

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Protecting Parks for Future Generations

April 2, 2006

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

Dear Superintendent O'Neill:

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) writes in support of the petition filed on August 16, 2005 by a broad coalition of groups, calling for leash law enforcement during the negotiated rulemaking process, in efforts to help protect the resources and provide safe visitor experience at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). NPCA is a non-profit organization with a primary mission to protect and enhance America's national parks for present and future generations. As the nation's largest membership organization dedicated solely to national parks, we represent a broad array of existing and potential park users. We have more than 300,000 members nationwide, with more than 40,000 members in the state of California.

Federal regulations require dogs to be leashed or otherwise physically restrained in the National Park System. Despite that, GGNRA is the only unit of the National Park System known not to enforce leash laws throughout the park. Leash laws provide important safeguards for people, our pets, wildlife, and our parks, and the National Park System's leash law has effectively protected every other unit within the system—while providing responsible access for dogs and owners—for decades.

In addition to federal regulations, a poll included in the materials with the petition shows that more than 70 percent of Bay Area residents are in favor of leash law enforcement at the park, revealing that the current voice control measures are not the preferred method for pet management. No doubt, the issue of pet management at GGNRA is complex and has a history dating back several years; however, the petition proposes a middle-ground solution geared towards responsible dog ownership.

NPCA plans to engage in the EIS planning process, and looks forward to progress from the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee to implement leash laws. Still, the recommendations from the Committee may not be finalized until 2007, with implementation taking place in 2008. All the while, people, pets, and sensitive wildlife within the park would go unprotected. NPCA urges GGNRA to initiate emergency rulemaking procedures to restore leash law enforcement at the park on an interim basis until a long-term solution is identified.

Sincerely,



Neal Desai
Program Coordinator, Pacific Region, National Parks Conservation Association

Cc: Director Fran P. Mainella, National Park Service



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