



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Parks Department



DATE: January 29, 2015

COMMISSION MEETING DATE: February 5, 2015

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Brenda Bennett, Executive Secretary
SUBJECT: Park News

Attached are news items of interest for the Commission.

1. January 6, 2015 Mercury News: Public challenges National Park Service proposed restrictions.
2. January 8, 2015 Half Moon Bay Review: County Parks expands commemorative program.
3. January 20, 2015 Mercury News: For Professor Joe Morlan, it's all about the birds.

Public challenges National Park Service proposed restrictions

By Jean Bartlett Features correspondent

Updated: 01/06/2015 05:02:49 PM PST

MercuryNews.com

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNR) — National Park Service (NPS) offers a list of areas on their website that are open to on leash dog walking only as well as places that are open to on leash or voice control dog walking. The latter grouping includes, in Marin: Muir Beach, Homestead Valley, Coastal Trail from Golden Gate Bridge to junction with Wolf Ridge Trail, and Wolf Ridge Loop (Coastal Trail to Wolf Ridge Trail; Wolf Ridge Trail to Miwok Trail; Miwok Trail back down to Coastal Trail). In San Francisco that list includes: Baker Beach, north of Lobos Creek, Fort Miley, and Fort Funston, excluding the 12-acre closure in northwest Fort Funston and the northern end of the Coastal trail, closed due to erosion.

On leash dog walking only includes, in San Mateo County: Milagra Ridge trails, Mori Point trails, Sweeney Ridge trails (except for the Notch Trail which is closed to dog walking), and Rancho Corral de Tierra. In Marin County that list includes: Fort Baker, County View Road and Marin Drive connector trails to North Miwok Trail and Fire road around Battery Smith-Guthrie. In San Francisco that list includes: Sutro Heights, Fort Mason and Fort Point lands, excluding inside the fort and the pier. The website, <http://www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/pets.htm>, also includes areas in the GGNRA that are closed to dogs, regulations that apply to all dog walkers and documents relating to the draft Dog Management Plan (DMP) and Environmental Impact Statement.

Airing December 25-28 on Alice @97.3 FM, Save Our Recreation — a developing organization that serves as an umbrella group to bring people and organizations supporting recreation together — presented a radio ad asking the public to inform themselves about "dramatic changes proposed by the NPR." Their goal, with public support, is to "keep recreational access to the GGNRA like it has been for decades."

The ad is in response to the draft DMP and Environmental Impact Statement released by NPS in January of 2011 for public review. The draft plan includes, among other things, adjustments to dog walking access for five sites in the preferred alternative and site specific analysis for Rancho Corral de Tierra.

Save Our Recreation states, "The National Park Service is trying to dramatically change how it has successfully managed public recreation areas in the San Francisco Bay Area for more than 40 years. It's planning to turn the majority of open space in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) into controlled zones, where visitor access and activities will be highly restricted."

In regards to the DMP, Save Our Recreation notes that due to 4,000 public comments, in 2013, the NPS released a revised version of the DMP. This time, 6,500 public comments were submitted against it and as a result, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the Marin County Board of Supervisors "both passed resolutions opposing the plan. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors also called on the GGNRA to rethink their plan." The final version of the Dog Management Plan is expected at the end of 2015.

Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA14) was the voice of the recent one-minute ad.

"We all love the Bay Area and one of the greatest things about our region is the access to world-class recreational opportunities, like the Golden Gate National Recreation Area," Congresswoman Speier said. "Unfortunately, there is an effort to dramatically cut these recreational uses which include limiting access to areas like: Ocean Beach, Fort Funston, Muir Beach and Rancho Corral de Tierra for people and their dogs. Simply put, we cannot allow that to happen. Fortunately, a growing coalition of Bay Area residents is standing up to support preserving recreation in these places. I've joined them and I am asking you to do the same."

The Congresswoman additionally asked listeners to visit the website, <http://www.saveourrecreation.com/>, and sign the website's petition in order to, "stop the proposal to limit recreational uses in the GGNRA."

Jean Bartlett can be reached at editor@jeansmagazines.org

County Parks expands commemorative program

By Julia Reis [julia@hmbreview.com] | Posted: Thursday, January 8, 2015 10:03 am

San Mateo County Parks is expanding a program that allows patrons to memorialize a friend or loved one while also infusing needed dollars into the department.

For more than 20 years, County Parks has accepted \$5,000 donations toward commemorative benches that recognize individuals, groups or historic events related to the park or community at-large. Last year, 13 benches were dedicated throughout the system, including at Devil's Slide Trail. The county has erected 124 such benches since the program began in 1994.

Now, due to growing demand for such commemoration opportunities, County Parks is adding a similar program for picnic tables. Doing so allows the department to meet requests from those who want to recognize a person or group while also meeting a need for new picnic tables in several county parks, including Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Memorial County Park. There is a master list of more than 50 needed tables, according to San Mateo County Parks Development Consultant Cecily Harris.

