

Attachment:

A brief review of research at the GGNRA

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) is a large urban unit of the National Park Service. The parklands run for 40 miles north and south of the Golden Gate Bridge and parklands are managed in three counties in the San Francisco Bay Area. In recent years, visitation has ranged from 16 and 20 million persons annually, making GGNRA visitation among the largest in NPS. Ocean Beach, the Presidio, Crissy Field, and Lands End are all located in San Francisco County. These parklands comprise the heart of GGNRA and receive substantial visitation from locals, Bay Area residents, and tourists.

Most of the sustained social science research at the GGNRA has centered on two destination areas within the park. Solid visitor profiles and valuable management data have been collected at Muir Woods National Monument and Muir Beach (Manning, Budruk, Valliere, & Hallo, n.d.) and Alcatraz National Historic Site (Manning, 2007b; Manning, Lawson, Wang, & Valliere, 1998). Protocols have been developed and refined (VERP and soundscape) and significant contributions to professional practice have emerged from the research at the GGNRA's premier destination sites.

Trail user studies at various park sites (Manning, 2007a; Tierney, 2004, 2005, 2007) and a trails and bikeway study at the Presidio (2000) have added to the knowledge base about these visitors. Several transportation studies were completed in the Presidio shortly after the Presidio Trust assumed responsibility for the interior portions of the Presidio (Presidio, 1999, 2000). An observational visitor count was completed on two weekends at Crissy Field in 2000 (David Binder Research) and replicated in 2006 (Tierney). Farrell (2003) completed a comprehensive analysis of participants in GGNRA community-based stewardship programs.

To provide additional public opinion data to guide park decision-making on pet management, a RDD (random digit dialing) telephone interview was conducted in four Bay Area counties (Solop, 2002). The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy commissioned other public opinion research through a series of focus groups about six years ago (David Binder Research, 2001, 2002). More recently, Roberts (2007) completed research on racial and ethnic minority perceptions and park usage patterns using focus groups around the Bay Area.

Baseline data have been collected at the new parklands in San Mateo County (Manning, 2007; Tierney, 2004). At the other end of the GGNRA, a multi-year transportation planning effort (Transportation Management Plan/CTMP, 2002a, 2002b; Water Shuttle, 2003 and 2007) focused on park-related travel to and around Marin County yielded demographic data as well as information about visitor travel patterns and activity preferences for the Marin County parklands.

These studies have been well designed and well executed, and they have provided valuable guidance to park managers for individual sites, helped to inform leaders about

important park management issues, and developed profiles for important park user groups (e.g., trails and volunteers). It is clear from a review of the existing research at GGNRA that people care deeply about these parks, and they are able to provide valuable feedback about their patterns and preferences for the future of the parklands.

Despite these valuable contributions, additional data are essential. Many of the data sets were assembled prior to substantial park restoration efforts. Other data, collected in the late 1990s or early in the new century, are approaching the end of their utility as new groups come of age, and the social, demographic, and economic factors that influence visitation change.

This research project is designed to address a large data gap in the heart of the GGNRA. Annual visitation to the two coastal sites (Ocean Beach and Crissy Field) is estimated in the millions. Visitation estimates for the Presidio, which includes Crissy Field, exceed four million annually. Lands End is an important segment of the California Coast Trail and the site of the first large-scale philanthropic investment in the GGNRA Trails Forever Initiative.

All four sites are in exciting “park-making” phases with many long-awaited projects beginning to attract the necessary resources for planning and implementation. The research proposed in this project will aid park planners and leaders by developing visitor profiles and establishing baseline data for important park indicators in key San Francisco County sites. The data will also feed directly into the park’s General Management Plan.

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