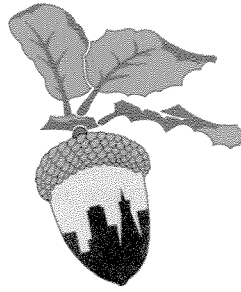


Nature in the City

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MEMO

DATE: Monday, June 12, 2006
TO: SF Commission on the Environment, Policy Committee; Community
FROM: Peter Brastow, Director, Nature in the City
RE: San Francisco Natural Resources Fact Sheet, Policy Analysis & the Accords

FACT SHEET

1. San Francisco harbors **diverse natural resources** in a unique environment characterized by a moderated Mediterranean climate, topographical and geological complexity. The City contains:
 - a. diverse geology including sand dunes, sandstones, serpentinite, and radiolarian chert;
 - b. diverse water resources, e.g., lakes, springs, creeks, aquifers, and wetlands;
 - c. over a dozen native plant communities, many of which are rare and endangered;
 - d. 20 rare or endangered plant species including 5 federally listed;
 - e. federally listed wildlife including mission blue butterfly, western snowy plover, red-legged frog and California brown pelican;
 - f. dozens of butterfly, reptile, amphibian, and mammal species incl. coyote and grey fox;
 - g. hundreds of species of birds including the locally endangered California quail, San Francisco's official bird;
 - h. untold insect diversity including dozens of species of solitary bees and perhaps a dozen species of native ants;
 - i. hundreds of species of fungi, algae, and lichen.
2. San Francisco's natural resources are managed under **multiple jurisdictions**. Local, state, and federal agencies include the National Park Service, the Presidio Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, California State Parks, University of California, CalTrans, the Port, SF Recreation and Parks, SF Public Utilities Commission, and Department of Public Works.
3. Several of these agencies are partners in the **Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve**, a unit of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere program.
4. Most natural areas are on public lands, but some, notably the KOIT property on Bayview Hill, are still **private properties**. These also include backyards and other spaces that contain not only significant greenery and basic wildlife habitat, but also locally native vegetation, which wildlife habitat value contributes significantly to the natural ecology of the city.

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5. Threats and impacts to ecological health and integrity are severe. **Invasive weeds** are the single biggest force of destruction to the city's natural habitats. Plants like cape ivy, French broom, yellow oxalis, ehrharta, and many others displace native plant and wildlife habitats.

6. Due to fiscal constraints and institutional ignorance, **natural resources planning** and management is not consistent across the city's jurisdictions. Some agencies do not even manage their significant natural resources for the conservation of biodiversity and ecological integrity. Others do not prioritize enough. Coordination across agencies is mostly non-existent. The San Francisco *Weed Management Area* is an existing multi-jurisdictional effort.

7. **Ecological community stewardship** of the city's natural areas and habitats is a thriving conservation and recreational activity within several jurisdictions. However, not all jurisdictions engage in stewardship, and those that do are severely underfunded.

POLICY ANALYSIS (not complete)

8. **Federal laws** to protect and conserve biodiversity include the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

9. **State laws and regulations** include the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the California Endangered Species Act, the California Fish and Game Code, and the California Public Resources Code.

10. Local **San Francisco laws, regulations and policies** include the following:

a. The *Park Code*. Acquisition by Recreation and Parks of significant natural areas is priority 3 of 3. No other references to natural areas or biodiversity exists in the municipal code including in the Planning Code or Environment Code, except for

b. the *Commission on the Environment*, which can make recommendations related to natural resource conservation and habitat restoration, and the *Precautionary Principle*, which includes the statement, "Where threats or irreversible damage to people or nature exists, lack of full scientific certainty about cause and effect shall not be viewed as sufficient reason for the City to postpone cost effective measures to prevent the degradation of the environment or protect the health of its citizens." *

c. *Proposition C*, a continuation of the Open Space Fund, includes specific allocation of monies for the significant natural areas management program if not covered by operations.

d. The *General Plan*. The Open Space and Environmental Protection Elements articulate thoroughly the conservation of biodiversity, natural areas and rare and endangered species. *

e. The *Golden Gate Park Master Plan* includes conservation of the coast live oak woodlands.

f. The *Sustainability Plan* contains a comprehensive biodiversity section with goals, long-term and short-term objectives, and actions, but no strategies for achievement.

URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACCORDS: SOME INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISCUSSION OF AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR URBAN NATURE #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.*

KEY GENERAL QUESTION: How can San Francisco play a global leadership role in the conservation, restoration and stewardship of its own natural resources and biodiversity?

For lands under the legislative jurisdiction of the City and County of San Francisco, **legal protection and conservation measures are not sufficient** to ensure prevention of degradation of natural resources due to ignorance, neglect & weeds. CEQA regulates planning and development, but only deals with existing resources directly impacted, not with habitat potential for restoration.

San Francisco needs stronger legal protection of its natural resources including acknowledgement of the role and benefit of community stewardship to both ecological and human health.

Topics for discussion include:

1. Existing laws and policies
 2. Gaps in laws and policies
 3. Data gaps in inventory of San Francisco's natural resources
 4. Interdepartmental, interagency and interjurisdictional issues, e.g., planning coordination
 5. Role of NGOs
 6. Public education and outreach
 7. Political ramifications
 8. Funding possibilities
 9. Laws and policies of other cities
 10. Goals of the *Biodiversity* Element of the Sustainability Plan
- i. To achieve a greater understanding of biodiversity, its importance, how it is threatened and how to protect and restore it.
 - ii. To protect and restore remnant natural ecosystems.
 - iii. To protect sensitive species and their habitats and support their recovery in San Francisco.
 - iv. To maximize habitat value in developed and naturalistic areas, both public and private.
 - v. To collect, organize, develop and utilize current and historic information on habitats and biodiversity.

