



CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA OFFICE

SAN FRANCISCO NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM FACT SHEET



The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the world's great biological treasures. It is home to dozens of unique wildlife and plant species, many found nowhere else on Earth. Unfortunately **many of these species are on the brink of extinction**, and the precarious status of San Francisco's wildlife and plants has become a topic of global concern: the Nature Conservancy has determined that **the San Francisco Bay Area is one of the six most important hotspots of biological diversity in the United States**, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO") has recognized portions of the City as part of the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve—**the same status granted to Brazil's Central Amazon rainforests**.

Yet while Brazil has preserved approximately 42% of its rainforests—which most scientists and conservationists consider a failure—San Francisco has preserved only 3-5% of its indigenous habitats, and **since 1958 approximately 50% of the City's indigenous plants have gone extinct within the City's boundaries**. To ensure that San Franciscans leave behind a legacy of good stewardship of our remaining wildlands, the City has proposed a progressive and bold plan to restore a small fraction of its indigenous landscapes. If approved, **the plan will preserve our natural heritage, strengthen our links to indigenous cultures, and provide wilderness access to urban communities that do not have the ability to travel vast distances to experience nature**.

San Francisco's Natural Areas Program Brings Balance to our Open Spaces



Unfortunately a small group of wildlife villains has led a campaign of lies and distortion in an attempt to destroy this progressive plan. **These individuals reject the notion that we have a moral obligation to preserve our natural areas for future generations to enjoy, and would prefer to see these last wild places converted to ball fields, aristocratic landscapes, dog runs, and parking lots**. If these individuals are successful in halting or dividing the plan, San Francisco's indigenous species could be lost forever. **This Fact Sheet is produced to set the record straight about San Francisco's Natural Areas Program**.

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MYTH: The Natural Areas Program will reduce access to city parks.

FACT: Every area managed by the Natural Areas Program is accessible to people for their use and enjoyment. There are no access prohibitions proposed in the plan, although the plan anticipates protecting endangered species through posted signs or protective fencing. Of the 30 miles of access trails provided in natural areas, 17 dilapidated trails will be improved for greater access under the plan. Furthermore, illegal, unsafe, and erosion-prone trails will be restored to parkland. By removing weed thickets and restoring natural topography, the Natural Areas Program will ultimately make parklands easier to access and restore viewscapes that have been hidden from the public for decades.

MYTH: The Natural Areas Program will reduce dog access to city parks.

FACT: Every area managed by the Natural Areas Program is accessible to dogs and their guardians. None of the natural areas have a blanket prohibition against dogs, although the plan does recommend protecting endangered species and sensitive wildlife from dogs through posted signs or protective fencing on .2% (.002) of the natural areas in San Francisco. While leashes are required in some natural areas, San Francisco has more off-leash areas per square mile than any other city in the United States; more than Sacramento, Oakland, San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Diego combined. 80% of San Francisco's off-leash areas are located within natural areas.

MYTH: The Natural Areas Program will clearcut San Francisco's trees.

FACT: The Natural Areas Program does not clearcut trees. Indeed, the program will create a net increase of 600 trees in San Francisco over the next 20 years through plantings of indigenous, fire-resistant trees and removing colonizing weed species such as *E. globulus*. *E. globulus* produces toxins that prevent indigenous plants from growing, and its extremely flammable oils and bark litter are a major concern during California's hot and dry summers.

MYTH: The Natural Areas Program kills cats.

FACT: The Natural Areas Program does not kill cats. In order to ensure that cats remain safe and wildlife remain protected, feral cat colonies will be moved away from sensitive habitats in consultation with the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

MYTH: The Natural Areas Program is too expensive.

FACT: The Natural Areas Program is exceptionally cost-effective: it manages the same number of acres as Golden Gate Park but at 1/6th the cost. In total the Natural Areas Program comprises only 1% of the Recreation and Park Department's budget. Hundreds of volunteers dedicate thousands of hours and tens-of-thousands of private dollars to keep the Natural Areas Program public expenditures low.