

Golden Gate Uses Team Approach On 'Monumental' Resource Problems

By Judd A. Howell

At times the problems facing natural resources management in any park can seem insurmountable. Limits in funds and staff set the scope of reasonable accomplishment during a work year. Much was written in the recent past about the importance of natural resources management. The *Threats to the Park* report identified the diversity of major problems the national parks face. Within each park, the diversity of problems that must be dealt with on a continuing basis is monumental.

In a park like Golden Gate the natural resources management problems can be intensified by the press of 22 million visitors each year. Being relatively new to the National Park system, Golden Gate has an immediate constituency with limited understanding about the natural values of the park.

Names such as "recreation area" and "urban open space" conjure up innumerable visions and biases that are tied to these concepts but not necessarily to the land and the resources on them. Even with an approved Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP), the budgeting process is slow, competition for priority is intense and prospects for measurable progress are slight.

This report describes a management system that can help overcome the above problems. The system can make a difference in the rate of progress and employee morale. It is not a panacea. As with any management system, its success is a function of the personalities involved. The following is a discussion of Golden Gate's natural resource management teams — their inception, organization, accomplishments and pitfalls.

Organization

In January 1982 a background questionnaire was developed to assess the ability and interest of Golden Gate's staff (250 people) to deal with natural resources problems. The questionnaire examined formal training, interests, and hobbies as they related to natural values of the park, regardless of an individual's current position. In addition to knowledge and skills, project titles were listed that corresponded to project statements in the NRMP. Respondents were asked to number in order of preference the projects they wished to work on.

The initial response indicated a high degree of interest in natural resources programs. Forty-six people responded, 26 of whom had some natural resources training. The majority (36) had baccalaureate degrees and four had masters degrees. Of the original 46 respondents, 40 indicated that they wanted to work on natural resources projects.

Tally sheets were developed to examine each person's education and priority project preference. Each respondent was categorized into one of six areas of expertise based on education and preference. The six areas of expertise corresponded to subject areas identified in the NRMP; aquatic resources, botany, geology, vegetation management, wildlife management and range management. The technical areas formed the basis for the natural resources management teams.

The natural resources management teams have a five-fold purpose. First, the teams provide more effective utilization of existing natural resources expertise within the park. Second, the teams begin implementation of the NRMP. Third, the teams act as an interim management vehicle until identified resource management positions can be filled. Fourth, the teams provide technical and labor support for existing natural resources management staff (currently one Natural Resources Specialist). Finally, the teams provide for effective utilization of Volunteers in Parks (VIPs) through team activities.

Three basic goals were established for the first year. The first was to begin implementation of the NRMP (Table 1). The second was to develop project statements for additional projects (Table 2). The final goal was to develop projects for summer youth programs within the framework of the NRMP.

The teams were organized to correspond to the six technical areas described in the NRMP. The park's Natural Resources Specialist supervised the teams for consistency with the NRMP, technical content and quality of work produced. Each team elected a team leader who met monthly with the Natural Resources Specialist to evaluate team direction and accomplishment.

The teams met each month independently; team leaders were responsible for unity and continuity of team effort. The leaders organized the monthly work program, assisted in work assignments, and assessed the status of the team.

Individual team members contributed some work time to natural resource activities. The superintendent permitted up to 10 percent of an individual's work

time to be spent on team projects with supervisory approval. Team members met monthly with the leader to report progress and organize work activities.

With the purposes, goals, and framework established the teams began enthusiastically chipping away at the natural resource management mountain. Generally, the teams settled down to a solid core of about 33 people. Some turnover occurred because of the large number of seasonal appointments. During the year 14 additional applicants filled out questionnaires and half were used to fill gaps in team membership. The range and vegetation management teams were consolidated because of the small number of individuals on the range team. This left five functioning teams.

Results

Since April 1982, five natural resources management teams worked on projects ranging from staff training to resources protection to project statement writing. The time each individual spent on team activities varied from as little as 10 hours to over 300 hours; the latter included on and off duty time. The vegetation management team for example had 10 active members who worked a total of 441 hours for the year. Theoretically, 20 team members working 10 percent of their time would provide 2 work years. Realistically, for the teams' first year about 1 work year was completed.

