


From: Peter Brastow <peter@natureinthecity.org>  
Subject: **Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE) & BIODIVERSITY**  
Date: July 6, 2009 4:03:39 PM PDT  
To: openspace@sfgov.org  
Cc: Susan Exline <Susan.Exline@sfgov.org>, Claudia Flores <Claudia.Flores@sfgov.org>, Sarah Dennis <sarah.dennis@sfgov.org>  
 1 Attachment, 96.5 KB

Greetings SF Planning Department,

Please find attached our official, collective inter-organizational comments (revised) representing the following organizations:

Nature in the City  
San Francisco Tomorrow  
Mt. Sutro Stewards  
Urban Watershed Project  
Visitacion Valley Greenway  
California Native Plant Society  
Kids in Parks  
Golden Gate Audubon Society  
Planet Drum Foundation  
Sustainable Watershed Alliance  
Sierra Club  
San Francisco League of Conservation Voters

Some of the above will likely provide further comment on other objectives within the ROSE, but the attached represents our collective voice on the subject of **biodiversity** in the City and County of San Francisco.

Thanks for all of your efforts.

Regards,

Peter Brastow  
Founding Director, **Nature in the City**  
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[ROSE biodiv....doc \(96.5 KB\)](#)

## Nature in the City

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Monday, July 6, 2009

### MEMORANDUM

TO: San Francisco Planning Department, Claudia Flores, Sarah Dennis and Susan Exline  
FROM: Nature in the City, Peter Brastow, Founding Director (and more - see below)  
RE: General Plan, Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE)

Please accept our latest suggestions for how to improve OBJECTIVE 4 - BIODIVERSITY of the ROSE. While Nature in the City recently participated in a small roundtable on the subject of biodiversity at SPUR, the product of that discussion was an incomplete exercise compared to what is contained in this letter, our official, comprehensive comments. What follows is a substantially improved version compared to what we offered in April, including differentiation and inclusion of some short-term action items.

We, the undersigned, represent thousands of conservationists in San Francisco, and so we urge you to consider seriously the totality of our suggestions for improvement of the ROSE. We are very gratified that biodiversity and natural resources are finally being given the priority that they deserve, and we want the policies to reflect the City's commitment in the most comprehensive and coherent way possible.

As we indicated in our April memo, we have not provided suggestions on how the ROSE should address conservation of specific, highly significant sites such as Golden Gate Park, McLaren Park, Lake Merced, Sharp Park, the Presidio, Fort Funston, Ocean Beach, Yerba Buena Island and Candlestick Point. We do believe the ROSE should address these areas, specifically.

Finally, in addition to differentiating actions, generally reorganizing, rewording, and increasing coherence, the major differences herein from our previous version include consolidating our 4.6 with 4.5, and thus placing significant policy statements into 4.2, restoration and management.

Sincerely,

Peter Brastow  
Founding Director, Nature in the City

Arthur Feinstein, Vice President for Natural Areas  
San Francisco Tomorrow

Craig Dawson  
Mt. Sutro Stewards

Doug Kern  
Urban Watershed Project

Fran Martin  
Visitacion Valley Greenway Project

Jake Sigg, Conservation Chair  
California Native Plant Society

Jeffrey Brown  
Kids in Parks

Mike Lynes, Conservation Director  
Golden Gate Audubon Society

Peter Berg, Founder and Director  
Planet Drum Foundation

Ruth Gravanis  
Sustainable Watershed Alliance

Steven Chapman, Executive Committee  
Sierra Club, San Francisco Group

Steven Krefting  
San Francisco League of Conservation Voters

Cc: Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council  
Astrid Haryati, Mayor's Office of Greening  
Lisa Wayne, Recreation and Parks  
Daniel LaForte, Recreation and Parks  
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Suzanne Gautier, SFPUC Communications

Alex Lantsberg, SWALE  
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Damien Raffa, SEEC-SF  
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Jennifer Clary, San Francisco Tomorrow  
Linda Shaffer, California Native Plant Society  
Matt Zlatunich, Golden Gate Audubon  
Noreen Weeden, Golden Gate Audubon  
Malik Looper, Literacy for Environmental Justice  
Peter Galvin, Center for Biological Diversity  
Richard Register, Ecocity Builders  
Saul Bloom, Arcecolgy  
Tom Radulovich, Livable City

## Objective 4

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY, NATURAL HABITATS, AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF OPEN SPACES.

