

# Lake Merced



Nature

Recreation

Water

Resources

One Vision

What will success look like?

# Acknowledgements

The Lake Merced Task Force would like to thank Nicholas Dewar, our facilitator, for his hard work and unique style which helped to make this cooperative meeting a reality.

Special thanks goes to the San Francisco Zoological Society and Laura Louttit for hosting the event

Also the Process Design committee:

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# Summary

On September 17th, 2003 after a meeting of the Lake Merced Task Force, some members remarked that they were tired of the administrative issues we seemed to be dwelling on and longed to get back to talking about the lake and the issues we face in restoring it.

It was suggested that we should convene a special facilitated meeting so that Task Force members could explore our common vision for the lake and possibly set some agreed-upon goals.

In December of 2003 it was decided that a small group (the Steering Committee and other interested parties) would call themselves the Process Design Committee and work with Nicholas Dewar, a group facilitator, to develop the framework for a productive meeting. The task force also agreed that the meeting would be on Saturday February 7th, 2004 and that it would be six hours in length.

The results of that meeting are captured in this document and will lead to additional work to articulate our current vision for Lake Merced and to guide us as we set our goals for achieving success.

At the end of the topic development period it was recognized that we probably should have included "Stewardship" as a key topic for discussion. I have included a short paper on the subject for further discussion.

For further information on this document or about the Lake Merced Task Force please contact the members of the Steering committee of the Lake Merced Task Force at [steering@lmtf.org](mailto:steering@lmtf.org) or call Tim Colen at (415) 601-1709.

# Process

The group relied on each participant's passion and sense of responsibility for the future of Lake Merced to energize a highly productive six hour meeting. The theme of the meeting was to discover the group's common vision of the lake's future. In other words, we sought to answer the question "What will our group's success look like?"

In order to maximize the creative participation of all who attended, the group worked without the formally-agreed operating procedures (based on Robert's Rules of Order). Consequently, the product of the day's work had no binding authority on the Task Force, and could only be treated as a recommendation.

The number of people who attended fluctuated between about 30 and about 35 participants. The process required all of the various members of the group to self-organize and take responsibility for ensuring that the agenda included every issue that each participant considered important for the proper consideration of the meeting's theme. The group created an agenda containing seven issues for discussion. These issues included several instances where the proponents of more than one issue agreed to merge into a single break-out session. In the process of two "break-out" periods, all of these issues were discussed. The enthusiasm of the groups resulted in significant changes to the schedule so that, instead of stopping for lunch, the participants grabbed some food from the buffet and went straight back into their meetings. Some sessions included more than 20 participants, others had as few as three to eight people. All groups, no matter how big or how small, submitted an account of their discussions that is included in this proceedings document.

# Process

After the conclusion of the break-out sessions, the group studied the work products of the break-out sessions that they had not attended, and then reassembled in a circle to consider which of the issues deserved most attention, and which could be conveniently treated as significant but subsidiary issues.

The group then considered whether or not any of the items could be merged. There were many suggestions about merging various issues, but the group never came close to consensus on this, and it was agreed to leave the list as it stood. However, in the process of the discussion the group discovered another issue that seemed significant and added it to the list, although it was not discussed at any length. A paper on this topic called "Stewardship" has been added to these proceedings.

The extended time dedicated to identifying salient issues prevented the group from considering any action that needed to be taken to carry forward their conclusions. This work will need to be considered in some other context at another time.

As a closing ceremony the participants took turns verbalizing their perspective on the day and the unanimous position was that it was a productive day well spent. New insight into our common beliefs and visions was gained. Most of the group left energized and ready to continue the work we started.

The meeting adjourned at three o'clock.

# Topics

- A Aquifer, Hetch-Hetchy, and Recycling
- B Biodiversity & Marsh Ecosystems
- C Balancing Nature with Recreation
- D The Physical Look for Structural Improvements to Lake
- E Financial Resources
- F Communicating Effectively
- G LMTF Policy Issues
- H Appropriate Facilities at and Around the Lake
- I Stewardship (added for further discussion)

# Aquifer, Hetch-Hetchy, and Recycling

Convener: Dick Morten and Howard Strassner

Participants: Jerry Cadigan, Michael Carlin, Tim Colen, David Dawdy, Bob Maddow, Erin Pashelinsky, Cynthia Royer and Bud Wilson.

