

FAQs ABOUT RECREATION IN THE PRESIDIO

1. Do ball fields belong in a national park?

Confusion remains about what national parks are, the relationship of the Presidio to the national park system, and the policy framework upon which Presidio Trust actions are based. The national park system includes 390 park sites with 13 different designations: national park, national monument, national preserve, national historic site, national historical park, national memorial, national battlefield, national cemetery, national recreation area, national seashore, national lakeshore, national river, national parkway, and national trails. National parks are extremely diverse in terms of what they contain – ranging in size from 13 million acres at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska to less than an acre at Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial in Pennsylvania. Facilities for active recreation are provided in several, most notably in urban national parklands such as Anacostia, Capital Lands, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), including the Presidio.

The Organic Act, passed in 1916, is the founding legislation of the National Park Service, and NPS land management policies are derived from that legislation. The Organic Act makes an overriding commitment to preserving natural and cultural resources. The Trust Act is the founding legislation for the Presidio Trust and it

clearly states that although the Presidio will remain part of GGNRA, the Trust itself is independent of both the NPS and the Department of the Interior. Policies that govern land management in the Presidio are derived from the Trust’s founding legislation which commits to support active recreation and preserve recreational resources in addition to natural and cultural resources.

Ball fields were part of the Presidio landscape when it was a military post, as they are in most American communities, and their presence continues to be appropriate in the Presidio today.

2. What role should the Presidio play in supporting active recreation for the broader community?

The Presidio is part of a national recreation area, the intent of which was to preserve outdoor recreation for a large number of people. The Presidio was an “open” post with deep connections to the surrounding community; its ball fields used by its neighbors. The Presidio today continues as a community, its very character dependent on the everyday activities of people. The Presidio should continue to provide opportunities for active recreation both for its growing community and for the general public.

- 3. How is the desire to build ball fields at the Presidio consistent with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department 2004 study, which showed that more people want hiking and biking trails than ball fields, which were in the bottom 5% of what most people said they wanted.**

It is true that the 2004 Recreation and Parks Department study showed that trails and bikeways were among the most important recreational facilities among those surveyed. The study also found that the city does not have sufficient ball fields to meet its needs.

The Trust is committed to increasing and improving recreational opportunities for the public, and has begun implementation of its 2003 *Trails and Bikeways Plan* and will establish 24 miles of trails, 19 miles of bikeways, and eight scenic overlooks, hopefully within the next five years. The Trust has also completed designs to expand and improve Rob Hill Campground, the only campground in the city. We hope to complete the Rob Hill project by the end of 2008.

Today people of all ages come to the Presidio for the following activities: running, hiking, cycling, soccer, baseball, golf, stewardship, birding, photography, art, dancing, kite flying, swimming, basketball, volleyball, rollerblading, picnicking, football, lacrosse, camping, etc.

- 4. Who gets to use Presidio ball fields? Why should a national park build more ball fields for private schools?**

Morton and Paul Goode fields are leased to private schools. According to the terms of their lease, however, 50 percent of the field times are set aside for community partners as well as the public, thereby increasing not restricting use of the fields. Fort Scott is managed by lottery and is used by two dozen organizations that include youth and school groups as well as adult sports leagues.

- 5. The number of ball fields at the Presidio should be limited because they are single-purpose facilities that preclude an array of other park uses.**

The challenge is to strike a balance between dedicating land to ball fields and creating opportunities for other types of park experiences, such as hiking, biking, bird watching, tennis, etc. This is part of the rationale for relocating and consolidating athletic fields at the Presidio – consolidation of several facilities in a few locations will allow for efficiencies of operation and management while at the same time relocating fields where they do not preclude other types of park experiences. For example, relocating Morton would allow for a continuous stream corridor and hiking trail. Furthermore, relocating Morton would allow for a higher quality field and improved amenities.

- 6. The restoration of the Tennessee Hollow watershed is the only opportunity in the park and the city to restore a complete ecosystem from creek to marsh to lagoon to bay – ball fields in the watershed are a major hurdle to fulfilling this promise.**

The Tennessee Hollow watershed is the largest watershed in the Presidio, offering a unique opportunity to restore a complete riparian system, from springs and seeps to bay, in a dense urban environment. Within a mile, one can hike through a complete system.

Presidio natural areas such as Mountain Lake, Crissy Marsh and Tennessee Hollow are already incorporated into curricula at several San Francisco schools, offering a platform for field-based science education, as well as recreation.

