

# FORT BAKER

Proposed Plan EIS

## 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION



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### 1.1 NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

Fort Baker is a site of historic, natural, recreational and aesthetic importance at the heart of the park. Portions of the site currently under the jurisdiction of the NPS as well as those soon to be transferred to the NPS by the Army require a comprehensive approach to their rehabilitation and stewardship in order to preserve their integrity and allow for public enjoyment.

Fort Baker is a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of the historic buildings at Fort Baker to be transferred from the Army to the NPS by 2001 are vacant. The historic buildings are in a declining condition, and require extensive rehabilitation in order to arrest deterioration and allow for occupancy that will provide for their ongoing care. The features of the historic landscape that contribute to the listing of the site on the National Register of Historic Places are in critical need of care. Nonhistoric buildings are also vacant and deteriorating, inviting vandalism and safety problems. Fort Baker's utility systems require extensive upgrades and replacements to support building and site uses. Recognizing NPS financial limitations and the high cost of preserving historic buildings and landscapes, new public uses of the buildings must generate revenue to fund these improvements.

Fort Baker's natural values are also exceptional, including a federally listed endangered species, the mission blue butterfly, found in grassland areas on the hills surrounding the developed area of the site. Protection and enhancement of the natural resources of the site as it receives greater public use will require a comprehensive strategy to balance these needs. Natural areas have been degraded by invasive nonnative plants and are in need of habitat restoration. Current protection and interpretation of natural habitats and wildlife is minimal.

Existing facilities and features for visitors' enjoyment of the site are minimal and inadequate. The Bay Area Discovery Museum (BADM) requires additional space at Fort Baker for its program, including exhibit and classroom space as well as fabrication and storage space for exhibits, and adequate staff office space.

The 1980 *General Management Plan (GMP) for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore* is the comprehensive land use plan for the GGNRA and Point Reyes. As such, it provides guidance on the management objectives for all lands within the GGNRA including Fort Baker. The GMP was prepared consistent with, and in support of, the National Park Service mission which is described in Section 1.3.

The 1980 GMP development concept for Fort Baker identified a range of uses for the site including a 350-person educational conference center, 150-person environmental study area, a 200-person hostel, ferry service, a 700-car parking lot, and short-term public berthing at the marina. As part of the planning process, the 1980 GMP development concept was reviewed within the current context of the site. Since approval of the 1980 GMP, several environmental and physical changes have occurred on the site and in its surroundings including listing of mission blue butterfly (which breeds on-site) as a federally endangered species and development of park programs and park partners at Fort Baker and throughout the GGNRA (including a Marin Headlands youth hostel). Based on the evaluation of these and other current conditions, the 1980 GMP development concept was refined to provide a detailed plan for the proposed future use, stewardship and preservation of Fort Baker resources. This

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refined concept constitutes the Proposed Action evaluated in the EIS. (The 1980 GMP development concept and other alternatives are also evaluated in this EIS.)

### 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to identify:

- the program and types of uses that would be accommodated in the historic buildings that would generate adequate revenue for building rehabilitation and preservation;
- improvements to facilitate public uses, including new construction and removal of buildings, landscape treatments, trails, parking, circulation, and locations and patterns of use;
- waterfront improvements;
- opportunities for habitat restoration; and
- an approach to the protection, rehabilitation and maintenance of historic and natural resources.

### 1.3 OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were developed to create a framework for considering and evaluating new uses and site improvements. They are based on NPS policy guidance, the 1980 GMP, current knowledge about the site, an understanding of Fort Baker's national park qualities, and public comments.

#### **Promote the National Park Mission**

Since Fort Baker is part of a national park area, understanding the mission of the NPS is essential when considering new uses and site improvements:

*The National Park Service is dedicated to conserving unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service is also responsible for managing a great variety of national and international programs designed to help extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. –From the NPS Strategic Plan*

Mission-related objectives developed to respond to this goal include:

- *Provide Public Programs and Opportunities.* Provide programs and opportunities that have a direct relationship to the National Park mission and relevance to national as well as local and regional visitors will be provided.
- *Protect, Restore and Maintain Historic, Cultural and Natural Resources.*
- *Provide Opportunities for Education and Interpretation to a Diverse Public Constituency.*

#### **Achieve Sustainability**

The NPS has adopted the *Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design*, a document that embodies a basis for achieving sustainability in facility planning and design, emphasizes the importance of biodiversity, and encourages responsible development decisions in national parks. The principles emphasize environmental sensitivity in planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance; the use of nontoxic materials, resource conservation and recycling; and the integration of visitors with natural

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and cultural settings. Management objectives directed toward accomplishing this goal at Fort Baker include:

- *Achieve Environmental Sustainability.* Promote environmentally sustainable building, infrastructure, landscape design, programming and operational practices, including access to and within the site. Create opportunities for education and demonstration of sustainable environmental practices in building and infrastructure. Use appropriate communications technology to broaden the reach of programs to offsite users.
- *Achieve Financial Sustainability.* Generate a stable source of revenue that contributes to historic, cultural and natural resource preservation and interpretation including overall site and infrastructure costs.

