

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS SUMMARY

PROJECT TITLE: Sweeney Ridge

	REQUIRED	DATE/ACTION/COMMENTS
PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE Section 7		
XXX		
106		
Archeo.		
MEMO TO FILES (Categ. Excl.)		
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT Draft		
To PRC		
To WRO		
Final		10-15-84
To PRC		
FONSI (without formal public review)		8-1-85
PRESS RELEASE (for both EA and FONSI)		EA - 10/12/84 10/14/84 for Public meetings
ADVISORY COMMISSION REVIEW		San Mateo Committee 1-22-85
PUBLIC MEETING		Weds Nov 7, 1984 7:30P. Pacifica " Nov 14, 1984 7:30 Ft. Mason
PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD		review letter 9-6-85 10-15-84 to 12-14-84
REVIEW OF RESPONDENTS Summary		
Staff Report		no date / Staff review EA 9-13-84
FONSI - Approved by Reg.Dir.		8-22-85
PERMITS/APPROVALS NEEDED		
COASTAL COMMISSION		
BCDC		
COE		
Other		
PROJECT START		
PROJECT COMPLETION		
AMENDMENTS TO ASSESSMENTS		
" " GMP		

NEWS RELEASE

u.s. department of the interior

national park service

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nancy Hornor (415) 556-4137
TDD ONLY (415) 556-2766

ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVES FOR SWEENEY RIDGE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

An Environmental Assessment of Alternatives for development of Sweeney Ridge was released today by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, announced General Superintendent John H. Davis.

The assessment reviews three alternative levels of development for the recently acquired 1,100 acre site that range from low-intensity use of the existing trails to construction of a two-lane paved access road to the ridge top near the San Francisco Bay Discovery Site and other development including a visitor center, picnic area and campground.

There will be a 60 day public review period for the assessment which will end on Friday, December 14. Public testimony will also be received at two hearings held by the GGNRA Advisory Commission. Meeting dates are Wednesday, November 7, 7:30 p.m. at Pacifica City Council Chambers and Wednesday, November 14, 7:30 p.m. at GGNRA Headquarters, Bldg. 201, Fort Mason, San Francisco.

Copies of the assessment will be available at GGNRA Headquarters, Fort Mason, at the intersection of Bay and Franklin Streets, in San Francisco. Copies may also be obtained by writing to the General Superintendent, GGNRA, Bldg. 201, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123 or by calling the Division of Resource Management and Planning at (415) 556-4137.

For information about the Advisory Commission hearing, call the GGNRA Staff Assistant at (415) 556-4484.

10/12

** GOGA **

NEWS RELEASE

u.s. department of the interior

national park service

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shirwin Smith (415) 556-4484

GGNRA WILL HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS IN NOVEMBER ON SWEENEY RIDGE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area Advisory Commission will hold two public meetings in November to hear public comment on the Environmental Assessment of Alternatives for the development of Sweeney Ridge.

The first meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 7, at the Pacifica City Council Chambers, 2212 Beach Boulevard in Pacifica. The Sweeney Ridge assessment will be the major agenda item for that meeting.

The second meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 14, at GGNRA headquarters, Building 201, Fort Mason in San Francisco. The agenda for the meeting will include briefings by the staff of the Presidio of San Francisco on construction projects planned for 1985 and on the Presidio's reforestation plan, comment on the Sweeney Ridge assessment and a committee report on the development plans for the Headlands Art Center.

The assessment of alternatives for the development of Sweeney Ridge presents three possible alternatives for development: A. Enhance the natural qualities with minimum change; B. Increase visitor services and access; C. Maximize visitor services and access. Alternative A would cause little change to the ridge, merely improving existing trails and allowing seniors and handicapped visitors to use private vehicles to reach the ridge top via Sneath Lane. Alternative B would add a shuttle bus service from Pacifica to the ridge via Sneath Lane, a horse rental concession offering guided rides to the ridge and a 10-site picnic area with restrooms and a few interpretive exhibits on the ridge top.

(More)

Alternative C would include all the improvements of Alternatives A and B with the addition of a two-way paved road to the top of the ridge. The possible road sites are Mori Ridge and Sneath Lane, the existing one-way road. Additional elements in this alternative are a visitor center on or near the California Department of Transportation property at the end of Mori Ridge with access from Highway One, a 100-car parking lot on the ridge at the end of the new access road and a hike-in campground in the middle or northern sections of the ridge.

Persons wishing copies of the assessment of alternatives for Sweeney Ridge should contact the GGNRA Resource Management and Planning Division at (415) 556-4137 or pick up a copy at GGNRA headquarters, Fort Mason, Building 201 in San Francisco at the intersection of Bay and Franklin Streets. The assessment will be available for public review for 60 days, through December 14.

Anyone who wishes to submit written testimony to the Advisory Commission on any of the agenda items for the upcoming meetings or who has any questions concerning these meetings should contact Shirwin Smith, GGNRA Staff Assistant, Fort Mason, Building 201, San Francisco, California 94123, telephone (415) 556-4484.

10/17/84

#



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
FORT MASON, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94123

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L76 (WR-GOGA)

SEP 6 1985

Dear Reviewer:

Enclosed is a copy of the Finding of No Significant Impact for the Proposed Development of Sweeney Ridge and Amendment to the General Management Plan. This is the final decision document for this project and should be attached to the Environmental Assessment of October 15, 1984. We thank you for your interest in this process. If you have any questions about this project or the review process, please call Nancy Hornor at 556-4137.

Sincerely,

for John H. Davis
General Superintendent

Enclosure

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/ SWEENEY RIDGE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

On October 15, 1984, the National Park Service released an Assessment of Alternatives for the Development of Sweeney Ridge, a 1,047 acre parcel of land acquired by the NPS in 1983. Three alternatives and their impacts were analyzed by this assessment:

1. Enhance Natural Qualities with Minimum Visible Change
2. Increase Visitor Services and Access
3. Maximize Visitor Services and Access

These alternatives and their impacts are summarized in the attached table from the assessment.

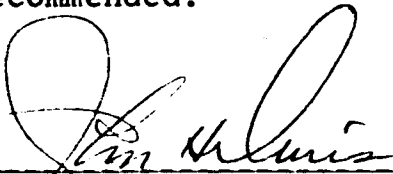
Public testimony on the assessment was heard in two public meetings held in November, 1984. Correspondence was received from many individuals and organizations commenting on the alternatives in the assessment. A staff report was prepared to compile the general points of agreement, issues and recommendations for a plan for Sweeney Ridge. A draft amendment to the 1980 General Management Plan was presented at a Citizens' Advisory Commission Meeting in February, 1985. The Citizens' Advisory Commission met in April, 1985 and adopted the attached amendment. The proposed plan for Sweeney Ridge contains elements of each of the alternatives evaluated in the assessment. Proposed development will preserve natural qualities and the historic setting and increase opportunities for public access by developing trailheads, allowing special access over the existing one lane paved road for seniors and handicapped visitors, and encouraging the provision of guided horseback rides.

Impacts of the proposed amendment include temporary noise, dust and traffic generated by Nike site building demolition and other construction. Correction of erosion problems and removal of the Nike buildings will restore approximately 12 acres to vegetation. Approximately two acres of vegetation will be disturbed by construction of a picnic area, a trailhead and visitor center and other access improvements. Improvements in access may result in a peak day visitation of 600. Impacts are discussed in greater detail in the Environmental Assessment (October 15, 1985). An archeological clearance survey has been done and proposed work involving ground disturbance will begin after appropriate clearances have been received from the National Park Service Western Archeological Center. Removal and disposal of any asbestos containing materials from the Nike site buildings will

be done in compliance with applicable OSHA and EPA standards.

Based on the Environmental Assessment, subsequent environmental review and the impacts of the proposed plan, the National Park Service records a Finding of No Significant Impact. Since this project does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Recommended:



General Superintendent, Golden Gate

8/1/85
Date

Approved:



Regional Director, Western Region

8/22/85
Date



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
FORT MASON, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94123

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L76 (WR-GOGA)

October 15, 1984

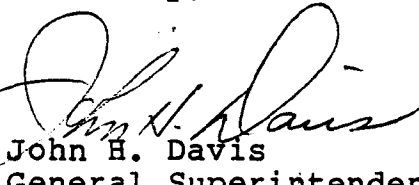
Dear Reviewer:

Enclosed is a copy of the Environmental Assessment of Alternatives for Development of Sweeney Ridge. Comments on the assessment and the proposed alternatives should be addressed to the General Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area; Building 201, Fort Mason; San Francisco, California 94123.

