



PROPOSED OCEAN BEACH FIRE PROGRAM

SUMMARY

More detailed information on this proposal can be found in “Draft CE Approval and Decision Memo – Attachment A” located at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OBfireprogram>.

A. Background

Recreational fires have a long history on Ocean Beach, spanning to before GGNRA was established. In recent years, the National Park Service (NPS) has taken action three times attempting to address concerns about beach fires causing impacts to public safety, visitor experience, and the environment. In 2004 fires were limited to between stairwells 15-28; in 2007 a 1-year pilot program introduced fire rings and limited fires to between stairwells 15-20; in 2014 a Revised Pilot Program changed the curfew to 9:00pm and instituted summer Spare the Air day restrictions.

Monitoring revealed that the 2014 Revised Pilot Program was unable to address the majority of concerns associated with recreational fires at Ocean Beach. Possible concepts for the future were discussed during a public meeting held on February 5, 2015.

B. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposal is to develop a safe, manageable, and sustainable Ocean Beach Fire Program. The Ocean Beach Fire Program addresses ongoing impacts and challenges in the categories of Public Safety, Visitor Experience, NPS Staff Safety, Park Operations, and Air Quality.

C. Development of Proposal (Pre-Proposal Scoping)

Following the February 2015 public meeting held to review the results of the 2014 Revised Pilot Program, NPS staff reviewed the feedback and comments that had been received. Over the following months, NPS staff further developed the ideas presented as possible next steps during the February 2015 public meeting. On September 24, 2015 the NPS hosted a public meeting discussion and listening session to present and hear feedback on the proposal for changes to the Ocean Beach Fire Program, including the permit system, winter rest period, CCSF support, and new fire rings and signage. As a result of evaluation and learnings of the 2014 Revised Pilot program, and the comments and discussion at the September and February meetings, NPS has prepared the proposed Ocean Beach Fire Program that is being issued for 30-day public review and comment.

D. NPS Preferred Ocean Beach Fire Program Proposal

NPS preferred Ocean Beach Fire Program proposal is based on what it believes best meet the program’s purpose, need and objectives. Using the discretionary authority of the Superintendent, the final program decision could be different than presented herein based on substantive comment from the public. The NPS Preferred Ocean Beach Fire Program proposal consists of the following main elements:

1. **Permit System** – Visitor groups of less than 25 people would need to obtain a \$35.00 permit using the Recreation.gov website or toll-free phone number to have a beach fire. Permit holders must be at least 18 years old and present at all times.
2. **Winter Rest Period** – Fires would not be allowed on Ocean Beach from the first day in November to the last day in February.
3. **Partnership with San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (SFRPD)** – A \$185,000 allocation would facilitate SFRPD support for maintenance, trash removal, and cleaning associated with the fires, and would also provide for a continuation of support for public outreach and education.
4. **Replace Fire Rings** – Current fire rings would be replaced with 12 new heat and corrosion resistant rings.

5. **Replace Signage** – Replace existing complex signage associated with the fire program with a simpler design which could read “FIRES BY PERMIT ONLY – Information: <http://go.nps.gov/beachfires>”.
6. **Increased Enforcement** – NPS Law Enforcement Rangers and United States Park Police (USPP) would work to contribute to the success of the Ocean Beach Fire Program by increasing enforcement associated with the fire program.
7. **Public Outreach and Education** – A comprehensive community engagement, outreach, and education plan would be developed and could include interpretation, traditional media, online information, and firewood sales or other comprehensive concession opportunity.
8. **Curfew Time** – The curfew time would remain at 9:00pm.
9. **Summer Spare the Air Days** – The NPS would continue to prohibit fires during summer Spare the Air days. Previously granted permits would be revoked and the permittee would be provided a refund, not including processing fees.
10. **Revised Data Collection and Monitoring** – Data collection methods from the 2014 Revised Pilot Program would continue in a revised weekend-focused manner.
11. **Ongoing Program Evaluation** – The NPS would evaluate the program on an annual basis during the Winter Rest Period and host public meetings to communicate to the public the information gathered and any associated proposals for change before the beginning of the following year’s fire season.

