



*inspiring people to protect
Bay Area birds since 1917*

May 12, 2010

Via U.S. Mail

San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission
501 Stanyan Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Re: Questions about proposed Disc Golf Course in McLaren Park

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of the Golden Gate Audubon Society regarding questions about the proposed disc golf course in McLaren Park. Golden Gate Audubon's mission is to protect Bay Area Birds and other wildlife, and to conserve and restore native wildlife habitat. We work to connect people of all ages and backgrounds with the natural world and to educate and engage Bay Area residents in the protection of our shared local environment. Many of our members use and enjoy McLaren Park on a regular basis.

McLaren Park provides breeding habitat for over 50 species of birds. (*See the San Francisco Field Ornithologist's "Atlas of Breeding Birds" available at sffo1.markeaton.org*). This is only one of a couple sites in San Francisco where the beautiful Lazuli Bunting breeds. In addition to breeding birds, many other bird species rely on McLaren Park as habitat during migration. Since 1992, the California Quail has been extirpated from McLaren Park and other species are occurring in decreasing numbers. For example, the Olive-sided Flycatcher population appears to be in decline, possibly due to the increase in the population of Common Ravens (a common nest predator), loss of habitat due to the Recreation & Park Department's habitat management practices, and the presence of feral cats in the park.

From our review of the proposal, it appears that approximately one third of the park will be dedicated to the San Francisco Disc Golf Course. We would like to confirm whether this is true. Moreover, is any of the proposed disc golf course in areas that are part of the Natural Areas Program? The proposed site appears to be among some of the best coastal scrub habitat, which has been significantly reduced throughout the California coast, but especially within San Francisco where it remains only in small, fragmented remnants (outside of the Presidio). The project will result in the removal or trimming of trees, installation of posts and cement foundations, and is likely to result in erosion and other impacts to the areas. How will these impacts be addressed, mitigated, and managed over the long term in McLaren Park?

Moreover, the project map is unclear. It does not clearly define where the disc golf activities will take place. It also fails to identify the off-leash dog play area. As you may know, dogs are

required by law to be on leash in all San Francisco parks, except in designated off-leash play areas. Off-leash dogs have significant negative impacts on local birds and on other park users. We are concerned that the proposed changes, which are for a single user type (disc golfers), may result in significant changes to the ecology and character of McLaren Park. For example, we are unaware of any environmental assessment that has been conducted for the proposed project. We are concerned that it will result in loss of habitat for birds and other wildlife and that the RPD will lack the funding and oversight to mitigate for these impacts over time.

Golden Gate Audubon supports outdoor recreation of all types, but we believe strongly that recreation should be balanced with concerns and measures intended to protect wildlife and our natural environment. In areas such as McLaren Park, where habitat degradation and poor management by RPD has resulted in impacts to local native bird populations, special care must be given before proceeding with projects that may have a significant impact on the environment.

Thank you for consideration of our concerns. We are happy to discuss this matter with you further at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (510) 847-6551 or mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Lynes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Lynes
Conservation Director

Cc: Lisa Wayne, Natural Areas Program
Jake Sigg, California Native Plant Society, Yerba Buena Chapter
Peter Brastow, Nature in the City
Ruth Gravanis