The Trust's planning guidelines retain Julius Kahn, Paul Goode, and Pop Hicks fields which are in the watershed. We believe that we can restore the watershed and retain the use of these fields. Finding a new location for Morton Field will allow for an improved field, whether it is in or out of the watershed, and it will be located to minimize impacts on other park experiences and other resources.

- 7. The major debate within the Presidio is whether or not to return the Presidio to its natural undeveloped state, meaning no recreational facilities.**

This is not a debate. This question was settled during development the planning guidelines for the Presidio, the *Presidio Trust Management Plan* (PTMP), which committed to retaining recreational facilities as well as restoring natural areas and historic landscapes. The *Presidio Vegetation Management Plan* (VMP), which predates the PTMP, divides the Presidio into three management zones – natural areas, historic forest, designed landscapes – and prescribes different management strategies for each. The VMP does commit the Trust to improving the landscape over the next 30 years, including reforestation of the historic forest, rehabilitation of historic landscapes, and expansion of the Presidio's natural areas. The Trust's commitment to the VMP is reiterated in PTMP. Both plans commit the Trust to the phased restoration of Tennessee Hollow over time. None of these landscape transformations precludes retaining and/or developing recreational facilities.

8. The current position of the Trust is to maintain the status quo (3 ball fields), which precludes development of additional facilities.

PTMP calls for the retention of Julius Kahn, Paul Goode, and Pop Hicks fields. It also gives the Trust the flexibility to remove or relocate Morton and Fort Scott fields to achieve other objectives such as restoring the eastern tributary of Tennessee Hollow which runs under Morton Field, and restoring the historic Fort Scott parade ground. Developing new ball fields is not precluded. In fact, PTMP gives general guidance that commits the Trust to “retaining facilities for active recreational use” (except where specific guidance is otherwise given) and to considering “additional built facilities, indoors and outdoors, in the future.” PTMP also commits to providing a diversity of recreational opportunities – from passive activities, such as a birding, hiking and stewardship to more formalized active recreation such as baseball and tennis.

9. The Trust is retaining Pop Hicks Field so they can cap Landfill E.

This is not true. A remedy for Pop Hicks is subject to a multi-agency regulatory process which includes public input. Key criteria for developing remedies include in addition to end-use: overall protection of human health and the environment, compliance with applicable laws, long-term effectiveness, reduction of toxicity mobility and volume, short-term effectiveness, implementability, cost,

regulatory agency acceptance, and community acceptance. The Trust has completed its Feasibility Study of the site, and has recommended a cover system, or cap, but the remedy has not yet been approved.

Some in the community who would like to see the restoration of Tennessee Hollow’s western tributary which runs along Pop Hicks have expressed concern that returning the field to active use would limit the restoration possibilities. The Trust has developed a preliminary site plan that strikes a balance allowing for both restoration of a continuous stream corridor and reconstruction of a little league field and picnic area. The plan also converts Barnard Road to a multi-use trail and relocates parking. We believe that this post-remediation land use scenario is the one that best satisfies competing demands for this area, and addresses the spirit and intent of PTMP.

10. There is plenty of room for the Presidio to achieve both its environmental goals and recreational goals, including a very significant expansion of what is currently available.

The fundamental belief embedded in PTMP is that the Presidio can both restore healthy natural systems and serve the public’s recreation needs. We believe that we can increase the number and quality of active recreation facilities. But the number of opportunities for relocating or adding ball fields is by no means unlimited, and is circumscribed by land use and/or development requirements such as parking or infill construction sites,

physical characteristics such as topography, or other resource considerations.

11. The Trust is proposing to remove Morton Field without replacing it.

Morton Field is designated in PTMP as a candidate for removal or relocation to allow for the restoration of an underlying creek, new streamside trail, and picnic area. Given its location atop a creek, the field has persistent maintenance problems. It also has a substandard parking area, limited area for equipment storage, and its only amenity is a portable toilet. Relocating the field to a more appropriate area will allow the Trust to provide a better facility, while also creating a rare opportunity for urban creek restoration. It should be a win-win with broad public benefit.

12. Trust should complete a Recreation Master Plan for the Presidio before ball field placement decisions are made.

PTMP provides an overall framework within which decisions about removing, relocating, or adding ball fields can be made. It provides general guidance about all manner of land use and management issues, including environmental restoration, historic preservation, sustainability, recreation, etc. It also provides specific guidance about many existing Presidio recreational facilities. The Trust is committed to doing the appropriate level of planning and compliance depending on the scope and character of any future actions.