After some introductory discussion we decided to list the pros and cons for the following possible sources or contributors of water to increase the water level in the Lake or the aquifer, with consideration of minimum negative impact on other sources. We also made a non binding priority selection by each of the delegates present distributing one, two or three points to selected alternatives, one being highest priority. I exchanged ones and three in order to total the choices so that alternative with the highest number of votes has the highest priority. If I totaled the votes, as originally listed, the alternative with the lowest number of points would have the highest priority but alternatives with no votes at all would be still higher.

**West Side Ground Water** - 14 points - one source could be from Golden Gate Park. We also spoke of storm-water infiltration or by-passing some storm water from the sewer system. This could only be done with great care.

**Pros:** West Side Basin Water has high quality and is available at moderate cost.

**Cons:** It could deplete the ground water table which could be required for an emergency water supply.

**Allemany Ground Water** - 12 points - This consists of pumping ground water from the east side of SF where excess water is seeping into residents basements and pump it over the hill to an existing channel to the Lake.

**Pros:** Water is available and clean and pumping could reduce current flooding problem.

# Aquifer, Hetch-Hetchy, and Recycling

**Cons:** Competing water demand for the renewal of Isalis Creek, Unknown costs and interruptible supply

**Recycled Tertiary Treated Water** - 12 points - Similar to Daly City Project to replace golf course irrigation water previously pumped from the aquifer.

**Pros:** Could replace domestic water use for irrigation and some industrial uses. Potential supply for the lake at low cost. Drought proof.

**Cons:** Regulatory and Political hurdles for Lake use or injection to ground water or aquifer. Difficult to obtain public acceptance. High cost for treatment and distribution.

**Vista Grande Storm Water** - 10 points - Project is being pilot tested for water quality.

**Pros:** Better use of storm water at low cost than dumping in ocean. Could be used to create a wet lands to help clean the water near impound lake.

**Cons:** Water quality is questionable. Regulatory hurdles.

**Conservation** - 4 points - Reduces use of Hetch Hetchy System water and or aquifer water. Some has already occurred.

**Pros:** It works, Politically favorable and Good Policy.

**Cons:** Possible limitations on returns and harden demand which could be a problem during droughts.



# Aquifer, Hetch-Hetchy, and Recycling

**Aquifer Management:** - 0 points

**Pros:** Good Public Policy for proper management of a resource of good water quality.

**Cons:** Unknown results on Lake level only after very long term.

**System Water:** - 0 points Addition of system water from Hetch Hetchy during last couple of years has raised the lake level by about four feet.

**Pros:** High quality, low cost and it works.

**Cons:** Not good to use potable water for non potable use. There are other claims for this water - fish and sustainable river. Political resistance. Interruptible. Regulatory hurdles due to Chloramin.

Conjunctive Use in which System water was used to replace Daly City aquifer use was discussed. Michael Carlin will provide total replacement flow last year and prospective additional flows to other districts. Patrick Sweetland will provide info and typical annual aquifer and system water use to put this use in perspective. Water required to maintain lake level. A more complete discussion is necessary to help make future selection of water source to raise and maintain Lake level.

Secretary Howard Strassner

# Biodiversity & Marsh Ecosystems

Convener: Randy Zebell & Dan Murphy

Participants: Greg Bartow, David Golden, Grace Morizono, John Plummer

Discussion Topics:

## **Open Water**

GB: Limnologist Alex Horn said that open water is a very rare resource in Bay Area. GB felt like open water values are being underemphasized.

## **Biodiversity**

ML: What is success?

DM: Need to balance recreation and biological resources.

DM: Late afternoon is a bad time to disturb birds. They are trying to settle down for the evening..

Need to set aside isolated coves where rowers don't need to go. Would make it easier for Ruddy Ducks to hang out without being forced to fly. Especially October through March. Could use buoys.