### **Retain and Relate to the Site's Special Qualities**

Management objectives developed to accomplish this goal include:

- *Demonstrate a Relationship Between Site and Use.* Demonstrate a connection to and preserve the site's special qualities (e.g.: serenity, seclusion, inspiration, cultural and natural resources, views).
- *Provide Waterfront Access.* Provide appropriate and compatible opportunities for public enjoyment of and access to the waterfront.
- *Demonstrate a Compelling Reason for the Program's Location at Fort Baker.*

### **Promote Public Access**

Management objectives developed toward responding to this goal include:

- *Provide for Park User Diversity.* Attract and serve a broad range of visitors including a diversity of age, income, ethnicity, physical abilities and interests. Within the mission of the NPS, serve national, regional and local visitors.
- *Provide Program Diversity.* Broaden the opportunities for the public to engage in a variety of park programs, activities and experiences.
- *Promote Public Access to Building and Programmatic Uses.* Broader opportunities for the public to engage in recreational, interpretive and other national park experiences

### **Minimize Environmental Impacts**

Management objectives developed to respond to this goal include:

- *Minimize Impacts to the Site and Adjacent Communities.* Minimize negative environmental and socioeconomic impacts.
- *Minimize Impacts to Other Park Sites.*
- *Minimize Traffic and Parking Impacts.* Minimize adverse traffic and parking impacts on the site and connecting road systems. Minimize automobile trip generation to the site and within the site. Promote alternative transportation modes (e.g., water shuttle<sup>1</sup>, shuttle buses, bicycle, pedestrian, alternative fuel vehicles).

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<sup>1</sup> Note: A separate planning process subject to additional environmental analysis would be conducted before a water shuttle service is implemented.

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### **Retain and Complement Permanent Site Tenants and Other GGNRA Sites and Programs**

Management objectives developed to respond to this goal include:

*Ensure Compatibility with Existing Permanent Tenants and Programs at Fort Baker.* Promote uses and activities that are compatible and synergistic with the BADM and Coast Guard Station, and other GGNRA tenants and programs. Complement and avoid competition with other existing and planned park sites and programs.

#### **1.4 SCOPING**

The NPS made every attempt to be diligent and creative in its efforts to involve the public during the preparation of the Proposed Action and EIS. Input was actively solicited from a broad range of public constituencies as part of an ongoing public involvement process. Ways of involving the public included: informal meetings with constituency groups and public agencies; “Planning Updates” on anticipated Fort Baker actions and opportunities for public involvement; conducting planning orientation tours, public workshops, and open houses; providing regular briefings at GGNRA Advisory Commission meetings; and making use of the Internet to provide information about the planning process and facilitate the review of the documents. Information on the context of the communications with representatives of the community, environmental and historic preservation organizations and public agencies who participated in developing the Proposed Plan and preparing this EIS is summarized in Section 6, Consultation and Coordination, and is available at Park Headquarters.

#### **1.5 ISSUES**

The following are the primary environmental issues raised by the public, other agencies, and the NPS Fort Baker planning team during the scoping process. These issues provided the basis for the selection of impact topics for environmental analysis in the Draft EIS. Additional issues and comments raised during the public review of the Draft EIS have been addressed in Volume II (Response to Comments) and throughout this Final EIS, as appropriate. Please note that Volume II is bound under separate cover and is available for review as described on the first page of this document.

##### **1.5.1 Relationship or Conformance with the 1980 GMP**

Review and analyses of the GMP concepts confirmed through public scoping identified elements of the 1980 GMP that were no longer appropriate or needed reconsideration because of potential impacts, such as parking for 700 cars in the Capehart area.

##### **1.5.2 Transportation and Site Access**

During scoping, the most frequently voiced concerns were the potential impacts on traffic and parking demand resulting from new building uses and site improvements.