The 60 day public review period will end on December 14, 1984. Two public meetings will be held with the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Citizens' Advisory Commission to take public testimony on the alternatives. The meetings will be held on Wednesday, November 7, 1984, 7:30 p.m. at Pacifica City Council Chambers, 2212 Beach Blvd., Pacifica, and on Wednesday, November 14, 7:30 p.m. at GGNRA Headquarters, Bldg. 201, Fort Mason, in San Francisco. After that date all comments and testimony received will be considered together with the assessment and a final plan will be presented at a public meeting in January.

If you have any questions about this proposal or the review process, contact Nancy Hornor at 556-4137.

Sincerely,



John H. Davis
General Superintendent

Enclosure

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
ALTERNATIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT
SWEENEY RIDGE

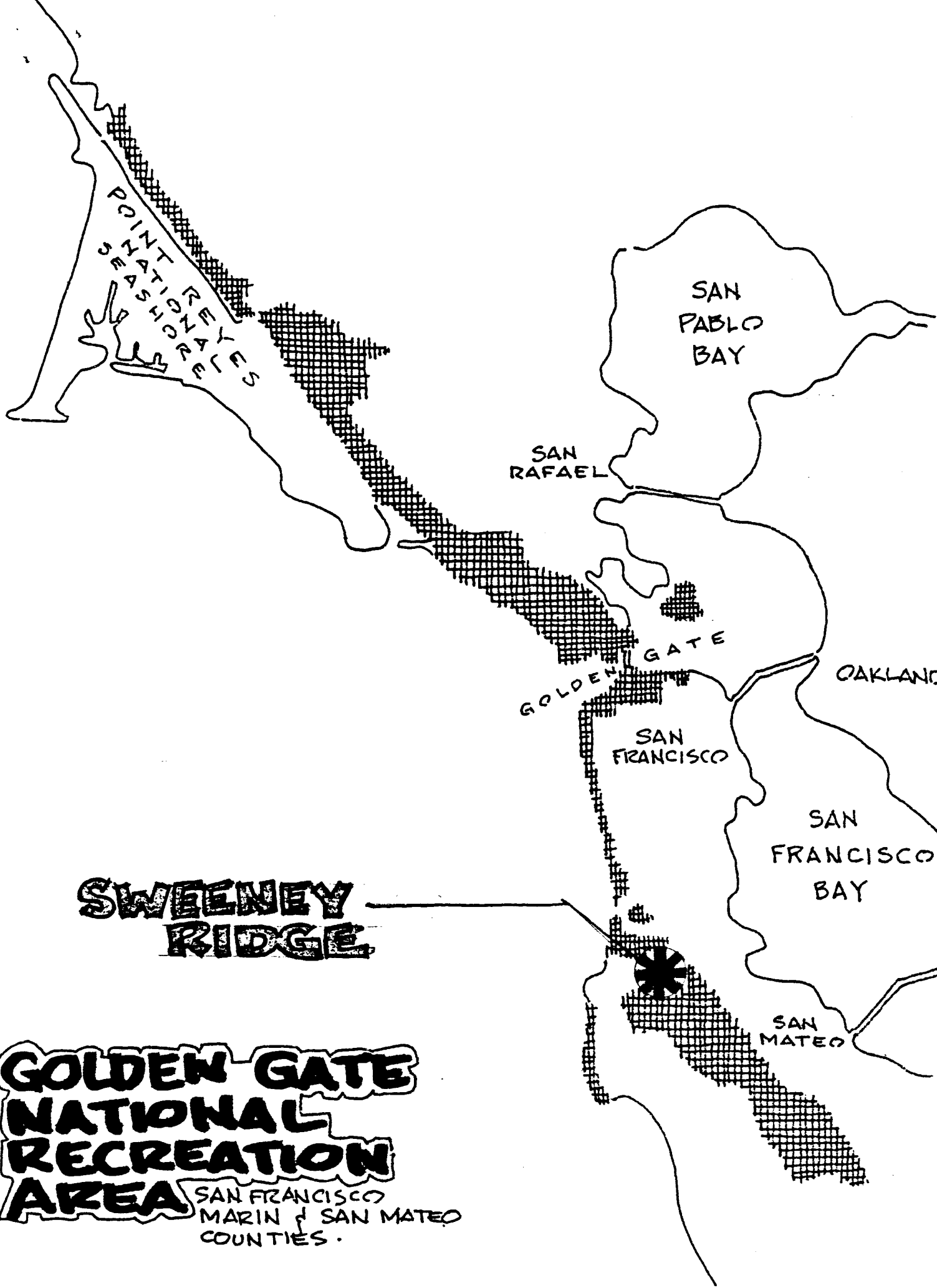
I. Background

A. General

In December of 1980 Public Law #96-607 expanded the authorized boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to include approximately 26,000 acres of land within San Mateo County the majority of which was already in public ownership. The exception to this rule was the 1,047 acre parcel of private land adjacent to the site that many historians believe to be the location from which the Portola expedition first viewed the expanses of San Francisco Bay in 1769--Sweeney Ridge. In 1983 Sweeney Ridge was acquired by the National Park Service to prevent its development for residential purposes and to preserve its natural, cultural and recreation values.

Because Public Law #96-607 was an amendment to the Act of Congress (P.L. #92-589) that established the GGNRA in 1972, the purpose of the park as articulated in that legislation applies to Sweeney Ridge as well as to the original areas of the park:

"In order to preserve for public use and enjoyment certain areas of Marin and San Francisco Counties, California, (San Mateo County added by P.L. 96-607) possessing outstanding natural, historic, scenic, and recreational values, and in order to provide for the maintenance of needed recreational open space necessary



**SWEENEY
RIDGE**

**GOLDEN GATE
NATIONAL
RECREATION
AREA**
SAN FRANCISCO
MARIN & SAN MATEO
COUNTIES.

D
P
I
N
T
S
A
T
S
H
O
R
E
L
I
N
E
S

SAN
PABLO
BAY

SAN
RAFAEL

GOLDEN GATE

SAN
FRANCISCO

OAKLAND

SAN
FRANCISCO
BAY

SAN
MATEO

← THORNTON BEACH STATE PARK

← DAISAKU IKEDA CANYON (DALY CITY)

← MUSSEL ROCK PARK (DALY CITY)

SAN FRANCISCO BAY

← MILAGRA RIDGE COUNTY PARK

← PACIFICA PIER & BEACH

← SHARP PARK (CITY OF S.F.)

← SKYLINE PRESERVE COUNTY PARK

← CAL-TRANS PROPERTY

← SWEENEY RIDGE

← BAY DISCOVERY SITE (COUNTY)

← SAN PEDRO BEACH

SAN FRANCISCO
SHERIDAN

← SAN PEDRO VALLEY COUNTY PARK

← MONTARA BEACH STATE PARK

← FITZGERALD MARINE RESERVE (COUNTY)



NORTH

← HALF MOON BAY

GGNRA

SAN MATEO COUNTY

to urban environment and planning, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (hereinafter referred to as the 'recreation area') is hereby established. In the management of the recreation area, the Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter referred to as the 'Secretary') shall utilize the resources in a manner which will provide for recreation and educational opportunities consistent with sound principles of land use planning and management. In carrying out the provisions of this Act, the Secretary shall preserve the recreation area, as far as possible, in its natural setting, and protect it from development and uses which would destroy the scenic beauty and natural character of the area."

This environmental assessment represents a major step in the process of determining the future use and development of Sweeney Ridge. The alternative proposals contained within the document have been derived from testimony at public meetings and letters received from users and potential users of the site. Review of the assessment will culminate in two more public meetings of the GGNRA Citizens' Advisory Commission in which people will have the opportunity to select their choices of alternatives or to suggest new ones. Based upon those meetings the commission will formulate a recommendation to the National Park Service which will then form the basis for an amendment to the park's General Management Plan.

B. Natural Factors

Sweeney Ridge is an area of steep slopes, shallow soils and high erosion potential. The ridgeline is the least steep portion of the site with grades of 15% or less, and is the most stable geologically. There is evidence of active or recently active landslides on the north slopes (HKS Associates).

