



**SAN FRANCISCO SUPERVISORS OKAY FROGS, SNAKES, AND GOLF AT SHARP PARK**

March 26, 2014

**San Francisco, CA.** Frogs, snakes, and golfers all won at Sharp Park Tuesday, March 25, when the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a small package of endangered species habitat enhancements and golf infrastructure upgrades at the historic, Alister MacKenzie-designed municipal golf course, located in Pacifica, CA.

By a 7-4 margin, the Supervisors voted to proceed with construction of a new frog breeding pond, native plant restoration area, moving a golf cart path from a wetland, and dredging invasive tules from an existing stream and pond. The purpose of these limited measures is to improve frog and snake habitat in and around the wetlands at the San Francisco-owned golf course.

San Francisco Supervisors Scott Wiener, David Chiu, Maria Cohen, London Breed, Norman Yee, Katy Tang, and Mark Farrell voted to support the Project, while Supervisors John Avalos, David Campos, Jane Kim, and Eric Mar opposed. In January, 2014 the Project received unanimous support from both the San Francisco Planning and Recreation and Park Commissions. The future of Sharp Park has been hotly debated here at City Hall since 2009. Tuesday's vote was the first time the Supervisors have okayed construction of new habitat and golf improvements at the 82-year-old seaside course.

Although the habitat restoration work had been approved in advance by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Army Corps of Engineers, the project was strongly opposed by Wild Equity Institute, a local offshoot of the Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity. Wild Equity objected that the project should not go ahead without a lengthy and expensive Environmental Impact Review - even though both the Fish and Wildlife Service and Corps have ordered that the new frog pond be completed by July, 2015, and the other work be at least begun by April, 2017. The City's Planning Department advised the Supervisors that an Environmental Impact Review is

unnecessary, under the California Environmental Quality Act. This position was unanimously approved in January by both the Planning and Recreation and Park Commissions.

In 2011, Wild Equity and a handful of activist groups sued San Francisco for alleged Endangered Species Act violations at Sharp Park. The lawsuit was dismissed in December, 2012 by Federal Judge Susan Illston, who found that golf there does not threaten the existence of the California red-legged frog or the San Francisco garter snake. She based her Order of Dismissal on the Fish and Wildlife Service's October, 2012 Sharp Park Biological Opinion, which imposes a long list of conditions -- including construction of the new frog pond and native plant area - upon San Francisco's golf operations.

Supporting the Project were representatives from the Sharp Park men's and women's golf clubs, Pacifica City Council, Pacifica Historical Society, Western States Golf Association, and SF Dog. The pro-bono San Francisco Public Golf Alliance cautioned the Supervisors that the extended Environmental Impact Review process sought by Wild Equity would cause the City to default on the Federal Agencies' time deadlines for the Project, jeopardizing the City's protection under the Biological Opinion and ultimately leading to revival of Wild Equity's lawsuit.

"This is a win for common-sense environmentalism, golf, the local community, and for ordinary citizens who love to use their parks," commented Public Golf Alliance co-founder Richard Harris, following the vote. "Wild Equity is not looking for reasonable solutions, but instead wants to eliminate not only golf, but other traditional public uses of the parks. That's bad policy, and must be opposed."

A Wild Equity spokesperson said the group may now ask the courts to review the Supervisors' decision.

A copy of the Public Golf Alliance letter to the Supervisors can be found at:

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/30028085/00003091.PDF>

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