulgation and enforcement of the National Park System's leash law at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Sincerely,

Sheila Styron, President
Guide Dog Users, Inc.