“In 2014, County Parks added new properties such as Devil's Slide Trail, Friendship Park and Moss Beach Park to the system,” Harris said in an email. “Additional properties, additional need and requests allow the program to grow.”

A \$5,000 donation covers the purchase of a bench or picnic table, plaque, installation and 10 years of maintenance. These can be rededicated after a decade for an additional fee. County Parks will also consider the dedication of an existing bench or table depending on its location.

Donations can be used now or held until enough funds are identified to underwrite a project.



Mary DeLong and Nancy Gallagher

Mary DeLong, left, of Montara, and Nancy Gallagher, of Redwood City, sit on a bench that is part of San Mateo County's commemorative bench program. The pair was captured on a Friday visit to the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in Moss Beach.

For Professor Joe Morlan, it's all about the birds

By Jean Bartlett Features Correspondent San Jose Mercury News

Posted: Tue Jan 20 18:08:59 MST 2015

MercuryNews.com

Pacifican Joe Morlan is one of the foremost birders in Northern California. The MIT graduate has taught field ornithology at City College of San Francisco since 1978. He is the coauthor of "Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area" and "Birds of Northern California." He is the Chair of the California Bird Records Committee and recipient of the 2010 Ludlow Griscom Award for contributions to regional ornithology. He is a sought out lecturer and a born teacher.

"I just put some bird seed outside and look what we have," the delighted ornithologist noted.

"White-crowned Sparrows, Golden-crowned Sparrows, Lincoln's Sparrows. The White-throated Sparrow is considered a rarity, but we have three of them. Last year we had five. It's an Eastern bird. There was not a record of a White-throated Sparrow in California until about 1880. Twenty years later, there were only 15 records. Now they are in my backyard and in Vallemar. Is that because there are more of them or is it because there are more people who know what they are seeing?"

A Pacifica resident since 1996, Morlan was born and raised in New York. First in East Chatham, in the Berkshire Mountains, and then in Pearl River, NY, right on the New Jersey border.

"I had a wonderful childhood and there was lots of nature all around," Morlan said. "I collected bugs and turtles and there were these Golden Guides that helped you identify all these little things you might find."

When Morlan was about ten, he got his first pair of binoculars and because of their ability to safely bring him closer to all the fascinating details of birds, he discovered a lifelong interest and a passion to share it.

"Right now there is a Rustic Bunting in Golden Gate Park," Morlan said. "It is the fifth record of a Rustic Bunting in California and the first one that anybody has been able to go and see for a prolonged period of time. It's been there for a month. People are calling from all over the country to see that bird."

"People think birds are free spirits and they can just go wherever they want," Morlan continued. "But they are creatures of habit. Once that Rustic Bunting settled into Golden Gate Park, it is on the same brush pile every day."

On a side note, Morlan dispelled the myth that baby birds who fall out of the nest cannot be put back in.

"Most birds can't smell," Morlan noted. "That's why there are so many birds in the dump. They do not abandon their babies if a human touches it. But if you can't put it back in the nest, don't touch it. The parents will do the best job of taking care of it."

For over 20 years, Morlan ran the Northern California Bird Box for the Golden Gate Audubon Society. This is a telephone messaging system where individuals report rare bird sightings and their locations. While still in use, Morlan said there are more instantaneous sources for today's techy world, such as the real-time, global birder website eBird. (In March of 2012, eBird participants reported more than 3.1 million bird observations across North America.)

Morlan's website, <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorlan/>, offers all kinds of links for birders. A talk with Morlan provides links to "best" local birding.

"San Pedro Valley Park is excellent," Morlan said. "Rockaway Beach is good as is Mori Point, the Archery Range, Milagra Ridge, San Pedro Creek and the mouth of the Calera Creek."

In Morlan's own backyard he has seen a Double-crested Cormorant, a Great Blue Heron, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (an Eastern bird), a Turkey Vulture, a Harris's Sparrow, a Tennessee Warbler, and the list goes on.

"Here's a philosophical question," the ornithologist chuckled. "If a Tennessee Warbler is in your yard but nobody knows what it is, did it happen?"

Through his classes and lectures, Morlan tries to educate volunteers to identify the birds they see.

"This is citizen science," Morlan said, "and through this data we learn whether birds are doing well or poorly, and if it is poorly, what are the causes. This brings us to conservation and the lives around us. Think about these little creatures and the things they had to go through to get here. Annually, we have seabirds off our coast that migrate from New Zealand. How did they do it?"

Evening bird classes taught by Joe Morlan (Field Ornithology III on Tuesday and Field Ornithology II on Wednesday), will start February 24 and 25 and run 12 weeks (May 19 and 20, respectively). All classes meet from 7 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. in room 218 at City College of San Francisco, John Adams Center, 1860 Hayes Street, San Francisco. Visit <http://goldengateaudubon.org/education/classes/> for details.

Jean Bartlett can be reached at editor@jeansmagazines.org.