RZ: Concerned about Western Pond Turtles in East Lake.

DM: Birding was better a long time ago.

## **Marshes**

DM: The relative biologic value of marshes at Lake Merced is much higher than other areas like Pescadero Marsh. Pescadero Marsh is very filled in. There is not a lot of food production for fish or ducks. Lake Merced marsh is very linear with lots of open water. This enhances its biologic value by increasing its edge, its ecotone extent, and its food production capacity.

# Biodiversity & Marsh Ecosystems

## **Pollution**

DM: Two-stroke boat motors pollute lake.

ML: Saw four two-stroke boats just clowning around on morning of Feb. 7.

GM: Electric motors don't perform well.

ML: Gas powered boats illegal except for maintenance. Is worried that fisher folk will want to use power boats too.

DG: Sewer pipe a problem.

ML: Non point source pollution a problem.

## **Erosion**

DG?: Sediment continues to enter lake from John Muir Drive and from trees falling along edge of golf course.

DM: Flooding frequency seems to be increasing.

DM: Riprap not the solution. Too much already at lake.

## **Recommendations**

Provide info to boaters on wildlife impacts of boating.

Designate East Lake as a preserve and close to recreation.

Establish rowing lanes in South Lake.

Keep power boats off North and East Lakes.

Get rid of two-stroke motors and use four stroke or electric motors on South Lake.

Define appropriate uses of motorized boats.

Identify sources of non-point pollution such as road drains that discharge into lake.

Map out recreation/protection zones for all lakes. Identify rowing, fishing, preserve areas.

Get DPW, PUC, and Rec/Park to increase efforts to stop sediment from filling the lake.

Active management is required to maintain biodiversity. Future projects should contribute funds for management/maintenance.

# Balancing Nature with Recreation

Convener: Lisa Wayne

Participants: Mona Cereghino, Ross Wilkinson, Dee Dee Workman, Paul Callahan, John Hertz, Rick Thall, Jim Stark, James Grant, Joe Mucelli, John Paul, Erik Rosengard, Dennis Quinn, David Hayes, Richard Young, Dick Allen, Mike Denia

## **Ideas**

Par course Improvements

Boathouse – improvements

Keep natural state – improved trails

Provide necessary resources (funding and maintenance)

Resolve conflicts

No Master Plan – need one, don't / won't reinvent the wheel

What is the lake? – Urban recreation / natural resource

Fragmentation of responsibility – overcome

Leadership needed

Bringing fishing back to the lake

Healthy functioning ecosystem

Water quality issues – important for fish

Appropriate mix of uses – trails, buildings, fishing, don't destroy habitat (use National Park model)

Usage fees

Don't want loss of recreation uses

Junior shooting program @ PRGC – need physical program space, meetings, teaching space, \*300+ sf

Lake is a regional resource

Make parks more physically attractive

Facilities should blend with the environment

# Balancing Nature with Recreation

Community service

Safe public access to / around lake

Better facilities = more use

Facilities that meet public needs, restrooms

Limit usage for appropriateness

Limit number of users or limit variety of uses

Maintain or expand existing uses?

Recreational carrying capacity should match available facilities (that can be maintained and not compromise natural ecosystem)

Balance – don't crowd out existing uses, don't over-promote the lake

Don't increase usages at the lake – keep focused

Don't expand boathouse footprint - development

## **Current Uses**

Rowing

Sailing

Shooting

Fishing

Running Paths

Natural Areas

Picnics

Golf

Wildlife observation

Education

Needs analysis needed?

# Balancing Nature with Recreation

Where are conflicts? – Recreation and Nature

Boathouse / docks – wetlands

Motor boats / fishing

Rowing in conflict with many uses

Impound Lake, causeway removal

On-going human use at lake is in conflict with habitat and wildlife

Feral cats / wildlife

Abandoned cars, auto camping

Trash

Trails – alignment, placement, unstable

LMTF special interests – within group tolerance of dissention

Need a plan – outline to start.

## **Additional Comments by attendee James Grant:**

I attended the "Balancing Nature with Recreation" and brought these comments to the group.