Annual grassland and coastal scrub are the predominant vegetation types found on Sweeney Ridge and represent one of the best examples of the coastal scrub community within GGNRA. There are areas of wetland and riparian vegetation and small groves of exotic trees (eucalyptus and Monterey pine). No rare or endangered plant species are known to occur on the site.

The grassland areas of the site have been grazed by horses for many years, promoting a habitat for wildflowers and giving a mowed appearance. Grazing has also prevented the encroachment of scrub species into the grassland. Although the corral areas are heavily impacted, and there is evidence of trampling in wetlands areas, a range analysis by the U.S. Forest Service found no evidence of overgrazing.

There is a great diversity of wildlife on Sweeney Ridge ranging from rodents to large mammals such as bobcat and coyote. It is likely that a transient population of the San Francisco garter snake, a federally listed endangered species, inhabits the south valley of Sweeney Ridge which forms the headwaters of San Mateo Creek. Potential garter snake habitat exists in stream and wetland areas as well as the adjacent grasslands. Grazing has

reduced the habitat value of the grasslands for this species. (Barry 1979).

Sweeney Ridge drains into five watersheds including San Francisco Water Department lands to the south and east. The headwaters of San Mateo Creek, Calera Creek, Laguna Salada Creek, and San Pedro Creek, a steelhead spawning run, are within the boundaries of the site.

Sweeping views of the Pacific coastline, the San Francisco Bay and the open space lands to the south have long been enjoyed by visitors to the ridge. Views of this open space from the adjacent communities provide a great contrast to their urban development and inspired many to work to protect its natural qualities.

C. Cultural Resources

On October 20, 1769, the exploratory expedition of Gaspar de Portola reached what is now San Mateo County. The Spanish civil-military governor of Baja California and his party were proceeding north along the California coast with the objective of locating Monterey Bay. Having failed to recognize the bay, the party continued on up the coast. On October 27, the expedition camped on the bank of Purissima Creek about five miles south of the present city of Half Moon Bay. They continued their northward march and two days later camped at Martini Creek just north of the present day community of Montara. Proceeding again north, the next day the party made camp in the San Pedro Valley in what is now Pacifica. Finding their way north blocked by forbidding cliffs, scouts under Sergeant Jose Ortega made their way up a

steep hill to the north east where on November 1, they became the first Europeans to view San Francisco Bay.

On November 4, Portola and his party left their San Pedro Valley encampment, this time proceeding inland along the scouts' route toward the crest of that portion of the coastal ridge. They reached the crest at a point on what is now called Sweeney Ridge and Portola and his entire party viewed the Bay. For the next several days the party explored the bayshore and the surrounding lands before returning to San Diego.

The trail along the southern ridge extending from Fassler Avenue is believed by historians to be the route by which the Spanish explorers reached the crest.

An outpost ranch was established in San Pedro Valley in 1785 in order to provide the Mission with fresh produce. In 1839 Rancho San Pedro was granted to Francisco Sanchez and an adobe residence was soon built on the site. It still stands as the Sanchez Adobe Historic Site. The use of the area for cattle grazing continued for many years. It is probable that the name Sweeney Ridge came from the Sweeney family of San Francisco who pastured cattle on the land during the 1860s and 70s.

At present, the ridge is the site of the remains of an Integrated Fire Control Station (IFC) for a Nike Missile Site that was active between 1959 and 1974. The IFC housed radar units to locate intruding aircraft and guide the missiles onto target.

These radars were protected by large white domes which, before removal, were a prominent feature of the skyline.

The five buildings remaining are all of a standard type used at all Nike batteries in the Bay Area. They are heavily vandalized, and are considered to have no historical significance in and of themselves. A similar control station has been preserved in GGNRA at Wolf Ridge, Fort Cronkhite, Marin County to provide for the future interpretation of this aspect of the area's military history.

D. Existing Use and Development

Very little of Sweeney Ridge's 1100 acres has been developed. Two low-key stone monuments mark the San Francisco Bay Discovery Site. This 19.25 acre site is a National Historic Landmark surrounded by San Francisco Watershed and National Park Service lands and managed by the City of Pacifica.

Approximately 700 visitors hike along the Fassler Avenue historical route to the Discovery Site each year, including participants in an annual celebration commemorating Portola's discovery of San Francisco Bay. Five structures in poor condition, pavement and a perimeter fence are all that remain of the Nike Missile Installation that was abandoned in 1974. It is presently used as a corral and for feed storage for the 14 horses grazing on the ridge.

Two high voltage PG&E power lines and an underground gas line cross the property. The North Coast County Water District's 200,000 gallon water storage tank and San Bruno's 400,000 gallon

tank are located there. In recognition of exclusions and easements in the deed, these facilities will remain.

Prior to NPS acquisition use of Sweeney Ridge consisted primarily of hikers along the historical route to the Discovery Site, equestrians from the nearby stables and occasional joggers. Unauthorized off-road vehicle use was heavy, causing damage to trails and steep slopes. Increased public awareness of the site since its acquisition has resulted in additional use, primarily by hikers on the weekend ranger-led walks. Unauthorized off-road vehicle use has decreased.

Trail access to Sweeney Ridge now exists along 4 main routes:

1) The unpaved extension of Fassler Avenue has been the designated trail to the Discovery Site, following the route that Portola is presumed to have taken in 1769. About 1/2 mile west of the GGNRA boundary it becomes an unpaved trail crossing private land. The steep portions of the trail are badly eroded in places. Because it crosses private land, its use is subject to an agreement between the landowner and the NPS.

2) Sneath Lane extends westward from Skyline Boulevard, through a residential community, crosses San Francisco Watershed property and terminates at the ridgetop near the Discovery Site. Except for its initial stretch as a neighborhood street, it is a paved one-lane road originally constructed by the Army for access to the Nike Missile Site. A locked gate prevents unauthorized auto access but allows foot traffic through a hikers' stile. Along with Fassler Avenue this route is used for ranger-led walks of Sweeney Ridge. Sneath Lane west of the locked gate is owned and

maintained by the NPS. Except for trailhead improvements, continued use for trail access to the ridge would not require any development.

3) An existing trail along the north ridge (Mori Ridge) connects the main ridge with Highway 1 at the Shelldance Nursery. This nursery is on a 12-acre parcel owned by CalTrans. Although no formal agreements exist between the NPS and CalTrans or the nursery owner some public access has been allowed, including parking at the nursery. The trail along Mori Ridge is in good condition, requiring minor maintenance for continued use. A series of hazardous conditions at the auto entrance to the Nursery from Highway 1 including high speed traffic, poor sight distance and lack of a traffic signal must be addressed before this site can become a focus of public use.

4) A steep trail connects Skyline College with Sweeney Ridge through the county's Skyline Preserve property. Although no formal agreement exists weekend parking has been allowed at the college. San Mateo County has proposed a hiking trail using this route (Sweeney Ridge Skyline Preserve Trail) which could eventually continue north to Thornton State Beach and south to San Pedro Valley County Park.

A north-south trail extends the length of Sweeney Ridge. It is paved between Sneath Lane and the Nike site. At its south end it terminates at a locked gate to San Francisco Watershed lands. Beyond this gate, Water Department unpaved service roads connect with San Pedro Valley County Park and the Sawyer Camp Trail. San Francisco Watershed managers have stated that public access in

this portion of the watershed cannot be permitted until a new water filtration plant is in operation to handle the impacts of increased public access. This is not anticipated to be completed before 1990. Until that time access to watershed lands is by permit only and limited principally to organized groups.

II. Alternatives

In June, 1984 the GGNRA Citizens' Advisory Committee held three public meetings to receive testimony on alternatives for the future of Sweeney Ridge. These public meetings formed the basis for development of the alternatives discussed in this assessment.

Speakers at the public meetings overwhelmingly emphasized retaining and protecting the natural qualities of Sweeney Ridge. People addressed both trail and auto access, recommending that primary trail access should be from the west and that wheelchair access to the ridge should be provided. Although nearly all speakers advocated hiking or equestrian trails many were opposed to auto access to the ridgetop.

Recommendations for other development included trailhead parking, access to the Discovery Site, a visitor center, camp sites, picnic area and restrooms. Resource management activities were encouraged, ranging from control of exotic vegetation to rehabilitation of eroded areas.