The aquatic resources team was especially active. Early on, the team was trained to conduct stream surveys. A volunteer fisheries biologist (retired Forest Service) conducted a two-day training session. With knowledge in hand, the teams:

Table 1. List of Natural Resource Projects

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Reference Number	Park Priority	Project Title	Status
RM-1*	1	Range Management	Proposed
RM-2	2	Exotic and Noxious Plant Control	Proposed
RM-3	3	Erosion Hazard Rehabilitation	Proposed
RM-4	4	Vegetation Management, S.F.	Proposed
RM-5	5	Dog Control	Proposed
RM-6	6	Fallow Deer Management	Proposed
RM-7	7	Water Resources Management Plan	Proposed
N-1*	2	Endangered Plant Survey	Proposed
N-2	10	Plant Community Mapping	Proposed
N-3	4	Erosion Hazard Survey	Proposed
N-4	5	Beach Monitoring Program	Proposed
N-5	6	Predation of Deer	Proposed
N-6	3	Aquatic Resources Study and Monitoring	Proposed
N-7	7	Monitoring Sensitive Nesting	Current Yr. 1
N-8	8	Marine Resources Monitoring Program	Proposed
N-9	9	Marine Mammal and Bird Monitoring	Proposed
N-10	1	Fire Research for Management	Proposed

Projects Requiring Additional Assessment

*RM — Natural Resources Management Project

*N — Natural Resources Research Project

- conducted periodic stream surveys of Redwood Creek, a silver salmon and steelhead trout spawning stream that flows through Muir Woods;
- assisted California Department of Fish and Game personnel in a survey of Lagunitas Creek, which contains California freshwater shrimp, an endangered species;
- conducted a staff training for all districts and U.S. Park Police in Dungeness crab identification and protection; (the crabs, threatened by poaching, are a significant resource of San Francisco Bay);
- developed and conducted a monitoring program of Rodeo Lagoon during bridge construction. The lagoon is the last habitat of the Tidewater goby in the Bay area. Tidewater goby spawning habitat would have been destroyed without bridge design modification and careful monitoring during construction.

The botany team conducted a review of the literature about endangered plants in the park. Contacts with local conservation groups and research institutes were made. A staff training was conducted on identification of endangered plants. Members of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) conducted the training. After the training, the CNPS provided five complete sets of photographs and distribution maps of endangered plants for each district.

The geology team developed a landform survey to evaluate erosion hazards in the park. The survey provided the basis for establishing priorities for correction and summer youth program projects. The team members and district staff were trained by the team leader, a physical geographer, to conduct the surveys. Updates to the survey are being conducted in certain locations by volunteers from San Francisco State University.

The vegetation management team had a slow start, but became the most effective in utilizing volunteer groups. They conducted fuel sampling in local Eucalyptus groves, which present extreme fire danger in California's Mediterranean climate. Volunteers from Urban School, a local high school, assisted the team in fuel sampling, establishing two fire-weather stations, planting native perennial grasses and stabilizing a heavily trampled endangered plant site. Other team members used volunteers from George Washington High School to eradicate forget-me-nots on the valley floor of Muir Woods. Team members also were active in removing pampas grass, another exotic plant.

Table 2. List of Projects Requiring Additional Assessment

Mammal Censuses
 Bird Censuses
 Feral Cat Census
 Trail Survey
 Herpetological Census
 Thistle, Scotch, and French Broom Research
 Blowing Sand Study
 Reestablishment of Native Perennial Grasses
 Reintroduction of Tule Elk
 Reintroduction of Natural Predators (Coyote and Mountain Lion)
 Develop Raptor Observatory
 Feral Pigs from MMWD Watershed

The wildlife management team developed management guidelines for a colony of bank swallows . . . the most northern coastal colony in California and of special interest to local Audubon groups. The cliffs, which are prime nesting habitat, have been extensively trampled by visitors. A volunteer associated with the team began surveys of marine mammals and birds. Another volunteer is collecting and curating the park's insect collection.

In cooperation with Point Reyes Bird Observatory, the team continued a system of beached marine bird and mammal monitoring, conducted monthly surveys of avia fauna on Alcatraz Island, and put on a park staff training exercise in the use of wildlife observation forms to upgrade the park's data base.

Training provided team members by the National Resources Specialist included statistical methods, biological sampling and a field exercise. In addition, other teams developed project statements to direct future resources management actions.

Discussion

Productivity of the natural resources teams for their first year was very high and covered a broad spectrum of activities. The teams accomplished the three primary goals; implementation of the NRMP, writing project statements, and developing youth program projects. They also provided an efficient matrix for utilizing volunteer support. Team membership cut across all divisions in the park – maintenance, administration, and ranger activities.

The natural resources teams did not operate with-

out problems. Lack of experience among team members led to uncertainty about what to do and how to do it. Once training began, the teams began to coalesce and progress became apparent.

The second major problem was gaining supervisory approval for participation. Even with strong support from top management and enthusiasm from park staff, some mid-level managers acted as stumbling blocks, making team member participation difficult if not impossible. This complaint was voiced by all teams. Team activities went beyond district boundaries and a considerable amount of work reciprocity occurred between districts. Once this was realized, some mid-level managers began to support the natural resource team program.

A third problem was team member turnover, creating difficulty with continuity. The personnel division now includes the natural resources questionnaire and team description with new employee orientation packets.

Even with the problems, the success of the natural resources teams is apparent. The teams provide a creative outlet for a number of employees to fulfill their personal NPS goals. The training and experience gained by team members help park management meet EEO goals. As technical staff come on board the teams can continue as a valuable extension of Golden Gate's natural resources management capability.

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