

*Fire@nps.gov*. Please submit electronic comments as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your message, contact us directly at Bandelier Fire Management Office at 505-672-3861 x512. Finally you may hand-deliver comments to Bandelier National Monument or at public meetings that will be held Los Alamos and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jim Whittington, Bandelier National Monument, 505-672-3861 x512.

Dated: June 11, 2003.

**Michael D. Snyder,**

*Deputy Director, Intermountain Region,  
National Park Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Park Service

#### **Golden Gate National Recreation Area Fire Management Plan, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo Counties, CA; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement**

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given, in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) that the National Park Service (NPS) is undertaking a conservation planning and impact analysis process for a fire management plan for Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and Muir Woods National Monument and Fort Point National Historic Site, two units of the National Park system also under the administration of GGNRA. The purpose of the fire management plan and environmental impact statement (EIS) process is to develop and assess

alternative strategies for reducing risks to the public, firefighters, sensitive resources and park facilities posed by unplanned and uncontrolled wildland ignitions and examine the opportunities to use fire as a tool to work towards achieving resource protection objectives. Notice is hereby given that a public scoping process has been initiated with the purpose of eliciting early public comment regarding issues and concerns, a suitable range of alternatives and appropriate mitigating measures, and the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts that should be addressed in the EIS.

**Background:** The current GGNRA fire management plan (FMP) was adopted in 1993 following a NEPA assessment process that culminated in the NPS approving a Finding of No Significant Impact decision (September 30, 1993). Since that time, a wide spectrum of new issues, improved information, and unforeseeable constraints have emerged which have the potential to affect the future direction of the fire management program within the park. Some of these factors include the continued decline in ecosystem health due to the absence of fire, increased risk of damage to sensitive natural and cultural resources as well as adjacent developed communities, increased suppression costs, and more stringent air quality regulations.

The new FMP will tier from the 1980 GGNRA General Management Plan which called for a park-wide vegetation management planning effort to examine major influences (including fire effects) on the health of native plant communities. Subsequently park boundaries have expanded, and as noted environmental conditions have changed. More recently, major revisions of NPS policy guidance for fire management activities have occurred (Director's Order 18 was re-issued in 2002), and the need for conformance with new Management Policies (2001), have substantially increased the necessary scope of the FMP planning process. As a result, the proposed FMP will supersede the current fire program, rather than update or supplement the 1993 FMP.

**Scope of Planning and Analysis:** The jurisdictional area of GGNRA covers 75,389 acres in San Mateo, San Francisco and Marin counties. Of the total acreage, 31,100 acres are directly managed by GGNRA in the three park units B GGNRA, Muir Woods National Monument and Fort Point National Historic Site. The northern lands of GGNRA, comprising 18,000 acres on Bolinas Ridge, east of Highway One in Marin County, are managed by the Point

Reyes National Seashore under an agreement between the two park units. These northern lands are part of the conservation planning area for the Point Reyes National Seashore FMP currently in preparation. The Point Reyes environmental impact analysis process is in advance of the GGNRA effort, and the two parks will coordinate closely so as to develop a complementary strategy for fire management activities that meets each park's objectives.

In addition to lands under the direct management of the NPS, the scope of the pending EIS analysis and the affected area to be addressed in GGNRA FMP will include lands within the park's jurisdictional boundary that be acquired for NPS management during the implementation period of the FMP. However, the interior portion of the Presidio of San Francisco (managed by the federal corporation known as Presidio Trust,) is not under the direct management of the NPS and is not included in the planning area. Some of the existing park sites to be addressed in the EIS process are the coastal portion of the Presidio of San Francisco (Area A), Stinson Beach, Tennessee Valley, Muir Beach, the Marin Headlands, Alcatraz Island, Fort Mason, the coastal areas of the Presidio of San Francisco, Ocean Beach, Fort Funston, Milagra Ridge, Sweeney Ridge, and the Phleger Estate.

Naturally occurring fire is an important ecological process necessary for maintaining the native plant communities of the park, but wildfire poses a hazard to life and property in the park's urban-wildland interface boundary area and developed sites within the park. GGNRA practice has been to aggressively suppress all wildland fire in the park whether naturally occurring or human-caused. To that end, GGNRA has conducted fire management projects to control fuel buildup in the last decade, reviewing each project individually for conformance with federal environmental regulations. The park has employed prescribed burning and mechanical fuel reduction to reduce hazardous fuels and to enhance natural and cultural resources.

NPS management policies adopted in December 2000 requires each park with burnable vegetation to prepare a fire management plan. The purpose of the FMP will be to guide a fire management program that protects park values and its cultural and natural resources; provides for safety considerations for park visitors, employees, neighbors, and developed facilities; and addresses potential impacts to public and private property adjacent to the park. Guided by