The proposals have been organized into three alternatives that represent three different levels of development. They are:

- A. Enhance the natural qualities with minimum change.
- B. Increase visitor services and access.
- C. Maximize visitor services and access.

The elements of the three alternatives can be interchanged or recombined to form a final plan for Sweeney Ridge.

Steep slopes and potential habitat of the San Francisco garter snake limit the portions of the site that can be considered developable. Because of the possible habitat of the San Francisco garter snake in the south valley, no development is proposed in that area.

Actions Common to All Alternatives

Since Sweeney Ridge was acquired by the NPS, management has focused on improving public awareness of the site and identifying resource management needs. Regardless of the alternative selected, basic resource management, maintenance activities and ranger patrol of the site will continue.

Trails will be maintained and improved to correct erosion problems. Unsuitable or duplicate trails and areas denuded by off road vehicle use will be revegetated. Signing at trailheads and installation of gates will improve public awareness of available access. All alternatives propose removal of the Nike buildings. Surveys for the San Francisco garter snake will be conducted throughout the year to map its habitat and determine actions needed for its protection. This may include restriction or elimination of grazing. Grazing will also be evaluated for its compatibility with visitor use. Other resource management needs

will be addressed when the park's Natural Resources Management Plan and Fire Management Plan are updated.

Description of Each Alternative

A. ENHANCE NATURAL QUALITIES WITH MINIMUM VISIBLE CHANGE.

The intention of this alternative is to minimize the intrusion of new development, recognizing the importance of the natural values of Sweeney Ridge and attempting to enhance them with basic improvements to the existing setting.

Access

Very little change would occur on Sweeney Ridge.

Existing trails would be defined and improved. Where necessary, formal agreements would be initiated with adjacent landowners to assure continued access over non-federal lands. If the trail extending from Fassler Avenue continues to be an important access, the National Park Service would seek to acquire a right-of-way up to the present park boundary.

With the agreement of the community, on-street parking and use of nearby parking lots (Church of the Highlands, formerly Crespi School and Skyline College) will continue to be relied upon as long as they are available and adequate to meet the demand. Trailhead improvements to provide parking space may eventually be needed with increased public access.

Special arrangements for seniors and handicapped visitors could be made to allow private vehicles to use Sneath Lane for access to the ridge.

Nike Site

The buildings and foundations of the Nike Missile Installation would be removed and the site restored to a natural appearance using native plants. A small interpretive exhibit would describe the historic defense function of the Nike system.

Other Development

There would be no other development under this alternative.

B. INCREASE VISITOR SERVICES AND ACCESS.

Access

Under this alternative existing trails would be improved as described in Alternative A. Special arrangements to allow limited auto access for seniors and handicapped visitors would also be made.

In addition a shuttle bus from Pacifica would operate to meet the demand, bringing visitors over Sneath Lane to the top of the ridge.

Since equestrian use of the trails has been popular, an alternative means of access to hiking or a shuttle bus could be provided by a horse rental concession. Historical tours on horseback could be offered using the Portola route and historically costumed guides. Other guided rides could explore the natural values of Sweeney Ridge.

Nike Site

The buildings of the Nike Site would be removed and the site restored or used for other development. Interpretive signs at the site would describe its historic defense function.

Other Development

A small picnic area (10 sites), restrooms, and low profile interpretive exhibits would be located on the ridge. A horse hitching rail would be installed. Siting and design of development would minimize its visibility from below the ridge. Possible sites include the Nike area or the level area adjacent to the Discovery Site (see figure 3).

C. MAXIMIZE VISITOR SERVICES AND ACCESS.

Access

Trail improvements, a shuttle bus and horse concession as described in Alternative B would be included in this alternative. In addition automobile access would be provided along a two-way paved road to the ridge, terminating within walking distance of the Discovery Site. Two alternative routes are considered:

1. Mori Ridge - Beginning at or near the CalTrans property a road would be constructed along Mori Ridge to the Nike Site, varying from the existing trail alignment as necessary for a National Park Service standard grade. From the Nike Site to the Discovery Site the road would follow the existing one-lane paved road widening it to two lanes.
2. Sneath Lane. The existing roadway would be widened to provide for two-way traffic. Changes in grade and alignment would be made

where needed for safety. Careful consultation with the San Francisco Water Department would attempt to minimize impacts to water quality from erosion associated with construction as well as the increased automobile traffic.

Because of known recently active landslides on the north slope of Mori Ridge and the lack of geological information along the Sneath Lane route, a thorough geotechnical study would be made before proceeding with either alignment.

The extension of Fassler Avenue is not considered as an alternative for a paved road. Grading and paving to meet National Park Service standards would have unacceptable impacts on the historical character of the existing trail, changing both its alignment and appearance.

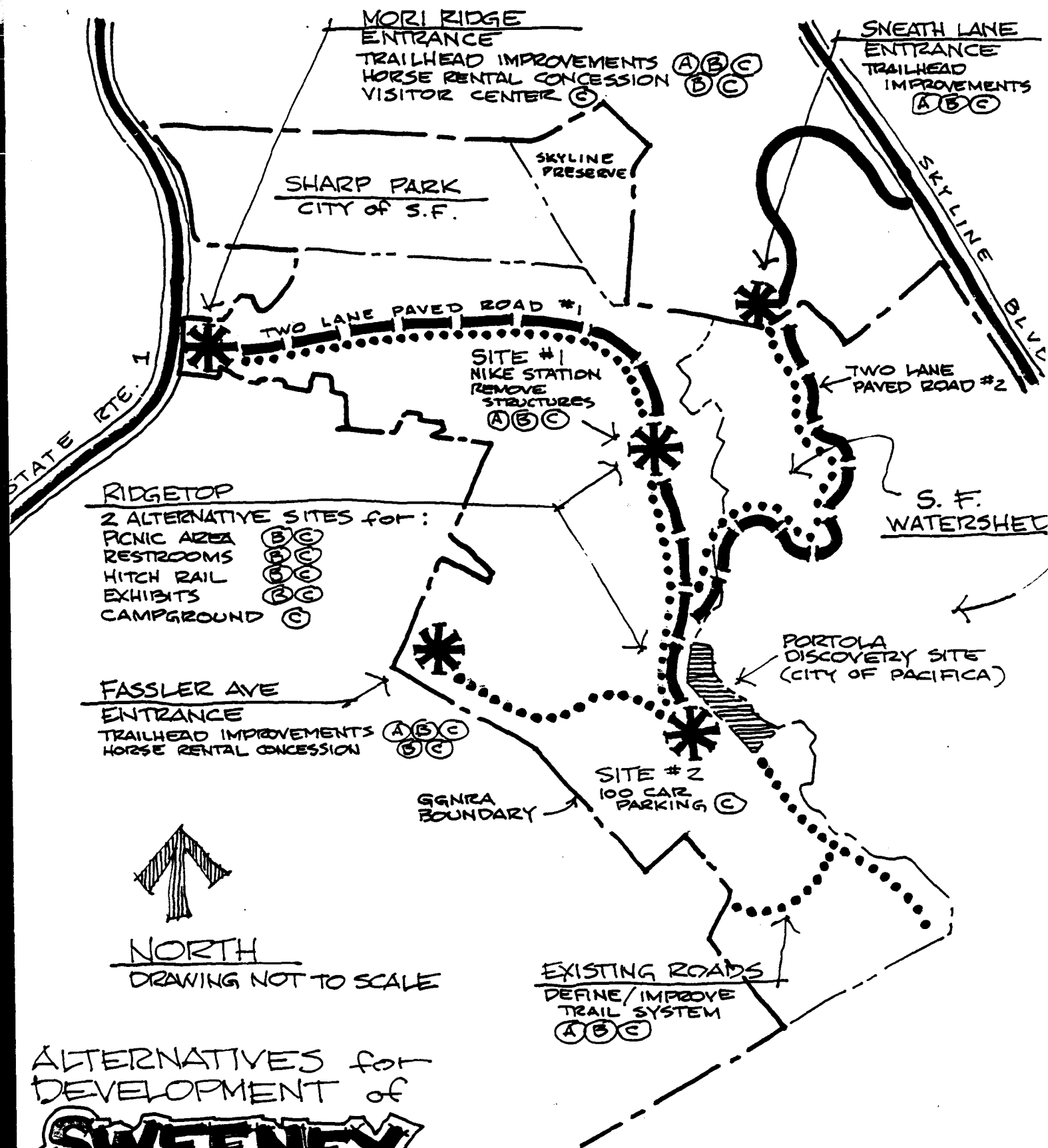
Nike Site

As in alternative A and B the buildings of the Nike Site would be removed. The site would be restored or used for other development. Interpretive signs at the site would describe its historical defense function.