E. Options Under Consideration

Based on public comment received prior to release of this proposal the following options are being investigated for feasibility of implementation. Following the 30-day public review and comment period, NPS will consider all substantive comments before making a final decision on the Ocean Beach Fire Program.

- **Permit System** – Permits would be available to be purchased immediately on site using an ‘iron ranger’ or an electronic permit dispenser.
- **More Fire Rings** – This option would replace the 12 current concrete rings with 20 heat and corrosion resistant rings.
- **Curfew Time** – This option would revert to the 10:00pm curfew in place prior to the 2014 Revised Pilot Program.

F. Pre-Proposal Public Feedback (Scoping Comments)

Public feedback on the Ocean Beach Fire Program was received during the September 24, 2015 public meeting and through correspondence sent prior to this proposal’s release. The public feedback received addressed the following broad themes, which are discussed in more detail and responded to in Attachment D “Pre-Proposal Public Scoping Summary” of the full proposal document: Amount of Fire Rings; Requiring Permits for All Fires; Permit Cost; Methods of Issuing and Obtaining Permits; Permitted Fire Times; Curfew, and Number of Permits per Day; Allow Fires All Year Long; Minimum Age Requirement; Maintenance; Enforcement; Education and Outreach; Sharing Fires and Sense of Community; Unused Reservations; Signs; Smoke.

G. Applicable Law and Policy

This proposal is consistent with NPS Management Policies, and 36 CFR §§ 1.5, 1.6, and 2.13.

H. Impact Assessment

The environmental impacts of implementation of this proposal are compared against the existing condition (the baseline conditions of the 2014 Revised Pilot Program), which includes regulations: CFR Section 2.13(a)(1); and GGNRA’s Superintendent’s Compendium.

Program Element	2014 Revised Pilot Program (Baseline)	Proposed Change
Permits	Only for groups 25 or larger	Required for all groups, Groups under 25 cost \$35
Minimum Age	18, 21 if minors present	NPS Preferred Action: No change. Option: Explore feasibility of additional opportunities for youth

CCSF Support	\$60,000 Education & Outreach	\$185,000 Maintenance, Education & Outreach
Fire Rings	12; precast concrete	NPS Preferred Action: 12; heat and corrosion resistant
		Option : 20; heat and corrosion resistant
Fires Not Allowed	Spare the Air Days (Winter and Summer)	November – February, and Summer Spare the Air Days
Monitoring	Daily Monitoring	Strategic, Weekend Based Monitoring
Signs	Limited placement, complex message	Additional signs, simple message
Enforcement	Focus: Monitoring and education	Focus: Education and compliance
Curfew	9:00pm	NPS Preferred Action: No Change
		Option: 10:00pm

The NPS Environmental Screening Form and a more detailed discussion of issues and concerns in the categories of Public Safety, Visitor Experience, NPS Staff Safety, Park Operations, and Air Quality can be found in the **“Draft CE Approval and Decision Memo – Attachment A”** located at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OBfireprogram>. The Ocean Beach Fire Program would result in some level of environmental impact but does not have the potential to cause significant adverse impacts under normal circumstances. The proposed action under consideration by the NPS is anticipated to fit within the boundaries of a Categorical Exclusion and NPS has determined that no extraordinary circumstances exist as defined by Directors Order 12, Section 3.5.

I. Summary of Public Comment (Post Public Review and Comment)

To be completed after public review and comment.

J. Decision / Implementation Process

This draft proposal and environmental compliance document for the Ocean Beach Fire Program is released to the public for a 30 day comment period from October 22, 2015 to November 20, 2015. The public will be notified of this document’s availability by email, press release, and social media outlets. The public is encouraged to submit comments during the 30 day period using the project website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OBfireprogram> or by mail to:

Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Attn: Ocean Beach Fire Program
Fort Mason, Building 201
San Francisco, CA 94123

Following the 30 day review and comment period, the NPS will review the comments received. With consideration of the public’s feedback, a final implementation decision would be made by the discretionary authority of the Superintendent, and could include a combination of any of the listed elements and options.