



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
Fort Mason Bldg. 201  
San Francisco, California 94123

FEB 18 2015

Dear Reviewer,

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to transmit the attached Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Project. NPS invites your review and comment on the document. With annual visitation of about 1.5 million, Alcatraz Island is one of San Francisco's top attractions and an international icon.

The Draft EIS was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations. The NPS has also begun consultations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and will meet its obligations as the process continues. NPS is the lead federal agency, and worked with the Port of San Francisco (Port) in developing the project alternatives. The project would establish a new, long-term ferry embarkation site for passenger service between the northern San Francisco waterfront and Alcatraz Island. It would also establish occasional connecting ferry service between the selected embarkation site and the existing Fort Baker pier in Sausalito, as well as between Fort Mason and other park destinations in San Francisco Bay.

The project objectives include the following:

- Establish the long-term (50 years or more) primary location for visitor access to Alcatraz Island.
- Provide an identifiable area for quality welcome, orientation, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources of Alcatraz, the larger GGNRA, and the national park system.
- Accommodate critical visitor and operational programs and facilities, and provide for efficient land and vessel operations.
- Economic feasibility and sustainability, and generation of revenue for investment on Alcatraz Island and other NPS facilities and visitor programs.
- Provide facilities for cross-bay ferry service to accommodate existing and future visitor demand for travel to Alcatraz Island and the other parklands in the Bay.

The Draft EIS describes and analyzes four alternatives—the No Action Alternative plus three action alternatives as follows:

- Port Pier 31½: would retrofit the existing structures, including portions of the Pier 31 and Pier 33 sheds and bulkhead buildings, and establish long-term ferry service at Pier 31½ (the wharf between Piers 31 and 33) along the Embarcadero. A third berth would be constructed to support ferry travel to other GGNRA sites.
- Port Pier 41: would retrofit and expand the existing structures and establish long-term ferry service at Pier 41 in Fisherman's Wharf. A third berth would be constructed to support ferry travel to other GGNRA sites.
- Fort Mason Pier 3: would retrofit the existing structures and establish a long-term ferry service at Pier 3 in Lower Fort Mason. A third berth between Piers 1 and 2 would also be constructed.

All action alternatives would also provide the occasional connecting ferry service operated to/from Lower Fort Mason and to/from Fort Baker. All action alternatives have the potential to meet project objectives.

Typically, a Draft EIS identifies a preferred alternative. However, NPS cannot identify a preferred alternative for the project at this time because agreement has not been reached with the Port on fundamental terms and conditions of NPS occupancy of Pier 3 1/2 or Pier 41. Our conversations with the Port over the past year have centered on NPS occupancy of Pier 3 1/2 as presented in the Draft EIS, but significant business terms remain unresolved, such as the level of rent the NPS or its concessioner would be charged and the approach to implementing phased improvements to the Port structures. Until these issues are resolved, NPS cannot fully consider a Port site as its preferred alternative. We are hopeful that productive discussions can continue and business terms can be finalized, thus enabling NPS to name a preferred alternative in the Final EIS and complete a Record of Decision.

The Notice of Availability, which serves to formally open the 90-day comment period for this Draft EIS, is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on February 20, 2015. Comments received by 12:00 P.M. Pacific on May 20, 2015 will be used to address concerns regarding the Draft EIS, as well as to aid in completing the Final EIS.

Agencies, members of the public, and interested organizations are encouraged to provide comments on the draft alternatives, advise the NPS on the nature and extent of environmental impacts, and further refine possible mitigation strategies that would reduce project impacts. Key impact topics discussed in the Draft EIS include transportation, land use, geology, noise, cultural resources, air quality, water quality, climate change, hazardous materials, public services and utilities, socioeconomics, recreation, and aesthetics.

Comment letters may be sent to this address, but for directions about submitting comments online, or for additional information about the project, the upcoming tour of the sites under consideration, and the public meeting, please visit the project website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ALCAembarkation>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Dean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank Dean  
General Superintendent

Enclosure:  
Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Draft EIS