The Pacific Rod & Gun Club is used and needed for youth and adult shooting programs and opportunity.

As such the physical grounds and structures are necessary. The existing fields and structures are

used and needed for our youth, as well as adult recreational activities and programs. That has always

been the historic use of PRGC and continues to be so. The white sheet notes simply stated: Shooting-

physical space/ meeting space. Please do include the fact that "The Pacific Rod & Gun Club is used and

needed for youth and adult shooting programs and opportunities. The existing fields and structures are

used and needed for the Pacific Rod & Gun Club's youth and adult recreational activities and programs. "

\*The "300 + square feet" mentioned in the draft report under the "Balancing Nature with Recreation"

must have been submitted by someone with zero knowledge of PRGC programs. It is certainly not on the

white sheet that was posted at the meeting. Please strike the misleading reference to square foot re-

quirement of youth programs at the PRGC.

# The Physical Look for Structural Improvements to the Lake

Convener: Mona Cereghino **\*see note at the end of this report**

Participants: Mona Cereghino, Ross Wilkinson, Dee Dee Workman, Paul Callahan, John Hertz, Rick Thall, Jim Stark, James Grant, Joe Mucelli, John Paul, Erik Rosengard, Dennis Quinn, David Hayes, Richard Young, Dick Allen, Mike Denia

Members briefly discussed creating an architectural plan for new construction on the Lake.

## **Summary**

Use a plan that was already in service in the state, such as the plan used by the GGNRA, Golden Gate Park or Yosemite and adapt the principles to fit.

Attempt to get someone with architectural landscape experience to be a part of the design committee.

Ideally, the plan would incorporate organic materials already found at the lake, i.e. wood and stone in new construction.

The form of new construction should be appropriate to the intended function of the item to be constructed.

Scale and proportion of new construction should take into consideration the other structures in the area.

Frequency and placement of items, such as, toilets, drinking fountains, benches, picnic tables and trash receptacles should be defined in such a way as to encourage visitors to use specific areas for specific activities. Care should be used to discourage improper use of facilities, such as camping on the lakeside or after hour teenage drinking parties.

# The Physical Look for Structural Improvements to Lake

Parking lots should be included in lake design. Care should be given to minimizing traffic congestion on the adjoining major streets.

Note: This subject was discussed during the session on Balancing Nature and Recreation convened by Lisa Wayne. Notes above are the recollections and opinions of the writer and may not be an entirely accurate chronicle of what was said by others that day.



# Financial Resources

Convener: Dee Dee Workman

Participants: Dick Morton, David Hayes, Michael Carlin, Greg Bartow, Randy Zebell and some others who may have slipped in

Sources of \$\$:

City

State

Federal

Foundation/Private \$

Ideas to pursue for funding for upkeep of the lake and its surroundings:

Put small surcharge on water bills for environmental enhancements

The PUC contributes the funds to Rec and Park for lake maintenance (since Rec and Park is managing the PUC's assets)

As part of the contract with the City, the Zoological Society and the Harding Park management company build in, as part of their concession fee, money for other recreational activities in the area, i.e., Lake Merced

Any project money that comes to the Lake should have dedicated maintenance money attached

PUC capital program should have a set-aside for lake enhancements

Identify high profile specific projects for foundation support

# Financial Resources

Obtain private funding for a master plan as the first step in a long-term private funding commitment from a foundation

Develop project-specific strategies for state and federal funding

Require concessionaires to maintain the property themselves as part of their contract

Look at the East Bay MUD model for possibilities for adaptation

Question: Who should get funding and manage grant projects for the lake? LMTF? Another group with a 501c3? PUC/Rec and Park staff?

Issue #1: Coordinating and prioritizing resources for the lake without a master plan is too hit and miss.

Issue #2: It may be time to revisit/redesign the divided ownership of the lake (PUC/Rec and Park) because this system isn't working

# Communicating Effectively

Convener: Mondy Lariz

Participants: Dick Morton, Tim Colen, Jerry Cadagan, Cynthia Royer and some others who where butterflies

Many have concerns about the way email messages are being used to attack individuals and organizations rather than conducting meaningful discourse that could lead to solutions to problems.

