

## **SUMMARY**

The Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Presidio of San Francisco is a collaborative planning effort between the National Park Service (NPS) and the Trust (Trust), the two agencies that share land management responsibilities for the Presidio, part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). The VMP and EA conform to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and tier from the Presidio General Management Plan Amendment (GMPA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed in 1994. The scope of this plan addresses all vegetation within the Presidio - both native plants and species introduced as landscaping. The native plant communities, diminished in size and rare within San Francisco, contain important habitat for a relatively large number of rare and endangered plant species. Historic landscape plantings and a historic forest are the result of significant design efforts and afforestation by the U.S. Army from the 1880s into the 1940s.

This plan has been developed to guide the NPS and the Trust in the management of vegetation resources at the Presidio. The vegetation resources have both natural and historical significance; both aspects will be protected and enhanced. Central to the plan is the development of sustainable and enduring vegetation that can be managed with less maintenance effort than is currently required, with increased resource sensitivity, and using natural processes whenever possible.

A vegetation management zoning map has been developed as the basis for future actions within three vegetation categories: native plant communities, historic forest, and landscape vegetation. The Selected Alternative for the VMP (a modification of the VMP and EA (1999) Alternative 1) directs the following management of Presidio vegetation resources:

- Native plant communities will be enhanced and restored and non-native trees outside of the historic forest and other non-native plants that have invaded native habitat will be removed over time. Habitat for thirteen special-status plants will be protected and enhanced.
- The historic forest, which is beginning to decline as it ages, will gradually be rehabilitated as tree falls and openings created by storms provide opportunities for tree replacement. A Historic Forest Characterization and Treatment Study (Historic Forest Study) will determine appropriate treatments, considering both ecological and historic values. Guided by the Historic Forest Study, forest management strategies and treatments will consider the extent to which a more age- and species-diverse forest can be achieved while maintaining the unique forest characteristics that contribute to the National Historic Landmark status of the Presidio. Other recommended actions will restore and maintain scenic vistas, preserve key historic forest stands, control erosion problems, treat trees that present hazards to visitors or property, and convert a topped Monterey cypress forest to lower growing species.

- Historic plantings and landscape character will be maintained and enhanced in landscape vegetation management zones. When replacement planting is necessary, use of new plant materials will consider potential threats to native plants from hybridization and invasive tendencies.

Implementation of the VMP will result in a vegetation mosaic of native plant communities, historic forest, and landscape vegetation, and will increase species and habitat diversity in the Presidio. The VMP requires a committed, long-term management effort, and ongoing public involvement, as well as periodic monitoring and evaluation to continue to maintain the Presidio's complex vegetation mosaic.

Environmental consequences of the Selected Alternative (Alternative 1) and three additional alternatives (Alternative 2: No Action, Alternative 3: Selective Forest Cuts, and Alternative 4: Increase Tree Diversity) are analyzed in the EA as required by NEPA. Impacts of the Selected Alternative will be beneficial to native vegetation and wildlife and will provide for the continuation of significant historic landscape resources that might otherwise deteriorate over time.

The VMP and EA were released for public review on July 1, 1999 following a nearly two year period of public involvement through newsletters, field visits, meetings, workshops and presentations to neighbors, tenants, the GGNRA Advisory Commission and other agencies. Public comment was accepted over a 4.5 month period, and presentations and oral comments were heard before the GGNRA Advisory Commission and the Trust Board. Comments were received from 478 agencies, organizations, and individuals. At the close of the formal comment period on November 18, 1999, NPS and Trust staff considered public and agency comment and recommended certain refinements to the document in response to the comments received. These modifications were presented as recommendations by staff to the public through meetings of the GGNRA Advisory Commission, the Trust Board and neighborhood groups.

The primary issues raised during the 4.5 month comment and response period on the VMP and EA (1999) were concerns about the size of the vegetation zones ; the balance between the zones; and the treatments proposed for each zone, often reflecting the intrinsic and often conflicting values that individual viewers place on the cultural forest and native plant communities. In response to these concerns, modifications have been made to the document and plan. The Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (see attachment E) addresses in more detail the principal issues raised by public comments, agency response and, where indicated, resultant clarifications and modifications made to the Final VMP and EA.

This Final VMP and EA is a revision of the VMP and EA (1999). Text has been added to provide necessary clarification or to incorporate the modifications made to the document following consideration of public and agency comment. The NPS and the Trust collaborated in the preparation of the EA, as each agency has separate jurisdictional responsibilities in the Presidio. The NPS initiated the National Environmental Policy Act

(NEPA) process, and has acted as lead agency in the preparation of the VMP and EA. The Trust assumed the role of a cooperating agency under NEPA following the transfer of jurisdiction of Area B of the Presidio from the NPS to the Trust on July 8, 1998. As a cooperating agency with jurisdictional authority, the Trust has independent legal responsibilities with respect to NEPA compliance. The NPS and the Trust collaborated on presenting the VMP to the public, soliciting and considering public comment and designating a Selected Alternative for the VMP. The NPS and Trust prepared jointly signed FONSI on the VMP and EA that will apply to actions of and satisfy the independent legal responsibilities under NEPA. Future site-specific vegetation management plans proposed by the NPS and the Trust will be reviewed for conformance with the VMP and FONSI. This Final VMP and EA and VMP FONSI comprises the NEPA record for the VMP.