

1. INTRODUCTION

The Presidio of San Francisco lies at the northern tip of the San Francisco Peninsula on the Golden Gate at the point where San Francisco Bay empties into the Pacific Ocean. For the residents of San Francisco and the 7 million inhabitants of the nine Bay Area counties, the 1,480-acre former military post is both a forested refuge and cultural landmark amid a densely urbanized setting.

The Presidio was included within the boundaries of Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) when Congress created the park in 1972. The U.S. Army turned over the management of the Presidio to the National Park Service (NPS) in 1994 as part of the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1989. Since the inception of the Presidio Trust (Trust) in July 1998, the Trust has managed the interior portion of the Presidio and the National Park Service (NPS) has managed the coastal areas. Other units of the GGNRA, also former military holdings such as Fort Baker and the Marin Headlands, are located just opposite the Presidio on the north shore of the Golden Gate, connected by one of the world's most famous landmarks, the Golden Gate Bridge (see Figure 1, The Region, and Figure 2, Presidio Place Names).

The Presidio was used continuously as a military garrison for 220 years and is unique among U.S. Army posts in that it contains artifacts and buildings from the Mexican-American War of 1848 to the very recent past, as well as from earlier occupation by Spain and Mexico. The outstanding historic significance of the Presidio is recognized by its designation in 1962 as a National Historic Landmark on the National Register of Historic Places. More than 500 of the 870 buildings within the Presidio are listed as contributing to the significance of the landmark district.

The native and planted vegetation of the Presidio is the product of both natural processes and human occupation and alterations. Prior to the settlement of the area by Europeans, the area now known as the Presidio consisted of sweeps of dunes, coastal marshes, and serpentine rocks dominated by grasses and shrubs, with trees found in the sheltered valleys and leeward hillsides. Remnant natural areas within the Presidio contain some of the last remaining examples of San Francisco's once extensive dune and serpentine native plant communities, as well as habitat for thirteen rare and endangered plant species.

Landscape plantings in developed areas and a historic planted forest provide a distinctive setting for the military post. The historic forest began as an ambitious Army beautification project conceived in the 1880s by Army Major W. A. Jones. The intent of his original plan was to plant trees to crown the ridges, border the boundary fences, and cover major areas of sand and marsh waste with a forest "that was to seem continuous and thus appear immensely larger than it really is" and provide a "contrast from the city."

The original planted trees, now over 100 years old, have matured into an extensive forest composed primarily of Monterey pine, Monterey cypress, and eucalyptus trees, that is a significant landscape feature of the Presidio and San Francisco as well as a refuge for people seeking fresh air, solitude, and recreation. The open space of the Presidio is a

mosaic of natural and historic landscapes. The natural areas containing some of the last remaining examples of San Francisco's native plant communities are threatened by the growth of recreational use and the continued colonization of non-native plants. Much of the Presidio historic forest, especially the cypress and Monterey pine stands, is in a serious state of decline (Jones & Stokes Associates, Inc. 1997). Historic viewsheds have been blocked by mature trees or cleared by unsightly tree-topping. As historic structures are leased for adaptive uses, the horticultural landscape needs to be restored in a manner consistent with the Presidio status as a National Historic Landmark.

This Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) for the Presidio of San Francisco was developed in the context of these existing concerns and with a view to the future stewardship of this national park.

Figure 1. The Region



Figure 2. Presidio Placenames



Source: NPS, Presidio Trust, 2001.