Other Development

A visitor center would be located on or near the CalTrans property for easy access from Highway 1. It would provide interpretive information on the natural and cultural resources of Sweeney Ridge as well as regional park access information.

A 100 car parking lot would be constructed on the ridge at the terminus of the road. Interpretive signs and benches would be placed nearby.



ALTERNATIVES for
DEVELOPMENT of
**SWEENEY
RIDGE**

GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

A hike in campground would be located in the middle or north ridge developable areas. It would include up to 15 sites, restrooms and trash receptacles. Campfires would not be permitted.

Other development described under alternative B (picnic area, hitch rail and restrooms) would also be included in this alternative.

III. Impacts

A. Impacts common to all alternatives

1. Each alternative would include trail improvements and maintenance with the following impacts:

-Erosion caused by uncontrolled runoff and gullying would be corrected. Erosion and sedimentation would be reduced by maintenance activities including grading, installation of check dams and water bars, and revegetation of unsuitable or duplicate trails.

-Signing and installation of hikers' stiles will improve public awareness of the access to Sweeney Ridge and visitation will increase. Visitation attributable to these basic improvements could increase the incidence of trespass into the San Francisco Watershed lands as well as the potential for human caused fires. Increased use of trails by horses and hikers will increase erosion and sedimentation of surrounding waters including a

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES AND QUANTIFICATION OF IMPACTS

ALTERNATIVE	MAXIMUM EXPECTED VISITATION (PEAK DAY)	CHANGES IN VEGETATION CAUSED BY CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION	IMPLEMENTATION/ CONSTRUCTION COSTS
A) <u>ENHANCE NATURAL QUALITIES WITH MINIMUM VISIBLE CHANGE</u>	400	12 acres restored	\$117,000
-Improve and define existing trails			
-Trailhead improvements if needed			
-Special auto access for seniors and handicapped			
-Remove Nike buildings and restore site			
-Small interpretive exhibits at Nike Site			
B) <u>INCREASE VISITOR SERVICES AND ACCESS</u>	600	12 acres restored	\$243,250
-All proposals of (A) PLUS:		1 acre disturbed	
-Shuttle bus from Pacifica			
-Horse rental concession/tours			
-Picnic area			
-Horse hitch rail			
-Restrooms			
-Interpretive Exhibits			
C) <u>MAXIMIZE VISITOR SERVICES</u>	2300	12 acres restored	
-All proposals of (A) and (B) above PLUS:		2 acres disturbed	\$1,332,250-\$2,232,250
-2 way paved road to within walking distance of Discovery Site		6-11 acres removed by construction	
(1) Mori Ridge			
(2) Sneath Lane			
-100 car parking lot			
-Signs, benches			
-Visitor center on/near CalTrans property			
-Hike in campground			
-Restrooms			

drinking water source if San Francisco watershed is affected. Ranger patrol and careful management of use will keep visitor impacts to a minimum.

2. Each alternative calls for removal of the buildings of the Nike Installation with the following impacts:

-Noise, dust and traffic generated by building demolition and removal of materials from the site would temporarily disturb wildlife, visitors, and possibly nearby residents. Work would be done on weekdays, when visitation is lowest. Wildlife will tend to move away from the area during demolition. Burial of non-combustible materials on the site would reduce traffic, noise and cost impacts associated with debris hauling and disposal. Erosion controls and revegetation of the site would minimize erosion impacts. An archeological survey and monitoring during any excavation will protect archeological resources. /

3. Other resource management activities that would occur under any alternative include monitoring grazing impacts and surveying for the San Francisco garter snake. The result of these activities will be an improvement in wildlife habitat and identification of measures needed for protection of a federally listed endangered species.

B. Impacts of Each Alternative

1. Impacts of Alternative A

Access improvements under this alternative would encourage an increase in visitation consisting primarily of individuals and

small groups hiking or riding on existing trails. Participation in the annual San Francisco Bay Discovery celebration and other use of the site by larger organized groups would also be expected to increase. Maximum visitation is estimated in Table 1.

Approximately 12 acres of land would be revegetated with elimination of unsuitable or duplicate trails, gullies and the Nike buildings. Habitat will be created and the natural appearance of the site improved.

After an initial period of implementing this proposal, disturbance caused by human activity will be limited to the low-intensity use of trails. Visual impact will be an improved natural appearance, and the maximum retention of the open space character.

2. Impacts of Alternative B

Visitation would increase more significantly under this alternative, primarily on weekends when the shuttle bus and horse concession would operate (see Table 1). Noise and emissions from traffic on Sneath Lane would increase due to shuttle bus operations on weekends. Approximately 3 round trips would be offered each day, depending on the demand.

Shuttle bus operation would disturb hikers using Sneath Lane. Guidelines for shuttle bus operation would emphasize safe speeds and consideration of hikers.

Increased use of the trails by people and horses has the potential to increase trail width and erosion along the trails on

Sweeney Ridge. Trail maintenance and management of trail use will attempt to keep these impacts to a minimum.

Trampling and some loss of vegetation would occur near the proposed picnic area and horse hitching rail as well as near the San Francisco Bay Discovery Site. Development of the picnic area would result in loss or disturbance of up to 1 acre of vegetation. Restoration of the Nike Site and other revegetation would restore approximately 12 acres of vegetation.

3. Impacts of Alternative C

Automobile access and other development proposed in this alternative would result in the most significant increase in the number of visitors to Sweeney Ridge by providing a quick ascent of the steep slopes and offering a variety of activities at the site.

A broader cross section of visitors would have access to Sweeney Ridge under this alternative. Seniors, handicapped visitors and families with small children would have the ability to drive to the ridge crest rather than rely on a shuttle bus or other special arrangements for access.

Construction of a road would have the following impacts:

-Cutting and filling for road construction would remove vegetation, alter soil profiles and drainage patterns and increase the potential for erosion caused by surface runoff from exposed soils, affecting a drinking water source if Sneath Lane is used.

-Cutting and filling for road construction would require a major alteration of the landform. Exposed cuts would be difficult to revegetate and would be visible from the surrounding area, as far away as Highway 1 or Skyline Boulevard, providing a great contrast to the natural vegetation and rounded landforms that now exist.

-Native vegetation would be removed (see Table 1).

-Noise and human activity associated with road construction would disturb wildlife, park visitors and nearby residents. Subsequent use of the road by automobiles would also disturb hikers, equestrians and wildlife. Wildlife would tend to move away from areas of human activity and occupy the more remote portions of the site and surrounding open space lands.

Other construction impacts for the two road alignments are compared in the following table:

TABLE 2 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE ROAD ALIGNMENTS

	DISTANCE	AVERAGE GRADE	CONSTRUCTION COST
SNEATH LANE	1.76 miles	8%	\$.7 million
MORI RIDGE	2.78 miles	12%	\$1.6 million

Auto emissions from increased traffic on Sweeney Ridge could cause some deterioration in air quality and affect water quality in the San Francisco Watershed.

Automobile traffic on Sweeney Ridge would have a visual and audible impact on what is now a very quiet experience away from urban intrusions. As many as 1500 round trips/day would occur.

Recreational traffic in the area would increase, most notably on Highway 1 and Skyline Boulevard on summer weekends. Neighborhood residential streets between these two routes and NPS boundaries would also experience increased automobile traffic.

Restoration of the Nike Site and other rehabilitation would restore 12 acres of vegetation. Construction of a parking lot, visitor center, restrooms, picnic area and hike-in campground would result in the disturbance of approximately 3 acres of vegetation. They would create a visual intrusion in the open space and depending on their siting would sometimes be "skylined" at the ridgetop.