Question: Have we created a monster with the email lists? What's wrong? Do we need a code of ethics to follow or guidelines for "best email practices?"

Maybe it is because email is too anonymous not like a face-to-face meeting  
It lacks context and subtlety.

We are cc'ing all at times when maybe we should not.

Shouldn't we notify the responsible party or agency first before airing complaints in public?

Venting about a situation is counter productive.

Need to offer solutions or ask for one from others.

Work on describing what the email is about in the title.

We need a list of agency contacts to help deliver messages to responsible entity.

Email can be a bad substitute for face-to-face meetings.

Try to isolate issues to committees first to do some initial fact finding/problem solving

Improve manners/courtesy in face-to-face meeting too.

Explain the lists better so members can make sure they participate in the right ones.

Steering committee to explore these and other ideas to improve our communications.

# LMTF Policy Issues

Convener: Tim Colen

Participants: Dick Morten

## **Recommendations:**

- Quarterly meetings may limit the effectiveness of the LMTF since it can't respond in a timely way to emerging issues.
- Not all LMTF committees are functioning
- More authority should be devolved to the committees to take initiative and act independently, but within the vision and goals of the whole group.
- However, there's currently a lack of trust within the LMTF to allow devolving authority to committees.
- The LMTF Rules are stifling the ability to do the lake's business.
- We should focus more on implementing key LMTF policies.
- We need to do more to develop new policies.
- Committees should focus on developing more resolutions within the LMTF with agency (DRP, PUC, DPW, etc) buy-in or participation.
- Committees should make annual updates to the LMTF of their accomplishments or status of progress made.
- Committees should make more frequent postings of their work to the LMTF website.

# Appropriate Facilities at and Around the Lake

Convener: Pacific Rowing Club: Erin Pashelinsky, Grace Morinzono, John Paul.

- Users:**
- 1) Public – parking and park users.
  - 2) Golfers/Harding Park Golf Course pass-through to parking.
  - 3) Runners, joggers, walkers around the lake.
  - 4) Fishing related activities.
  - 5) Dragon boat paddlers and related users.
  - 6) Rowing – Crew and related activities.
  - 7) Naturalists and related flora and fauna activities.

**Needs:** 1) Meeting facilities:

- a. 200+ multi use meeting space (w/related limited kitchen facilities/ restrooms, display space, related office space, posting notices, etc.)
  - b. Affordable Rental Rates (nonprofits use for group meetings and related classes, CSUSF Recreation classes [sailing/boating], Naturalists/ Environmental awareness classes with local school districts, private parties, weddings, fund raising events etc.)
- 2) Storage/activity related interior space for specific user group/lessee:
- a. Dragon club equipment/boat storage, private locker rooms/showers, restrooms and private related use space.
  - b. Rowing club equipment/boat storage, private locker rooms/showers, restrooms and private related use space.
  - c. Restaurant/snack bar/concessionaire related storage.
- 3) Restaurant/snack bar/concessionaire/lessee retail space?
- a. Food-snack-retail-fishing permit/bait shop-full service restaurant? (Alcohol sales? Hours of operation? Full or limited activity at night? Supervision/maintenance of area, parking, buildings, public restrooms and public areas related to the activity in the area.)

# Appropriate Facilities at and Around the Lake

- 4) Appropriate water access for all users:
  - a. Beach users (appropriate restroom/showers etc.)
  - b. Piers/Docks (floating?)
    - 1. Fishing access/docks (handicapped access issues.)
    - 2. Dragon boat appropriate docks (North Lake.)
    - 3. Rowing/Crew appropriate docks (South Lake.)
    - 4. Multi-use docks/piers as required by activity.

**Requirements:** 1) Environmentally friendly appearance for all structures.  
2) Adequate capacity for present and anticipated needs.  
3) Smallest serviceable footprint for least impact on the lake area  
(perhaps an underground tunnel like [berm-hidden] facility might be a solution.)

