



September 4, 2016

Supervisor Malia Cohen, Chair, Land Use and Transportation Committee
Supervisor Scott Wiener
Supervisor Aaron Peskin

**Re: September 12, 2016 Meeting of the Land Use and Transportation Committee:
Resolution File # 160183 Urging the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to
Expand Public Access to the Peninsula Watershed Lands**

Dear Supervisor Cohen and Members of the Committee,

Committee for Green Foothills (CGF), a regional environmental organization in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, has a long-standing and abiding interest in the Peninsula watershed lands dating back to the 1969 "Four Party Agreement" that protects the 23,000 acre watershed while allowing limited recreational activities within a 4,000 acre area along the eastern boundary, but not in the area contemplated by the proposed Resolution.

CGF urges your rejection of Resolution #160183 for the following reasons:

Water Quality: San Francisco and its 2.7 million water customers in 26 cities, water districts and private utilities are blessed with some of the finest drinking water in the nation. In every survey taken by the SFPUC, the public overwhelmingly supports its primary mission of **providing the highest quality water for the City and County of San Francisco and its suburban customers**, and does not want it to be compromised in any way.

Fire: The risk of catastrophic wildfire is real. 95% of all California wildland fires are human-caused. Both Big Sur's Soberanes Fire and Yosemite's Rim Fire were caused by illegal campfires in unauthorized areas. The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Peninsula Watershed Management Plan (PWMP) noted that the chief concern of the SF PUC with regard to water quality is catastrophic fire. ***"Studies in the FEIR document an increased chance of fire once the public is allowed into a formerly closed area. Should a devastating fire occur, the resulting erosion and sedimentation of watershed streams and lakes would make treatment of the water using direct filtration a difficult, if not impossible endeavor"***. (PWMP FEIR, Spring 2002) ***"A catastrophic fire...will reduce water quality, increase sediment load in the reservoirs, reduce storage capacity, and create a potential filtration problem."*** (Guido Ciardi, Forester, SF Water Department and President of Fire Safe San Mateo County: <http://firesafesanmateo.org/projects/crystal-springs-watershed>)

Trespass: Unrestricted access will foster trespass and other illegal activities including cutting new trails through protected areas for mountain biking, camping, swimming and fishing in the lakes, illegal marijuana grow sites, and hunting, among others. The PWMP's FEIR concluded: ***"Although most recreational users consider themselves to be environmentally***

responsible, the experience of public land managers in the Bay Area demonstrates that a percentage of public land users will invariably violate access rules and engage in illegal trespass and the building of unauthorized trails. (PWMP FEIR, Spring 2002).

Protection of Unique Habitats: The watershed supports the highest concentration of special status species in the Bay Area (PWMP FEIR, Spring 2002). It is home to mountain lions, Bald Eagles and threatened Marbled Murrelets. This biodiversity is extraordinary, considering the watershed is adjacent to 10 Peninsula cities. ***“Resource agencies with statutory authority to regulate SFUC construction and other activities in the watershed (US Fish and Wildlife, CA Fish and Wildlife, and CA Department of Health Services) all expressed concern about permitting unrestricted public access to the interior of the watershed due to the unique assemblage of habitats and species that occupy the watershed and potential public health impacts.”*** (PWMP FEIR Spring 2002).

Cost: Uncontrolled public access will greatly increase annual costs of patrolling the watershed, restoring unauthorized trails and off-limit areas impacted by trespass, and higher levels of water filtration and treatment, particularly in the event of a catastrophic fire. These costs should not be borne by the ratepayers, as expressly directed by the SFPUC in adopting the Peninsula Watershed Management Plan.

The Peninsula Watershed is NOT a Park; it is our Water Supply! San Francisco has wisely protected these lands for over 150 years. There are hundreds of miles of trails accessible to residents of San Francisco and the north Peninsula in nearby county, state, and national parks, as well as Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserves. The current docent program that provides managed access along Fifield-Cahill service road should be expanded and improved.

Please reject Resolution 160183 and reaffirm that the primary function of the Peninsula watershed is protection of our water supply and preservation of its natural resources. Please do support instead increased public access through an expanded docent program.



Lennie Roberts, Legislative Advocate

Mayor Ed Lee and San Francisco Board of Supervisors
President Warren Slocum and San Mateo County Supervisors
San Mateo County Parks Commission
Marlene Finley, San Mateo County Parks Director
Harlan Kelly, Jr. General Manager, SF PUC
Tim Ramirez, Natural Resources and Land Division Manager, SF PUC
Brian Aviles, Senior Planner, Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Other interested parties