

TENNESSEE HOLLOW WATERSHED PROJECT SUMMARY
NOVEMBER 2002
(as revised January 2003)

BACKGROUND

The Presidio Trust (Trust) is preparing a planning and environmental document and is initiating public scoping for the Tennessee Hollow Watershed Project (project). The project will establish a comprehensive watershed-based approach to habitat restoration, resource management and enhancement, and identify opportunities for public interpretation and enjoyment of this approximately 270-acre watershed in the southeastern portion of the Presidio. The Trust intends to use the document to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act and the Endangered Species Act. As part of the NEPA scoping process, the Trust is seeking public input on:

- the significant issues and options to be considered
- identifying the full range of reasonable alternatives
- defining the scope of the environmental analysis

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Restoration and comprehensive watershed management can provide multiple benefits for park resources and visitors alike. As urban development occurs, vegetation is removed and replaced with impervious surfaces and/or fill materials. Because native soils and vegetation help both to absorb and filter rainwater, their removal or alteration can have substantial impact on water quality as well as the volume of storm flows. Urban encroachment also introduces a higher potential for pollutant loading including household hazardous wastes, trash, pesticides, pet wastes and other materials that can be washed into waterways and carried into receiving waters. In addition to water quality and storm water infiltration, the waterways themselves serve as important habitat for aquatic organisms as well as terrestrial wildlife that live and forage in the riparian and upland plant communities they support. In the Bay Area, pressures from urban development have substantially reduced the amount and quality of available riparian habitat. These same natural areas also serve as an oasis for people living in urban environments. They provide opportunities for recreation, education, community participation, interpretation, and solitude.

Tennessee Hollow presents a unique opportunity for watershed restoration, management and interpretation. It is unique in that the watershed is relatively compact and occurs within a national park site in an urban environment. The watershed's headwaters (springs), creek corridors and confluence with the receiving waters (Crissy Marsh) are all contained within the Presidio providing the unique opportunity to restore, enhance and interpret the creek system as a whole. An important aspect of the restoration will be to daylight the creek and expand habitat so that a continuous wildlife corridor is established connecting rare habitat in the upper watershed (serpentine grasslands and seeps) to the lower watershed (salt water marsh). The availability of year-round freshwater in

SUMMARY OF TENNESSEE HOLLOW WATERSHED PROJECT
NOVEMBER 20, 2002

Tennessee Hollow played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Presidio as a military post, providing an opportunity to integrate the interpretation of the natural resource values and cultural history of the watershed for park visitors.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT AREA

The Tennessee Hollow Watershed is spring-fed and represents the single largest watershed at the Presidio. The watershed is one of the primary freshwater sources for the recently restored Crissy Marsh. There are three primary north-south facing valleys in the upland areas, containing three tributaries of the creek (western, central and eastern). The watershed topography varies from 300+feet in the upland areas (in the south) to 0 feet at the confluence with Crissy Marsh (in the north).

In addition to its biological values, past and current uses within the watershed area are varied and the interests served are complex. The watershed contains one of the oldest residential areas of the Presidio and is currently home to more than 1,000 people. Recreation is the second most prominent land use within the project area. Park visitors frequent the watershed to play sports at one of the three active play fields, tennis courts or playground areas, or to hike and bike along its trails.

Historically, the watershed has transformed with time and changes in use. The availability of year-round freshwater and the resources it supported were likely important to the native peoples, and were critical to early explorers and the establishment of the Presidio as a military base. As the military presence grew, so did the modification of the watershed, and segments of the creek were filled and routed into underground pipelines. These activities as well as the planting of the Presidio forest and construction of military housing, roads, infrastructure and use of the creek channel and its surroundings as fill sites for the disposal of waste substantially altered water flows and vegetation within the watershed.

Other influences included the development of adjacent areas of the City of San Francisco. Historically, the watershed boundary extended beyond the Presidio into the neighborhoods of Presidio and Pacific Heights. Today, rainfall from these neighborhoods runs off the developed areas, is captured in the City's combined sewer system and routed away from Tennessee Hollow to a municipal treatment plant. Although these changes have reduced the amount of water flowing into Tennessee Hollow, groundwater springs and seasonal rainfall within the Presidio still provide year-round flows to Crissy Marsh. These flows are conveyed primarily in lined channels or underground storm drains and only small segments of the natural channel remain. These remnant areas of the creek support riparian vegetation and provide some of the most valuable wildlife habitat at the Presidio.

PUBLIC & AGENCY INPUT

Over the next year, the Trust will explore opportunities to expand and enhance the natural systems of the watershed and interpret its past. Options for removal of non-historic housing, infrastructure and play fields, restoring surface drainages, and creating wildlife habitat will be considered. Other issues to be considered include improving access and

**SUMMARY OF TENNESSEE HOLLOW WATERSHED PROJECT
NOVEMBER 20, 2002**

enjoyment for park visitors, coordinating planned environmental remediation with habitat restoration, and implementing measures to avoid impacts to cultural resources. At this time, no detailed alternatives have been developed and no specific plan or preferred alternative for the watershed exists. A range of planning alternatives that will propose specific actions and physical changes to the watershed will be developed following agency and public input. Each alternative will describe proposed phasing, cost estimates of implementation, and an overall funding/implementation strategy.

While no decision has yet been made on the contents of the planning and environmental document, based on preliminary review of the project and input received to date, issues and impact topics to be analyzed will most likely include; hydrology, water quality and flooding; archeology, historic built environment and cultural landscapes; biological resources; geology and soils; transportation and traffic; land use and policy consistency; air quality and noise; visual quality; utilities; and cumulative effects.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO PUBLIC

The following information is also available to assist the interested public in contributing to scoping for the project:

- November 2002 Presidio Post cover article (“The Trust Initiates Planning for the Tennessee Hollow Watershed Project”), which describes the planning process for the project
- November 20, 2002 public scoping workshop comment card, which includes a map of the study area, draft project goals, a preliminary list of options to consider for developing alternatives, and a list of the environmental impact topics to be analyzed in the forthcoming environmental document.

To request either document, please contact the Presidio Trust Planning Department by calling 415-561-5414 or by e-mail at thproject@presidiotrust.gov.

PROVIDING COMMENTS

We encourage the public and interested agencies to actively participate in the planning and environmental review process for the project. Please submit your initial written comments by **February 24, 2003** to Allison Stone, NEPA Compliance Coordinator, The Presidio Trust, 34 Graham Street, P.O. Box 29052, San Francisco, CA 94129-0052. Fax: 415-561-2790. E-mail: thproject@presidiotrust.gov. Once a range of alternatives has been defined, an additional opportunity for public scoping comments will be provided. The second public scoping comment period will be noticed in the *Presidio Post* newsletter, on the Trust website and by direct mail upon request.