[Definition of *biodiversity*, i.e., toward long-term ecological sustainability]

### Policy 4.1

**Preserve all natural areas and naturalistic habitats.**

[Definition of *Natural Areas* (include *native and/or natural habitat*)]

[Definition of *naturalistic*]

- Expand “significant natural resource area” designation to City lands other than Recreation and Parks and develop guidelines and new code, if necessary, for how these areas are managed.
- Develop local reserve system that controls human access to the City’s most sensitive wild areas, and create an educational program that interprets these special places for the public. Examples include the proposed preserve at Lake Merced, Islais Creek in Glen Canyon, Laguna Honda Natural Area, and Bayview Hill grassland.
- Create the San Miguel Hills Bioregional Park and Preserve for a world-class ecological conservation, environmental education, and environmentally sustainable recreation asset in the heart of the city.
- Assure competent and adequately funded management of all City-owned wild lands and natural areas, by incorporating all into one jurisdiction. Possible solutions include:
  - a. Recreation and Parks Natural Areas Program, appropriately funded;
  - b. Create a *City Department of Natural Resources*;
  - c. MOU among Departments with one in the lead;
  - d. Regional Open Space District.

### Actions

- Prioritize list of lands and natural areas to be acquired including private lands and those belonging to other government agencies.
- Start with consolidating the multi-jurisdictional Twin Peaks Natural Area under one agency’s management.

### Policy 4.2

**Restore and manage remnant natural ecosystems, native habitats, natural areas, watershed lands and other habitat areas, and strive for collaboration among agencies and jurisdictions.**

[Define *ecological restoration*]

[Define *ecosystem*]

[Define *watershed*]

- Encourage and foster interdisciplinary ecosystem and watershed-based natural resources management collaboration among agencies and jurisdictions, using *Chicago Wilderness* as a guide

*Restoring local biodiversity and wildlife habitat by connecting urban people with nature where they live.*

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and potential model.

- Manage the City's lands in a framework of natural science.
- Manage all open spaces, not just natural areas, for the conservation of biodiversity.
- Ensure Recreation and Parks, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and other City agencies that own or control open space land devote financial and personnel resources to managing their natural areas until they become part of a *single natural resources agency*.
- Create one or more native plant nurseries to facilitate ecological restoration.
- Preserve and create wildlife corridors among natural areas and open spaces to connect habitats.
- Acknowledge the important role of and conserve private open space, especially rear yards, as habitats and habitat connectors.

### **Actions**

- Prioritize the work of and assign City staff to the San Francisco Weed Management Area.
- Create a City Office of Biodiversity to lead policymaking that helps make the City a world leader in the conservation of urban biodiversity.
- Create a San Francisco Biodiversity Council to facilitate inter-agency natural resources and environmental management.
- Create a City Natural Resources Management Department in charge of conservation, restoration and management of the City's natural areas, ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Find funding from all possible sources to support the Natural Areas Program and/or a new City Department of Natural Resources at the level needed to manage sustainably the City's natural ecosystems.
- Develop a maximum ecological restoration alternative for both the Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan (SNRAMP) and the Lake Merced Watershed Plan.
- Implement nature trail and environmental restoration section of the 2008 Parks Bond.
- Identify and map watershed boundaries, natural areas and communities, wildlife corridors and desired and potential interconnectivity among parklands for wildlife migration and recreation.
- Expediently apply for and expend any funding that becomes available for ecological restoration and education.
- Amend the Planning Code to protect rear yards from development.

### **Policy 4.3**

**Protect and restore sensitive and special-status species, habitats, and natural resources.**

- Protect and restore all ecological communities, including, but not limited to: freshwater, tidal and riparian wetlands; grasslands, including coastal prairies; oak woodlands, coastal scrub; dunes; aquatic etc.
- Protect and restore rare and endangered plants and their habitats, including all species listed by the California Native Plant Society at both the state and local level (reference lists).
- Protect and restore rare, endangered, and other special-status wildlife and their habitats (reference lists).
- Conserve geological resources, e.g., radiolarian chert outcrops and serpentine outcrops and seeps.
- Conserve and restore indigenous hydrological resources, including riparian communities, seeps, springs, creeks, ponds, and lakes, and explore feasibility of daylighting creeks.