## Convenors comments

"Appropriate Facilities at and Around the Lake" was chosen as a topic to get the group's input on parameters for all stake holder's facility needs. An attempt was made to define some limiting factors that each group might want placed on any proposed elements with the intent that solutions could be negotiated or suggested before participants take rigid positions. We quickly came to the conclusion that various concerns were strongly held and that most members of this breakout section were more than willing to openly discuss their positions. Environmental concerns seemed to trump all others (without a clean well cared for lake and lake area no one will come). Next came the facility needs of the using public which all felt should fit within the limitations of aesthetically pleasing designs and be of adequate size or capacity to accommodate the anticipated users both now and in the foreseeable future. Restrooms, well defined running routes, a boathouse for many varied activities (meeting/class rooms, club specific locker rooms/showers, storage for dragon boats/rowing boats/food concession needs/retail needs/park and recreation needs, display cabinets/areas for notices, etc.) parking lots, ramps, handicapped access, nature areas, docks/piers, various fishing and fishing support areas are needed but should be defined by user surveys.

# Appropriate Facilities at and Around the Lake

Concerns immediately were expressed about the ongoing maintenance of the various components because in the past there have been sizable investments and then the units were allowed to deteriorate to the point of almost not being usable. When this has happened, the users/public would shy away and the less desirable elements of the community would gravitate into the area. It was felt that some profit making enterprise was needed to be given an adventitious usage permit that would allow for the general care /maintenance of the area as a condition of being granted the favorable position. If the profits were sufficient the entity would be monetarily encouraged to defend the gains by keeping up the wholesome drawing of customers. The consensus of the group seemed to be to allow the various parties that had strong desires/needs to control various aspects, to do just that, if the effected group got basically what it wanted. For example the boathouse group was not interested in dictating the aesthetic accoutrements of the facility if it got the elements included in the basic design. There was also a desire of some to limit the footprint of the various facilities and that could be accomplished to not degrade the environmental impact if for example the bulk of the building was placed under the berm separating the north and south lakes. The dragon boats and the rowing boats want lake level access to storage that could be accomplished by using the area between the two lakes which is under the present roadway leading into the golf course. The overall outcome of this exercise seems to have been that if positions are taken and explained, it is possible to have an acceptable master plan that if reasoned and negotiated with the parties can meet almost everyone's vision of the lake. The best part of the exercise was that the most diverse elements who had started out thinking they were in direct opposition found that they had more in common than they had perceived. We all wish to thank the task force for the chance to participate and to have worked with such an excellent group of fellow concerned citizen stakeholders.

# Stewardship

David Hayes reminded us of the importance of stewardship to the future health of Lake Merced. Here are some thoughts on stewardship:

The objectives of the Lake Merced Task Force are to establish a healthy and sustainable marriage of lake and land eco-systems, that balances the needs of wildlife, habitat and safe recreational activities. This stewardship includes a collaboration of City governance and citizen support.

The Lake Merced Task Force is made up of organizations which are working together as stewards to protect, restore and improve Lake Merced.

We should foster a philosophy which holds that humans have a unique responsibility to manage, care for, and improve our natural resources for this and future generations. By setting a good example of effective stewardship, we can inspire others to take the role of steward seriously and continue to responsibly manage the ecosystems at Lake Merced.



# Conclusions and Next Steps

Of the issues discussed we concluded that only the following four were of major importance:

Aquifer, Hetch-Hetchy, and Recycling  
Biodiversity & Marsh Ecosystems  
Balancing Nature with Recreation  
The Physical Look for Structural Improvements to Lake

The issue of Appropriate Facilities at and Around the Lake was considered a sub-category of the physical look of the lake, and the subject of Financial Resources while not selected as a major vision item was considered by all to be an integral part of every vision and therefore very important. The other items were deemed to be administrative in nature and not part of our vision.

Since we ran out of time and did not make it to goals and next steps it will be important to continue this work at the earliest possible time. One approach might be for committee chairs and the steering committee to work on this in committee.

In the mean time it is hoped that committees will get busy on updating their portion of the lake stewardship plan.

It would be great to have something from each committee for the March 10th task force meeting.