

DETERMINATION of NO IMPAIRMENT
Muir Woods National Monument Reservation System

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
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National Park Service (NPS) Management Policies 2006 (§1.4) requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether or not proposed actions will impair a park's resources and values. The fundamental purpose of the national park system established by the Organic Act and reaffirmed by the General Authorities Act, as amended, mandates that NPS conserve park resources and values. NPS managers must always seek ways to avoid, or to minimize to the greatest degree practicable, adverse impacts on park resources and values. However, the laws do give NPS management discretion to allow impacts on park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of the park, although that discretion is limited by the statutory requirement that the NPS must leave resources and values unimpaired unless a particular law directly and specifically provides otherwise.

The prohibited impairment is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, will harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise will be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. Non-resource topics are generally not subject to impairment assessment. Whether an impact could lead to impairment depends on the particular resources that will be affected; the severity, duration, and timing of the impact; the direct and indirect effects of the impact; and the cumulative effects of the impact in question and other impacts. An impact on any park resource or value may, but does not necessarily, constitute impairment. An impact will be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is:

- Necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park, or
- Key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or
- Identified in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents as being of significance.

An impact may be less likely to constitute impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to preserve or restore the integrity of park resources or values and it cannot be further mitigated. Impairment may result from visitor activities, NPS administrative activities, or activities undertaken by concessioners, contractors and others operating in the park. Impairment may also result from sources or activities outside the park.

An impairment determination is not made for all resource impact topics analyzed for the selected alternative. An impairment determination is not made for land use, socioeconomics, transportation and circulation, recreation and visitor use, public health and safety, and public services and utilities because impairment findings relate back to park resources and values. These impact areas are not generally

considered to be park resources or values according to the Organic Act, and cannot be impaired in the same way that an action can impair park resources and values. The following consideration of impairment only applies to the following resource impacts evaluated in the EA which pertain to the selected alternative. Finally, this determination which has been rendered solely by the park manager applies only to NPS lands, not any adjacent areas.

Special Status Species

The selected alternative will not negatively impact local threatened or endangered species, including the northern spotted owl, coho salmon, or steelhead trout. The decline of migratory fish species has been associated with a number of factors including modification of habitat, habitat loss, water pollution, over utilization (for a number of purposes, including commercial and recreational fishing), disease and predation, oceanic conditions, and drought, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, Marine Fisheries Service's Coho Salmon Recovery Plan (NOAA 2012). The NPS, in partnership with local, state, and other federal agencies and other non-governmental organizations, has been implementing a series of projects and programs to improve and restore habitat and conditions for these species, however, this project will not have a substantial impact, beneficial or negatively on them.

Vegetation

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of vegetation. It will eliminate parking in inappropriate locations along Muir Woods Road, which will allow some regrowth of native vegetation along roadsides, a minor beneficial impact. There will be negligible impacts associated with installation of physical barriers along Muir Woods Road or from actions in the Conlon Avenue parking area. This will include minimal trimming, pruning, and removal of one tree, which is showing evidence of Sudden Oak Death. The tree will be removed and disposed of according to standard practice for trees with that disease. All vegetation actions will occur outside of bird nesting season. Because the impacts associated with vegetation are extremely limited this impact topic has been dismissed from further analysis.

Wildlife Habitat

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of wildlife habitat. Reduction of roadside parking will not have notable impacts to wildlife habitat. The Redwood Creek habitat has been affected by a number of factors including human modification, habitat loss, water pollution, and low water volume (NPS 2011b). The NPS, in partnership with local, state, and other federal agencies and other non-governmental organizations, has been implementing a series of projects and programs to improve and restore habitat, however, the proposed action will not have a substantial impact, beneficial or negatively.

Air Quality

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of air quality. The number of vehicle trips, including a modest expansion of the shuttle system to the monument, will be reduced under the proposed action. This is expected to result in reduced vehicle miles traveled, less congestion, and fewer cars circling or idling while waiting for a parking spot to become available. This will reduce emissions of air pollutants and be a minor beneficial impact.

Water Resources

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of water resources. Reduced shoulder parking will occur in both alternatives and will have negligible effects on the areas contributing to runoff; buffer

zones will increase slightly, but benefits are expected to be minor. The Redwood Creek Watershed Assessment (NPS 2011b) did not identify any water quality problems in the watershed associated with parking in the watershed, including on Muir Woods Road. Reduction of parking on the road is therefore unlikely to improve water quality from non-point source storm water pollutants or improve overall water quality.

Viewscapes

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of viewscapes. Placement of fencing and signs will have an effect on the viewshed in the area. However, the proposed posts and fencing will be 30 inches in height or less and are not considered to substantially affect the viewscapes in the corridor. The impacts to viewscapes of these actions are expected to be minor.

Cultural Resources

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of cultural resources. The area of Muir Woods is considered an important cultural landscape and careful attention is paid to how this area is interpreted and affected by proposed projects in relation to potential impacts to the landscape. Neither of the alternatives will alter the cultural landscape in any significant way.

There are no known Native American sacred or culturally sensitive sites, locales (such as clan gathering or other cultural event), or landscapes present in the project area. Additionally, implementation of the project is extremely unlikely to disturb human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony, as defined by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

Geology: Soils, Bedrock, Streambeds

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of geology. Reduced roadside parking will reduce potential contribution to runoff and erosion along Muir Woods Road. No changes to the road itself are proposed within this project. However, the impacts that are associated with the installation of erosion protection measures, along with the physical barriers that are planned to be installed on the road shoulder to prevent illegal parking, will be minor and only beneficial. Routine maintenance and widening of driveway access to improve safety at Conlon Avenue, currently a maintenance and parking area; (including light grading, laying of gravel, and installing stormwater management measures such as wattles) will reduce the potential of sedimentation into Redwood Creek or its tributary.

Soundscapes

The selected alternative will not result in an impairment of soundscapes. The number of vehicle trips, including a modest expansion of the shuttle system to Muir Woods, will be reduced under the selected action. This is expected to result in reduced vehicle miles traveled, less congestion, and fewer cars circling or idling while waiting for a parking spot to become available. This will reduce vehicle-related acoustic impacts and be a minor beneficial impact to the monument's soundscape.