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.

<u>One specific area that we believe merits greater financial scrutiny during this year's</u> <u>budget discussions is Sharp Park, which is a golf course owned by the City of San</u> <u>Francisco, but located in Pacifica/San Mateo County</u>. 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

Arthur Feinstein Vice-Chair Sierra Club, Bay Chapter

Brent Plater Executive Director Wild Equity Institute

Saul Bloom Executive Director Arc Ecology

Justin Augustine Staff Attorney Center for Biological Diversity

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

Roy Earnest President Pacifica's Environmental Family Peter Brastow Founding Director Nature in the City

Steve Krefting San Francisco League of Conservation Voters

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

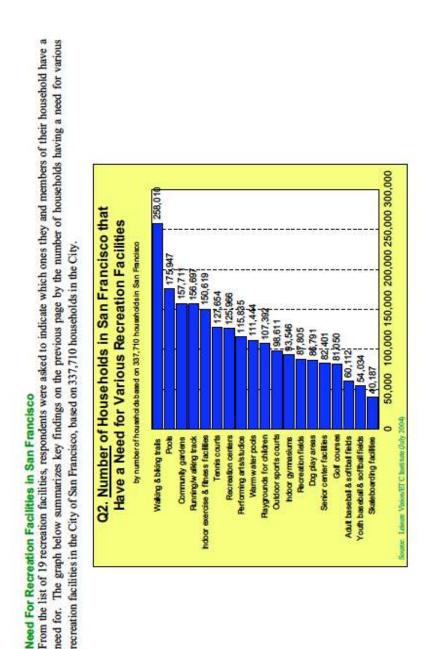
Nicholas Quesada Chair San Francisco Youth Commission

Michael Stewart Vice-Chair San Francisco Chapter of Surfrider Foundation

Laurie Graham Board member, Conservation Committee Sequoia Audubon Society

Eric Brooks Coordinator Our City

Dyer Crouch Pacifica Shorebird Alliance



San Francisco Recreation and Park Department

Attachment: San Francisco Recreation Needs Survey http://www.parks.sfgov.org/wcm_recpark/Notice/SFRP_Summary_Report.pdf

page 13 (PDF File page 17) and A-12 (PDF File page 60)