

April 28, 2010

Supervisor John Avalos  
Chair, Budget and Finance Committee  
City Hall, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94102

**RE: Responsible Recreation and Park Budget; Sharp Park Analysis Requested**

Dear Chairman Avalos:

Thank you for your leadership on the Budget and Finance Committee and your support of our City's parks, open spaces and recreation centers. We are organizations that support and prioritize the health, access, and well-being of San Francisco's parks and recreation centers. We write to you because, as the City's budget during these trying economic times will no doubt affect the health of these areas, we wish to see well-informed dialogue involving the Board of Supervisors and the general public.

The City's Recreation and Park Department (RPD) has begun to examine its priorities and, out of necessity, cuts are being proposed to recreation facilities and parks citywide. We ask that, as the Board of Supervisors prepares to examine the RPD's budget proposal, a priority be placed on the responsible action to return financial resources to San Francisco's neighborhood parks, create recreational amenities that all city residents can enjoy, and protect our environment. Additionally, and now more than ever, the budget allocations and anticipated cuts must be as responsive to neighborhood park and recreation needs (see attached RPD survey).

Despite the economic challenges, RPD is adopting new approaches to the way recreation is offered and establishing pilots, such as the gardener apprentice program, that will enhance our parks and position RPD to better recover from many years of funding reductions. We support RPD's efforts to rebuild the department and urge RPD to continue to look for new models of managing the park system that benefit park users and are financially sustainable.

One specific area that we believe merits greater financial scrutiny during this year's budget discussions is Sharp Park, which is a golf course owned by the City of San Francisco, but located in Pacifica/San Mateo County. Sharp Park Golf Course has a long history of environmental problems, largely because of its poor design and unfortunate placement. The RPD has documented that the operation of the golf course harms the habitat and causes take (i.e. killing) of two species protected by the federal Endangered Species Act: the California red-legged frog and the San Francisco garter snake. San Francisco is not permitted by the federal or state government to cause this harm.

The City is responsible for the ongoing legal liabilities and capital expenditures (to the tune of tens-of-millions) associated with the environmental problems at Sharp Park, which loses money annually. San Francisco is currently exposed to massive civil

penalties for harming endangered species in violation of state and federal law. The City's current analysis for Sharp Park does not factor in numerous requirements made by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Coastal Commission; requirements that would substantially increase the financial burden to the City in order to meet Federal legal requirements.

Through greater financial scrutiny of Sharp Park, decision makers and the public can more accurately understand the financial choices facing the RPD, as well as better invest City funds into parks and recreation centers that serve San Francisco communities

Sincerely,

Meredith Thomas  
Executive Director  
Neighborhood Parks Council

Peter Brastow  
Founding Director  
Nature in the City

Arthur Feinstein  
Vice-Chair  
Sierra Club, Bay Chapter

Steve Krefting  
San Francisco League of Conservation  
Voters

Brent Plater  
Executive Director  
Wild Equity Institute

Neal Desai  
Sr. Program Manager, Pacific Region  
National Parks Conservation Association

Saul Bloom  
Executive Director  
Arc Ecology

Michael Stewart  
Vice-Chair  
San Francisco Chapter of Surfrider  
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Justin Augustine  
Staff Attorney  
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Laurie Graham  
Board member, Conservation Committee  
Sequoia Audubon Society

Mike Lynes  
Conservation Director and General  
Counsel for Environmental Matters  
Golden Gate Audubon Society

Eric Brooks  
Coordinator  
Our City

Roy Earnest  
President  
Pacifica's Environmental Family

Dyer Crouch  
Pacifica Shorebird Alliance

**Need For Recreation Facilities in San Francisco**

From the list of 19 recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate which ones they and members of their household have a need for. The graph below summarizes key findings on the previous page by the number of households having a need for various recreation facilities in the City of San Francisco, based on 337,710 households in the City.