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### Actions

- Implement the Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan to ensure that appropriate and effective techniques are used to manage and restore RPD natural areas.
- Create a database of natural areas and their threats, e.g., invasive species, and including threatened species and habitats.
- Produce a comprehensive local biological inventory and biodiversity recovery plans.
- Map all existing wetlands, riparian areas, and underground indigenous water resources.

### Policy 4.4

#### **Integrate the protection and restoration of biodiversity with all efforts to achieve environmental sustainability.**

- Include biodiversity as a key part of all open space planning criteria.
- For all open space and public building construction and renovation projects, require materials and local soil, habitat, wildlife-serving, moisture regime, and local climate-appropriate native plantings, that will promote biodiversity, save water, and capture and filter storm water runoff.
- Limit landscape features of minimal habitat value, e.g., impervious surfaces (parking lots, paved trails), lawn, ivy, junipers, etc., and replace existing with native plantings (same as above).
- Integrate LID stormwater management features, such as bioswales and constructed wetlands, into landscape and open space construction projects.
- Protect aquatic and shoreline ecosystems by reducing and eliminating combined sewage overflows.
- Pursue the best available science for bird and other wildlife-friendly building design.
- Conserve soil and geologic resources by minimizing erosion and using materials on site instead of exporting or importing.
- Use lighting that reduces light pollution while saving energy and protecting wildlife.
- Limit development of backyards.
  - Require covered trash containers at all City facilities and regular refuse pickup and disposal to minimize wildlife access to human food.

### Actions

- Redevelop Treasure and Yerba Buena Islands and Candlestick-Hunter's Point in the most ecologically responsible and sustainable way.
- Cease irrigation of landscapes where it is unnecessary and/or only promotes invasive weeds.
- Require CEQA review for proposed projects to install artificial or synthetic turf.

### Policy 4.5

#### **Develop public and agency awareness and understanding of local biodiversity and natural habitats, and foster community-based ecological and natural areas stewardship.**

- In cooperation with management agencies, create, foster and nurture a robust community ecological stewardship program and network, which goal is to match every natural area in the city with a local neighborhood stewardship group.
- Build and staff a community urban nature education center in the heart of the city.
- Incorporate local natural history and ecological stewardship education into San Francisco's public

school curriculum.

- Strengthen efforts in collaborative, high-quality, local environmental and natural resource education and stewardship programs that foster youth and adult understanding of their role in building healthy natural communities.
- Identify priority backyard corridors and implement backyard habitat program.
- Build a world-class nature trail through the Twin Peaks Bioregion, that showcases appropriate interpretive signage that teaches San Franciscans and visitors about the importance of urban biodiversity and nature conservation and gives them an opportunity to enjoy a nature immersion experience “in their own backyard.”
- Require educational information, e.g., signs and brochures, on local native plant and wildlife habitats as part of new trail projects such as the Blue Greenway and the Bay Area Ridge Trail and in new developments such as Treasure/Yerba Buena Islands, Candlestick-Hunter’s Point, Park Merced, Sea Wall Lot 337, India Basin, and all future residential development projects.
- Educate the public about not feeding wildlife human food and about keeping cats indoors through the Cats Indoors Program.
- Provide information to all residents on local resources available for unwanted pets.
- Provide public education and enforcement of the leash law except in designated dog play areas.

#### **Actions**

- Fund and staff a volunteer program to recruit, train, deploy, supervise, support and reward ecological and natural areas stewards, particularly local community and neighborhood groups.
- Provide in-service local ecological and biodiversity training for appropriate agency staff.
- Implement a public education campaign to address “What you can do to conserve the nature, biodiversity in the watershed where you live,” and celebrating San Francisco’s natural heritage.
- Incorporate environmental education (signs, waysides and kiosks) about local ecology and sensitive species into every natural area.
- Put a *Guide to San Francisco’s Natural Heritage* in every household.
- Implement wildlife-serving native tree, shrub, and perennial demonstration plantings throughout the city.
- Create a citywide campaign dedicated to education about the impact of invasive plants.