4. Construction Projects

All construction projects included in a final plan will be preceded by an additional review and site-specific analysis of their impacts. This review will assure either that impacts were adequately covered in this environmental analysis or that additional impacts based on new information or changing conditions or publics are taken into account and documented before the site is finally committed to development. Detailed surveys required for compliance with NPS policies and federal laws will be undertaken at that time. These surveys will include site-specific archeological surveys and surveys to verify endangered species occurrences. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service will be consulted whenever conflicts with the endangered or threatened species are encountered. Locations of facilities may be slightly altered or appropriate mitigating measures adopted to reduce impacts as a result of this site-specific analysis.

IV. Consultation and Coordination with Other Agencies and the Public.

At the three public meetings held in June 1984 approximately 30 individuals and 6 groups or agencies were represented including

Mayor Peter Loeb of Pacifica

Pacificans United to Save our Hills (PUSH)

North Coastal Reserve Committee

Pacifica Chamber of Commerce

People for the Preservation of the Wild and Natural

San Mateo County Recreation and Parks Department

Others consulted during preparation of this assessment include

Sean Barry, herpetologist

Trust for Public Land

San Mateo County Soil Conservation Service

Pacifica Recreation and Parks Department

San Francisco Water Department

Heritage Trails Fund

United States Forest Service

San Mateo County Transit District (SAMTRANS)

Copies will be sent for review to the above and

Portola Foundation

Public meetings of the GGNRA Citizens' Advisory Commission will be held on November 7 and November 14, 1984 to discuss this draft environmental assessment.

List of Preparers of this Document

Nancy Hornor, Environmental Specialist, GGNRA

Doug Nadeau, Chief, Resource Management & Planning, GGNRA

Steve Haller, Acting Historian, GGNRA

References

Barry, Sean J., "Investigations on the Occurrence of the San Francisco Garter Snake on Sweeney Ridge," Prepared for HKS Associates, December, 1979.

HKS Associates, "Draft Environmental Impact Report for a Planned Unit Development on Sweeney Ridge in Pacifica, California," Prepared for the City of Pacifica, April 1980.

National Park Service, General Management Plan and Environmental Analysis, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore, U.S. Department of Interior, September, 1980.

National Park Service, Natural Resources Management Plan, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, U.S. Department of Interior, June, 1982.

National Park Service, "Study of Alternatives, New Area, Sweeney Ridge, California," June, 1979.

San Mateo County, "the Natural Resources Management Plan for Sweeney Ridge Skyline Preserve," November, 1979.

State of California Department of Transportation, "Draft Environmental Statement Route 380 Portola Freeway and Alternatives," May, 1974.

AMENDMENT TO GGNRA GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/SWEENEY RIDGE

CHARACTER AND INTENSITY OF USE/DEVELOPMENT

Development of Sweeney Ridge will attempt to maintain its natural qualities important to the preservation of the historic setting while improving access to the ridge and the Discovery Site. Most use of Sweeney Ridge will continue to be dispersed use of trails and open space by people seeking quiet enjoyment of the setting and the spectacular views. The character of the area will remain essentially the same.

The CalTrans property will be the focus of much of the change to occur here. Following acquisition by the National Park Service, resolution of traffic problems and construction of a safe entrance to this site, it will become a major trailhead with the development of parking, provision for restrooms, water and a few picnic tables. A small visitor/information center will be constructed offering regional park information as well as interpretive information on Sweeney Ridge. These improvements will share the site with the existing nursery operation.

The NIKE site will undergo a transformation in appearance with the removal of the NIKE structures, foundations and fences. This area will be returned to a natural appearance and be developed as a small picnic area and resting place for hikers and equestrians. Siting of the picnic facility will take maximum advantage of wind protection and visual screening offered by topography and vegetation. Low profile interpretive exhibits and restrooms will also be provided.

To increase access from the Bay side, trailhead improvements will be made at the Sneath Lane entrance and at Skyline College parking area. Other trailhead improvements will be made in conjunction with the county-proposed San Andreas trail extension from Skyline Boulevard over San Francisco watershed lands to Sneath Lane.

If efforts to acquire an easement over the Fassler Avenue extension are successful, a secondary trailhead will be developed at that location. Other trail work to be accomplished will improve trail conditions and grade, correct erosion problems and provide signing. Trails not needed for the trail system will be revegetated.

Other improvements in access to Sweeney Ridge will take advantage of the existing paved road, Sneath Lane. Special auto access for seniors and handicapped visitors, small tour bus permit-controlled

access, "demand-activated" public transit and special event shuttles will be permitted to use this route. A regularly scheduled shuttle from Pacifica over Sneath Lane to the Discovery Site is also proposed. A small turn-around and parking area will be provided within walking distance of the Discovery Site connected with a handicapped-accessible trail.

The National Park Service (NPS) will work with SanTrans to identify needed improvements in public transit to trailheads, including location and visibility of bus stops and scheduling of buses.

The San Francisco Bay Discovery Site is the core element of significance on Sweeney Ridge. The NPS will seek its donation and provide modest improvements for this historic resource. These may include minor landscaping and interpretive exhibits.

The provision of guided rides at a private stables outside of park boundaries will be encouraged, since this facility could offer a unique opportunity for public access. Impacts of additional use by horses, hikers and autos will be monitored.

For a period of at least five years the National Park Service will monitor and evaluate the demand for access by the public, including the elderly and the handicapped, to the Discovery Site. If this analysis indicates that the demand significantly exceeds visitation levels, further consideration will be given to additional access provisions. -

Public Law #96-607 states that: "The Secretary is authorized to seek appropriate agreements needed to establish a trail within this property [San Francisco watershed lands] and connecting with a suitable beach unit under jurisdiction of the Secretary." Although watershed management staff has been reluctant to take any actions that would result in an increase in the limited public use that the watershed lands now receive, in response to the above provision the National Park Service will continue to work cooperatively with all appropriate local agencies to improve public access on and between all units within the San Mateo County authorized boundary of GGNRA.

LAND MANAGEMENT ZONING

The primary management goal at Sweeney Ridge is preservation of the natural and cultural resources. All of Sweeney Ridge is included in a Natural Resource Zone. This management strategy will protect the qualities that are important to preservation of the historic setting of the Discovery Site and the Portola route.

The bulk of the parcel is a Natural Landscape Management Zone in which natural resources and processes will remain as undisturbed as possible, given a relatively high level of natural park uses (hiking, picnicking, etc.). Management activities will be directed

primarily at protecting wildlife and vegetation from misuse and overuse and at maintaining a variety of landscape settings conducive to recreation (open grasslands as well as coastal shrub).

Headwaters of the five creeks that drain Sweeney Ridge are included in a Biotic Sensitivity Subzone, as are other stream courses and shorelines in the park. This subzone generally identifies those natural resources in the park that are particularly sensitive to human use or are especially valuable from an ecological or scientific point of view. Use and development in these areas should be either discouraged or mitigated sufficiently to avoid significant levels of deterioration.

Adopted by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Advisory Commission, April 24, 1985

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES AND QUANTIFICATION OF IMPACTS

ALTERNATIVE	MAXIMUM EXPECTED VISITATION (PEAK DAY)	CHANGES IN VEGETATION CAUSED BY CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION	IMPLEMENTATION/ CONSTRUCTION COSTS
A) ENHANCE NATURAL QUALITIES WITH MINIMUM VISIBLE CHANGE -Improve and define existing trails -Trailhead improvements if needed -Special auto access for seniors and handicapped -Remove Nike buildings and restore site -Small interpretive exhibits at Nike Site	400	12 acres restored	\$117,000
B) INCREASE VISITOR SERVICES AND ACCESS -All proposals of (A) PLUS: -Shuttle bus from Pacifica -Horse rental concession/tours -Picnic area -Horse hitch rail -Restrooms -Interpretive Exhibits	600	12 acres restored 1 acre disturbed	\$243,250
C) MAXIMIZE VISITOR SERVICES -All proposals of (A) and (B) above PLUS: -2 way paved road to within walking distance of Discovery Site (1) Mori Ridge (2) Sneath Lane -100 car parking lot -Signs, benches -Visitor center on/near CalTrans property -Hike in campground -Restrooms	2300	12 acres restored 2 acres disturbed 6-11 acres removed by construction	\$1,332,250-\$2,232,250



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
FORT MASON, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94123

IN REPLY REFER TO:
A18 (WR-GOGA)

January 22, 1985

To: San Mateo Committee
From: Chief, Resource Management and Planning
Subject: Summary of Public Response to Sweeney Ridge Assessment

Thirty-seven letters were received commenting on the alternatives presented in the assessment, including 14 from organizations and local governments:

1. California Alpine Club - supports Alternative B.
2. Portola Expedition Foundation - wants road access to Discovery Site from the west; a resource center and other amenities; unobtrusive change.
3. San Mateo County Business and Convention Bureau - wants road access.
4. Challenge Development - intends to sell or develop the private land along the extension of Fassler Avenue and doesn't want to "exercise an easement."
5. Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter - (letter identical to testimony from 11/14 meeting) - supports Alternative A with modifications including improved access from Bayside; extension of San Andreas trail over Watershed land east of Sneath Lane; install chemical toilets on ridge top near water tanks.
6. San Mateo County Development Association - wants road access to Discovery Site.
7. Committee for Green Foothills - supports Alternatives A and B and transfer of CalTrans site to GCNRA.
8. U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Center, San Bruno - wants no road, minimal change, horse stables at NIKE site.
9. California Native Plant Society - supports Alternative A, recommends an inventory of plant succession and control of invasion of scrub species into grassland.

