



# SIERRA CLUB San Francisco Bay Chapter

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November 21, 1993

Hon. Mayor Loni Hancock and  
Members of the City Council  
City of Berkeley  
2180 Milvia  
Berkeley, California

Re: Off Leash Dog Proposal for North Waterfront Park

Dear Mayor Hancock and Members of the City Council:

This letter is an official statement of Sierra Club's position on the issue of an off leash dog area for the wildlife habitat area of North Waterfront Park.

The Sierra Club reiterates its opposition to the proposal to allow an off leash dog park on the area of North Waterfront Park that is designated as a wildlife habitat area. The Council has already received my previous letter on the subject along with the comments of the Chapter's Wildlife Subcommittee.

Because of substantial misinformation that some have spread about the Sierra Club and its position, I think it is important to point out that the Club has remained opposed to the off leash dog park area in the North Waterfront Park. Indeed, proponents of this proposal have sought to change the Club's position and failed. This issue has received far more scrutiny within the Sierra Club than even Santa Fe's waterfront plans did in the 1980's. Both the East Bay Public Lands Subcommittee, which focuses its work on the public lands in the East Bay, and the Northern Alameda Regional Group were asked to vote to recommend changing the Club's position. Both refused to recommend any change. Hence, all entities of the Sierra Club with any relationship to this issue have remained steadfast in their opposition to the Off leash Dog area proposal.

I think it is also to remind the City Council that in 1976, now almost 20 years ago, the City adopted a Master Plan for the North

Waterfront Park that planned the Northern 40% of the Park as a wildlife habitat area. The recent proposed revisions put forward in 1990 did not alter or change the use designation for the Northern 40% of the Park. This is the same area where the off leash dog use is proposed. To assist the Council I have attached a memorandum for long time Berkeley resident and waterfront commissioner Ed Bennett detailing the history and selected portions of the Haag/Roberts Northern Waterfront Park Conceptual Park Master Plan Report.

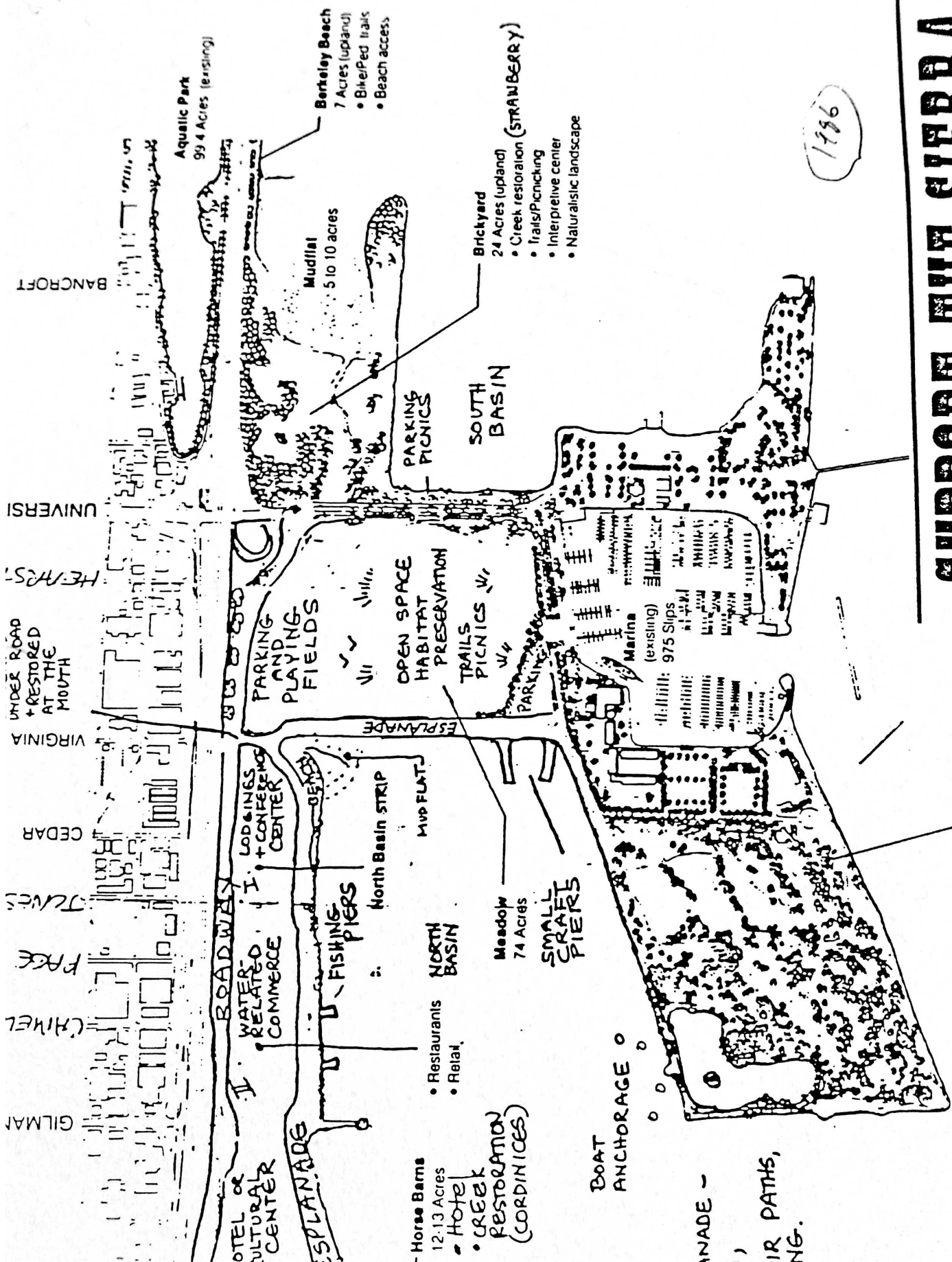
The Sierra Club maintains that if the City intends to allow a use not previously permitted under the Master plan for this site, then it must engage in legal and proper Park planning such as Amending the Master Plan through a proper planning process that includes noticed public hearings. To do otherwise would not be proper park planning and in violation of the Master Plan for the site, which could make the city vulnerable to a legal challenge if it allows an inconsistent use in an area of the Park.

Finally, I am sure you have heard the claim that there is no wildlife there now and that no wildlife habitat could be restored. This argument is mistaken for two reasons. First, the basic idea of the 1976 Master Plan was to restore habitat for wildlife. If a use is allowed in that area which will harm wildlife, then no restoration can be successful. Dogs and other domesticated animals have a devastating impact on wildlife. There can be restoration of this site if the off leash dog use is permitted.

Second, it may not be as costly as we have assumed to restore the area to a native habitat. The North Waterfront Park already has a native plan garden area planted by the Native plant society and others. This is thriving on top of the garbage pile. It is a living example of what can be done to restore habitat even though this is a dump site. The proposed off leash dog use is inconsistent with the proposed restoration and should be denied.

Sincerely yours,

Norman La Force, Chair East Bay Shoreline Park Task Force,  
Legal Chair, San Francisco Bay Chapter, and  
Member of the Chapter Executive Committee



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