

# Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  
representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar  
PO Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248 | [midcoastcommunitycouncil.org](http://midcoastcommunitycouncil.org)*

**Gus Mattammal** | **Gregg Dieguez** | **Scott Bollinger** | **Kimberly Williams** | **Dan Haggerty** | **Ann Rothman** |  
Chair Vice-Chair Treasurer Secretary | **Claire Toutant** |

Date: August 28, 2024  
To: Dave Smith, Kirsten Holder, Joshua Winchell - NPS  
CC: Supvr. Ray Mueller, Gina Quiney, Marisol Escalera Durani (District 3 Staff),  
MWSD GM: Clemens Heldmaier and MWSD Board, Steve Monowitz - SMC  
Planning, Stephanie Rexing - North Central District Manager - Calif. Coastal  
Commission and Staff  
From: Midcoast Community Council

Subject: **MCC Community Comments on NPS/GGNRA Plans in Rancho Corral de Tierra**

This letter confirms the community feedback and suggested next steps discussed at our MCC meeting on August 14, 2024 regarding your plans for the GGNRA lands in the San Mateo County Midcoast, bordering our constituents in Montara, Moss Beach, and El Granada, and including a watershed of our Montara Water and Sanitary District (MWSD).

This letter augments our prior meeting comments and letter of April 10, 2024. It is based upon written and verbal comments from almost 150 attendees at the 8/14 meeting, representing over 1% of the total population of the MCC jurisdiction. Clearly, plans for the GGNRA are a top community concern and priority.

Following are topic notes from the 8/14/24 meeting:

1. NPS agreed to hold a public meeting (e.g. Town Hall) dedicated to this topic at a larger local facility. MCC can help arrange the Supervisor's Harbor Office and/or coordinate with Half Moon Bay (HMB) for use of their library. We request that such large, dedicated forums occur BEFORE further Plan specification. An hour at a multi-topic MCC meeting is insufficient.
2. We note that prior "feedback" to the NPS, cited from over 10 years ago, did not come from the MCC or the MWSD. This current dialog should be viewed as the more important source of community opinion. As NPS designs and schedules further outreach events, we request that MCC, MWSD, HMB, and Pacifica all be notified well in advance so that they can both participate and amplify notification to their constituents. Notification to the MCC should be via email to:  
[midcoastcommunitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:midcoastcommunitycouncil@gmail.com)
3. Horse stabling is to be preserved at current levels, subject to further research on bacterial contamination of surface water. *[Discussed below]* The community overwhelmingly believes that horses provide recreational, educational, mental health, and even safety benefits. For example, the Large Animal Evacuation Team, which trains at some of those horse facilities, is a safety factor. There should be no question after the CZU fires (and so many others) how necessary this group and these facilities

are. There is community concern about stable preservation, given NPS actions in other stabling venues.

4. It was suggested that instead of parking and visitors' centers, funds would be better employed in improved stewardship of the lands (e.g. suppressing invasives like Pampas Grass).
5. Trees should be preserved where they are not a fire hazard, as they provide eco-system services in an era of Climate Change.
6. Camping should not be authorized due to the potential for watershed and serious fire danger, prevention of homeless campgrounds, and noise.
7. We have concerns about ANY impermeable surfaces created, given the exacerbation of Climate Change-related peak rain bursts in our area (worst in the County), and the extant flooding and erosion of Hwy 1 - which is our only evacuation route - due to inadequate drainage culverts in Montara and Moss Beach.
8. More parking would be a mixed blessing to increase access because it might just fill up with State Beach-goers, instead of GGNRA users, and it would remove habitat and create impermeable surfaces, increasing storm runoff.
9. There is concern that a visitors' center, restrooms, roads, and excessive signage will destroy the natural scenic beauty of the area. Less is more, with respect to any human structures. We want to preserve open space for habitat and for wildlife. Any new parking or other development, if at all in this space, should be located directly adjacent to the highway.
10. We request that NPS create a task list for the design review process in collaboration with the Coastal Commission, SMC Planning, the MCC, MWSD, and HMB and Pacifica.
11. We request identification of the NPS horse expert and equestrian architect. What are the qualifications of the horse expert and what findings result from a review of the other facilities they oversee currently?
12. There definitely are unsafe trails at present. One biker fell in a hole and was severely injured and helicoptered out. Trail maintenance is supported by the community. However, the nature of the road/trail management needs careful specification and review. Efforts to maintain a Montara Mountain road leading to cell towers, including rolling dips and berm construction, have repeatedly failed within 1 to 2 winters of completion, leading to increased erosion, destruction of native vegetation, and spread of invasive species. The MCC can mobilize knowledgeable people to assist in this trail design process.

**Equine Bacteria:**

There is a dispute about whether horses are contributing to harmful bacteria in the water runoff from the GGNRA lands. Conflicting reports have been cited. Our request is that a workgroup be formed with personnel from the NPS, local community, and other entities relevant to this process (e.g. RCD). That work group should review the evidence, and if it is not conclusive, outline the additional required testing and research required to reach a conclusion. The findings of this process seem important to a decision about the number of horses which should be stabled in the area, and whether mitigations are required, and at what cost. This will be one part of adopting a transparent and cooperative decision-making process with the community.

Thank you for working toward the goal of preserving the current number of horses. We look forward to seeing updated GGNRA plans that incorporate the feedback of the local community, retain historic equestrian uses, and allow the stable operators to maintain the existing equine population.

**Conclusion:**

The Council thanks you and your NPS team for the time, courage, and sensitivity displayed at our 8/14/24 meeting. We realize that our community is outspoken in general, and especially so regarding our Parks and open spaces. For many residents, these spaces are a primary reason we live here, and we intensely use and value them, as you have recently heard. We look forward to a productive collaboration toward enhancing the outdoor experience for all.

Sincerely,

s/Gus Mattammal, Chair