##### **1.5.3 Impacts on Natural and Cultural Resources**

New uses requiring construction or resulting in increased numbers of visitors have the potential to impact cultural and natural resources. All of Fort Baker is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. The natural and cultural resources on the site have significant ecological and historical value requiring protection, and their preservation and enhancement was of concern as was compatibility of new uses.

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### **1.5.4 Waterfront and Beach Restoration**

Sustainability of the treatment of the waterfront, including landscape irrigation requirements and potential impacts of removing the bulkhead to restore the beach, raised concerns about potential impacts, including erosion, wave damage, debris accumulation, sedimentation and water safety.

### **1.5.5 Compatibility of Uses with Existing Qualities**

New uses of Fort Baker could attract levels of use and traffic that would change the character of the site, including its feeling of peacefulness, serenity and seclusion.

### **1.5.6 Recreation and Visitor Experience**

Changes in the site could affect access, proximity of parking to destinations, and the ability of current users to continue current activities.

### **1.5.7 Human Health, Safety and the Environment**

Fort Baker is the site of several ongoing Army cleanup programs for former military sites contaminated with hazardous waste products. The Army is conducting investigation and remediation actions in accordance with federal and state regulations, including the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). The Army is the lead agency conducting the investigation and cleanup of areas at Fort Baker contaminated by hazardous materials. Questions were raised during scoping about the Army's cleanup and the relationship to implementation of the Proposed Action.

## **1.6 PURPOSE OF THE EIS**

In accordance with section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Pub. L. 91-190, this EIS evaluates the environmental consequences of implementing the Proposed Plan for Fort Baker (Proposed Action). It also provides a discussion of the environmental impacts associated with the alternatives, and identifies mitigating measures to avoid or reduce adverse effects. Technical preparation of the EIS has been in compliance with the requirements of NEPA and the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality. A summary of the Executive Orders that are typically addressed in NEPA documents is presented below. Other laws that have directed this effort are described in Section 6, Consultation and Coordination.

Several Executive Orders are typically addressed in NEPA documents. The following is a summary of each, and relevance to the Fort Baker Plan EIS.

- *Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 (Floodplain Management and Wetland Protection)* – These executive orders direct the NPS to avoid, to the extent possible, long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with modifying or occupying floodplains and wetlands. They also require the NPS to avoid direct or indirect support of floodplain or wetland development whenever there is a practical alternative. Fort Baker is not located within the designated Floodplain, and no known wetlands exist on the site (see Section 1.7 for additional discussion). Therefore, no additional discussion or analysis of Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 are presented in this EIS.
- *Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations)* – This Executive Order directs federal agencies to assess whether their actions have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. An analysis of this topic is provided in Section 4.2.9.4.

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- *Secretarial Order 3175 and ECM 95-2* – These memoranda require bureaus to explicitly address environmental impacts of their proposed actions on Indian Trust Resources in any environmental document. There are no formally designated Indian Trust Resources at Fort Baker. An analysis of the Proposed Action’s effect on cultural resources is provided in Section 4.2.5.

The *1980 General Management Plan for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GMP)*, the guiding plan for the park, and corresponding Environmental Assessment (EA) were reviewed and used in the development of the Plan and EIS. Since Fort Baker was included within the entire program for the GGNRA, and the GMP and EA provide guidance on the management objectives and development concepts for the site. This EIS concentrates on the specific issues associated with the Proposed Action and alternatives. The EA is incorporated by reference into this EIS and can be viewed at Park Headquarters, Building 201 Fort Mason, San Francisco.

The impacts associated with the disposal of Fort Baker will be analyzed in the U.S. Army in its required NEPA document. Although the NPS has considered the data and analyses presented by the Army in a preliminary (unpublished) environmental document, issues related to the Army’s disposal of the base are beyond this EIS and are not addressed.

### **1.7 IMPACT TOPICS DISMISSED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION**

The following impact topics were dismissed from further consideration.

- *Climate*: none of the alternatives, including the Proposed Action, would have significant effects on temperature, wind, precipitation, or other weather conditions and patterns.
- *floodplain*: Fort Baker is not located in a 100-year flood zone area (U.S. Army, 1983). All naturally flowing streams have been diverted into storm drainpipes and leave the site through outfalls at the edge of Horseshoe Bay.
- *wetlands*: no wetlands are known to exist at Fort Baker. Wetlands existed on the site before the northern portion of Horseshoe Bay was filled, sometime around the turn of the century. Effects on estuarine areas are discussed in the water resources and biological resources sections (Section 4.2.3 and Section 4.2.4, respectively).