2.

10. Pacifica City Council - supports Alternative B with addition of trailheads at Fassler Avenue and CalTrans property. Has designated a special committee to work with GCNRA on development of Sweeney Ridge.
11. Midpeninsula Open Space District - interested in a trail network beyond Sweeney Ridge both north and south; no road.
12. Marin Audubon - Alternative A; no grazing.
13. City of San Bruno City Council voted to oppose road construction on Sneath Lane (no official correspondence).
14. Sequoia Audubon Society - supports Alternative A. Recommends doing a demographic survey of present users of Sweeney Ridge to find out where they come from and what thier recreational needs are. Also advocated an equestrial trail plan and management program.

Twenty-three letters were received from individuals following release of the Assessment of Alternatives on Sweeney Ridge. Some letters did not specify preference for an alternative but addressed specific issues or recommended elements of more than one alternative. A summary of the content of the letters follows:

Alternative A - 8 including a petition with 257 signatures
Alternative A or B - 1
Road Access - 9
No Road Access - 2
Primary Trail Access from Bayside - 3 including a petition with 257 signatures
Avoid Impact to Adjacent Neighborhoods - 2
Provide Shuttle - 1
Visitor/Information Center - 2
Provide Restrooms at Ridge Top - 1
Handicap Access on Trails - 2
Remove NIKE Buildings - 1
Eliminate Grazing - 1
Keep Grazing/Horses - 5
Additional Acquisitions - 1
Trail Connecions North and South of Sweeney Ridge - 2
No Horse Rentals - 1
Extend San Andreas Trail through Watershed to Sneath Lane - 3
Improve Habitat for San Francisco Garter Snake - 1
Special Auto Access for Seniors/Handicapped on Sneath Lane - 1

Forty-six speakers gave testimony at the two November hearings on the Assessment of Alternatives. These groups were represented:

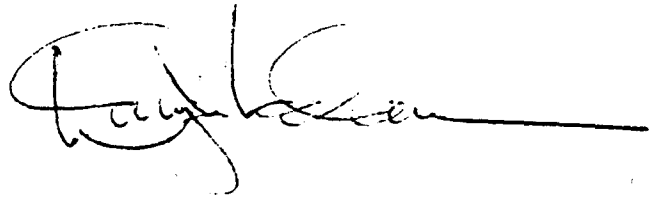
Portola Expedition Foundation
Pacifica Chamber of Commerce
Committee for Green Foothills
Pacifica Historical Society
Friends of Pacifica
California Alpine Club
Pacificans United to Save our Hills
Golden Gate Audubon Society

3.

Testimony at the November Advisory Commission meetings is summarized as follows:

Alternative A - 10
Alternative B - 7
Alternative C - 5
Alternative A or B - 4

Minimal Development - 1
No Road - 4
Road - 8
Handicap Accessible Trail from Pacifica - 1
Trail Connections through San Francisco Watershed - 1
Trailheads at Various Locations - Pacifica Side
 • Skyline College - 1
 • Fassler Avenue - 1
Shuttle - 5
Visitor/Information Center - 7
Acquisition of CalTrans Property - 1
Improvements in Trail/Grade - 2
Special Arrangements for Seniors/Handicapped - 1
Continue Grazing - 1
Adaptive use of Portions of NIKE Site - 2
Historic Preservation - 3
Acquisition of Fassler Right-of-Way - 4
Additional Acquisitions in San Mateo County - 1
Concern with Impacts to Residential Neighborhoods - 3
Regional Trail Planning - 3
Retain Nursery - 2
Major Trailhead at Sheldance - 2
Protect San Francisco Garter Snake Habitat - 2
Camping (hike-in) 1
Picnic Area - 1
Extend San Andreas Trail through Watershed to Sneath Lane - 1
Improve Trail Access and Parking on Bayside - 1
Provide Restrooms on the Ridge - 1

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray K...". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

STAFF REPORT TO THE
SAN MATEO COMMITTEE OF THE
GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ADVISORY COMMISSION
ON
DEVELOPMENT OF SWEENEY RIDGE

GENERAL POINTS OF AGREEMENT

Preserve Natural Qualities and Open Space

Throughout the planning process a strong voice was heard from all of the diverse interests represented, urging that development not alter the natural qualities and the open space character of Sweeney Ridge. Seen by many as a place to "get away from it all," it was hoped that while this opportunity would be extended to many, it would not detract from the character or solitude enjoyed today. This was recognized as the most important objective, regardless of the specific development and uses that were advocated. Protection of wildlife, correction of erosion problems and control of exotic species were also strongly recommended.

Access and Visitor Amenities

Virtually all respondents during planning for Sweeney Ridge stressed that access should be improved and expanded to provide opportunities for many to visit the ridge and Discovery Site. Although varying in the degree of development advocated, there was also a general consensus regarding the need for more visitor-serving facilities. The greatest support was heard for trailheads, restrooms, a picnic area, a visitor center, improvements in trail condition and grade, special arrangements for vehicle access over Sneath Lane for seniors and handicapped visitors and a shuttle bus. The CalTrans property received the most support for a site for development of a major trailhead and visitor center.

Historical Preservation and Interpretation

The importance of the Discovery Site and the Portola trail were stressed by many who asked that the historical significance be interpreted and preserved. Low key interpretive exhibits or use of a visitor center were recommended. Many noted the importance of the natural character of the site as it relates to its history.

2.

Remove the NIKE Buildings, Retain the Nursery

The nursery was seen as compatible with park uses and its retention was repeatedly requested. The NIKE buildings were viewed by very few as having any historic or adaptive value and their removal was recommended. This view is supported by National Park Service historians who have determined that the structures are not significant because of their poor condition and preservation of a similar site elsewhere in the park.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Road Access

The one controversial issue that persisted throughout the planning process was the debate over the need to construct a two-way road, paved for vehicle access, to the ridge top. Many comments focused on this one issue alone. Clearly it was the hope and expectation of many people that acquisition of Sweeney Ridge by the National Park Service would result in development of vehicle access for all. While the impacts of road construction described in the assessment were not contested, the importance of this access was seen by many as an over-riding consideration. Comments for and against a road were split almost equally with these exceptions: a petition against a road signed by over 250 people and the official positions of the Pacifica and San Bruno City Councils opposing road construction.

Recommendation:

Considering the irreversibility, high cost, and potential adverse environmental impacts of the proposal, and especially in view of the lack of a clear consensus on this subject, at this time the staff finds no strong basis upon which to recommend that major road improvements should be made to facilitate public vehicular access to Sweeney Ridge. Instead, strong efforts should be made to implement all other proposals in the plan which would improve access for all. In accomplishing this it will be important to work with the cities of Pacifica and San Bruno, the San Francisco Water Department, CalTrans and San Mateo County Department of Parks and Recreation to facilitate implementation of county trail proposals, correction of traffic problems at the entrance to the CalTrans property, and implementation of the shuttle proposals.

Guided Rides

A horse rental concession providing guided rides of Sweeney Ridge received little discussion, either pro or con. This facility could offer a unique public access and could be located outside park boundaries.

Recommendation:

Encourage the provision of a guided ride operation at a private facility outside of the park. Monitor impacts from the additional trail use by horses and any other problems that may occur and re-evaluate.

