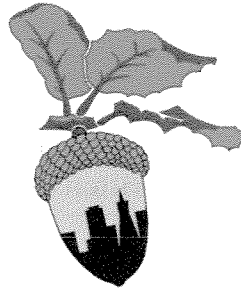


# Nature in the City

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DATE: Monday, January 9, 2006

TO: San Francisco Commission on the Environment

FROM: *Nature in the City*

RE: Urban Environmental Accords

During **WED2005**, the *Nature in the City Committee* produced the **Nature in the City Symposium**, in which we asked the fundamental question - how do we achieve global environmental or even local urban environmental sustainability without *intentionally* conserving, restoring and stewarding are locally evolved natural environment? The answer is that local urban nature conservation and stewardship IS ecological sustainability – that goals achieved in the realm of local nature conservation should be integral to the evaluation of whether our City is “sustainable”. These goals would include measurements of the level of healthy interaction between local people and their local nature.

*Nature in the City* has been founded to connect urban people with their local nature and to catalyze urban nature conservation, restoration and stewardship in San Francisco. The *Nature in the City Steering Committee* includes members who are *leaders* of or very active in the following organizations.

Alliance for a Clean Waterfront

*Kids in Parks*

*TreeFrog Treks*

*Urban Watershed Project*

Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council & *Native Plant Nursery*

*California Native Plant Society*

Dune Ecological Restoration Team

Golden Gate Audubon Society

Natural Resources Defense Council

*Habitat Potential*

Presidio Restoration Advisory Board

Sierra Club

*Treasure Island Wetlands Project*

Attached for the record are previous comments we submitted including some to this body on November 9, 2005.

Received in Committee Meeting 1/9/06

For the purposes of today's hearing, ours being to highlight the natural ecology of the City, we endorse and support the following **Accords** - which apply particularly to the City's natural environment - as written essentially without further clarification:

**Urban Design Action 8: Adopt urban planning principles and practices that advance higher density, mixed use, walkable, bikeable, and disabled-accessible neighborhoods which coordinate land use and transportation with open space systems for recreation and ecological restoration.**

**Urban Nature Action 10: Ensure that there is an accessible public park or recreational open space within half-a-kilometer of every city resident by 2015.**

**Water Action 20: Protect the ecological integrity of the city's primary drinking water sources (i.e., aquifers, rivers, lakes, wetlands and associated ecosystems).**

We had suggested several changes to the Accords. None were implemented. We offer the following suggestions for how to interpret the language of **Urban Nature Actions 11 and 12** more broadly and as it is appropriate to the rich and biodiverse natural environment of San Francisco.

**Action 11: Conduct an inventory of existing canopy coverage in your city; and, then establish a goal based on ecological and community considerations to plant and maintain canopy coverage in not less than fifty percent of all available sidewalk planting sites.**

We urge that the term "canopy" be broadly defined as our City's natural ecosystems, *including* the street and other planted trees since these do provide habitat for wildlife and serve other environmental functions.

We urge that the goal stated include "development of an implementable place-based plan to protect and restore our city's natural ecological community."

**Action 12: Pass legislation that protects critical habitat corridors and other key habitat characteristics (e.g. water features, food-bearing plants, shelter for wildlife, use of native species, etc.) from unsustainable development.**

We urge that legislation do more than protect from unsustainable development, but that such proposed law mandates conserving and *restoring* habitats through adoption by all City entities of principles of *natural ecological design* or "*Naturescaping*" for all planning and construction activities within the city limits. *Natural ecological design* emphasizes optimizing compatibility with our indigenous locally evolved ecosystem, recognizing that the City was developed in a natural environment much of which wildness still exists. The entire geography of the City, e.g., natural areas, urban forests, streetscapes, backyards, etc., is potential wildlife habitat. Thus, methods would include, e.g., using native plants in revegetation where possible, and identifying all potential natural ecological linkage opportunities including backyards, streetscapes, roofs, and especially daylighting creeks and other riparian corridors.

[submitted November 9, 2005 to the Policy Committee of the Commission on the Environment]

Hi Monica,

Unfortunately, I cannot make it to the Commission on the Environment meeting today. I just found out about it.

I've just spoken with Johanna, and she instructed me to email you our thoughts about the Urban Nature portion of the Urban Environmental Accords.

I am contributing these ideas on behalf of our new organization, Nature in the City, which is a collaborative undertaking, including participation from individuals representing organizations including the following: California Native Plant Society, Kids in Parks, Alliance for a Clean Waterfront, Treasure Island Wetlands Project, Treefrog Treks, Urban Watershed Project, Sierra Club, others, and many local stewards and ecological activists.

Regarding "**Action 10: Ensure that there is an accessible public park or recreational open space within half-a-kilometer of every city resident by 2015,**" we urge the implementation of this Accord to emphasize open space, parks, and natural areas. That is to say, the point here is for people to have a place to seek refuge from the stresses of urban life in some form of connecting to nature in whatever way they like. It doesn't mean a place to play tennis, chess, or do yoga (though these things are obviously important). The emphasis must be on providing access to **urban nature**, the title of this section.

Regarding "**Action 11: Conduct an inventory of existing canopy coverage in your city; and, then establish a goal based on ecological and community considerations to plant and maintain canopy coverage in not less than fifty percent of all available sidewalk planting sites,**" the emphasis should be on "ecological and community considerations" in that planning, design, and project implementation should incorporate the best knowledge about wildlife and other habitat potential for each location. Planting San Francisco native trees (there are approximately 10 species) should be an explicitly stated sub-goal. Many species of non-native trees have proven to have great wildlife habitat value as well. The point is to incorporate the lense of enhancing and restoring habitat for locally evolved biodiversity.

Regarding "Action 12: Pass legislation that protects critical habitat corridors and other key habitat characteristics (e.g. water features, food-bearing plants, shelter for wildlife, use of native species, etc.) from unsustainable development, we want to work with the City on this Accord to come up with some inclusive language that acknowledges that the entire City is potential habitat, that it was developed in a natural environment much of which wildness still exists, and that local urban nature conservation and stewardship IS ecological sustainability. The relevant question here is how do we achieve global environmental or even local urban environmental sustainability without intentionally conserving, restoring and stewarding are locally evolved natural environment?

Thanks very much for taking these comments.  
Feel free to call me if you have any questions – cell – 845-0087.

Sincerely,

Peter Brastow

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[submitted via WED website, February 15, 2005]

Greetings,

Please consider strongly the following suggestions for the Urban Nature section of the Urban Environmental Accords including changing the order:

**Action 10 (nature)**

Change existing Action 11 to:

"Conduct inventory of indigenous natural ecosystem in your city; establish goal based on ecological and cultural considerations to develop an implementable place-based plan to protect and restore your city's indigenous ecological community."

**Action 11 (human physical/emotional access to and reconnection with nature)**

Existing Action 10 - change "park or recreational open space" to "park, open space, or natural area".

**Action 12 ( institutional integration of nature and culture)**

-incorporates existing Action 11-

Institute and promote urban ecological design and "naturescaping" policy for all government agencies and city at large: use native plants in revegetation where possible and identify all potential natural ecological linkages including backyards, streetscapes, roofs, and especially daylighting creeks and other riparian corridors for both wildlife and people.

Thanks for your consideration.

Peter Brastow

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