Problems of Implementation

Sweeney Ridge presents many challenges to implementation of a plan. Funding to implement an approved plan may not become available in the near future if entirely dependent on Federal sources. In addition, access from the west presently extends across two parcels of non-Federal land. The privately-owned portion of the extension of Fassler Avenue is clearly limited in the duration and type of use. The owner has stated that arrangements with the National Park Service for this access are temporary in nature and they intend to sell or develop this property. The CalTrans property is seen as one of the most desirable to develop as a trailhead and a site for parking and a visitor center. Acquisition of this parcel and the solution of traffic problems associated with the adjacent highway must precede any development.

Recommendation:

The acquisition of a right-of-way or easement along the alignment of Fassler Avenue extension should continue to be pursued by the NPS. Efforts to acquire the CalTrans property should also continue. The National Park Service will work with Pacifica and CalTrans to resolve traffic problems at the entrance to this parcel through redesign or installation of a signal.

Grazing

There was little response on either side of the issue of continuing grazing. Although there is no evidence of overgrazing, San Francisco Garter Snake habitat is being degraded.

Recommendation:

Grazing should be restricted from San Francisco Garter Snake habitat and phased out as the NIKE buildings are removed and this site developed for picnicking.

AN EMERGING PLAN

Increase access through:

- Improving condition and grade of existing trails and related signing.
- Correcting erosion on existing trails and revegetating any not needed for the trail system.
- Improving trailhead at Sneath Lane.
- Developing trailhead at CalTrans site following resolution of traffic problems and land ownership. Improvements should include parking, restrooms, water, and picnic tables.

- Acquiring an easement over Fassler Avenue extension and developing a trailhead at that location.
- Enhancing the Skyline College parking area as a trailhead.
- Supporting implementation of county-proposed extension of San Andreas trail between Sneath Lane and San Bruno Avenue, working with the County and San Francisco Water Department.
- Using Sneath Lane for special auto access for seniors and handicapped visitors, shuttle bus service from Pacifica, small tour bus permit - controlled access, "demand-activated" public transit and special event shuttles.
- Coordinating with SamTrans to improve public transit to trailheads including location and visibility of bus stops and scheduling.

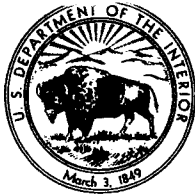
Seek donation of San Francisco Bay Discovery Site to National Park Service and provide outdoor interpretive exhibits for this historic resource.

Remove NIKE buildings and develop a picnic area at that site with restrooms, water and low-profile exhibits.

Develop a visitor/information center on the CalTrans property.

Monitor traffic impacts to adjacent residential areas and along Sneath Lane from increased visitor use.

Continue to assess need for hike-in camping based on use patterns and requests.



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
FORT MASON, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94123

April 24, 1985

AMENDMENT TO GGNRA GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/SWEENEY RIDGE

The staff proposes to substitute the following for the paragraph proposed for addition to the end of the section - Character and Intensity of Use/Development:

For a period of at least five years the National Park Service will monitor and evaluate the demand for access to the Discovery Site. If this analysis indicates that the demand significantly exceeds visitation levels, further consideration will be given to additional access provisions.

In response to an oversight pointed out by Al Schmidt of the Sierra Club, the following is proposed as another addition at the end of the same section:

Public Law #96-607 states that: "The Secretary is authorized to seek appropriate agreements needed to establish a trail within this property [San Francisco watershed lands] and connecting with a suitable beach unit under jurisdiction of the Secretary." Although watershed management staff has been reluctant to take any actions that would result in an increase in the limited public use that the watershed lands now receive, in response to the above provision the National Park Service will continue to work cooperatively with all appropriate local agencies to improve public access on and between all units within the San Mateo County authorized boundary of GGNRA.

Done
DWB J also
sent this to
CPC 1/14
[Signature]

AMENDMENT TO GGNRA GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/SWEENEY RIDGE

CHARACTER AND INTENSITY OF USE/DEVELOPMENT

Development of Sweeney Ridge will attempt to maintain its natural qualities important to the preservation of the historic setting while improving access to the ridge and the Discovery Site. Most use of Sweeney Ridge will continue to be dispersed use of trails and open space by people seeking quiet enjoyment of the setting and the spectacular views. The character of the area will remain essentially the same.

The CalTrans property will be the focus of much of the change to occur here. Following acquisition by the National Park Service, resolution of traffic problems and construction of a safe entrance to this site, it will become a major trailhead with the development of parking, provision for restrooms, water and a few picnic tables. A small visitor/information center will be constructed offering regional park information as well as interpretive information on Sweeney Ridge. These improvements will share the site with the existing nursery operation.

The NIKE site will undergo a transformation in appearance with the removal of the NIKE structures, foundations and fences. This area will be returned to a natural appearance and be developed as a small picnic area and resting place for hikers and equestrians. Siting of the picnic facility will take maximum advantage of wind protection and visual screening offered by topography and vegetation. Low profile interpretive exhibits and restrooms will also be provided.

To increase access from the Bay side, trailhead improvements will be made at the Sneath Lane entrance and at Skyline College parking area. Other trailhead improvements will be made in conjunction with the county-proposed San Andreas trail extension from Skyline Boulevard over San Francisco watershed lands to Sneath Lane.

If efforts to acquire an easement over the Fassler Avenue extension are successful, a secondary trailhead will be developed at that location. Other trail work to be accomplished will improve trail conditions and grade, correct erosion problems and provide signing. Trails not needed for the trail system will be revegetated.

Other improvements in access to Sweeney Ridge will take advantage of the existing paved road, Sneath Lane. Special auto access for seniors and handicapped visitors, small tour bus permit-controlled

2.
access, "demand-activated" public transit and special event shuttles will be permitted to use this route. A regularly scheduled shuttle from Pacifica over Sneath Lane to the Discovery Site is also proposed. A small turn-around and parking area will be provided within walking distance of the Discovery Site connected with a handicapped-accessible trail.

The National Park Service (NPS) will work with SanTrans to identify needed improvements in public transit to trailheads, including location and visibility of bus stops and scheduling of buses.

The San Francisco Bay Discovery Site is the core element of significance on Sweeney Ridge. The NPS will seek its donation and provide modest improvements for this historic resource. These may include minor landscaping and interpretive exhibits.

The provision of guided rides at a private stables outside of park boundaries will be encouraged, since this facility could offer a unique opportunity for public access. Impacts of additional use by horses, hikers and autos will be monitored.

For a period of at least five years the National Park Service will monitor and evaluate the demand for access by the public, including the elderly and the handicapped, to the Discovery Site. If this analysis indicates that the demand significantly exceeds visitation levels, further consideration will be given to additional access provisions.

Public Law #96-607 states that: "The Secretary is authorized to seek appropriate agreements needed to establish a trail within this property [San Francisco watershed lands] and connecting with a suitable beach unit under jurisdiction of the Secretary." Although watershed management staff has been reluctant to take any actions that would result in an increase in the limited public use that the watershed lands now receive, in response to the above provision the National Park Service will continue to work cooperatively with all appropriate local agencies to improve public access on and between all units within the San Mateo County authorized boundary of GGNRA.

If the access provided by these recommendations proves to be inadequate to meet public needs, further consideration will be given to additional measures to facilitate access to the ridge top.

LAND MANAGEMENT ZONING

The primary management goal at Sweeney Ridge is preservation of the natural and cultural resources. All of Sweeney Ridge is included in a Natural Resource Zone. This management strategy will protect the qualities that are important to preservation of the historic setting of the Discovery Site and the Portola route.

3.

The bulk of the parcel is a Natural Landscape Management Zone in which natural resources and processes will remain as undisturbed as possible, given a relatively high level of natural park uses (hiking, picnicking, etc.). Management activities will be directed primarily at protecting wildlife and vegetation from misuse and overuse and at maintaining a variety of landscape settings conducive to recreation (open grasslands as well as coastal shrub).

Headwaters of the five creeks that drain Sweeney Ridge are included in a Biotic Sensitivity Subzone, as are other stream courses and shorelines in the park. This subzone generally identifies those natural resources in the park that are particularly sensitive to human use or are especially valuable from an ecological or scientific point of view. Use and development in these areas should be either discouraged or mitigated sufficiently to avoid significant levels of deterioration.

Adopted by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Advisory Commission, April 24, 1985