

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT OFF-LEASH DOGS AT THE GGNRA

MYTH: The National Park Service is trying to ban dogs from entering the GGNRA.

FACT: The National Park Service welcomes dogs in nearly every acre of the GGNRA. To protect people, our pets, wildlife, and the park from harm, the Park Service simply asks that people exercise responsible dog ownership by leashing their dog while in the GGNRA.

MYTH: The GGNRA is a safe place to let dogs roam off-leash.

FACT: The GGNRA is not a safe place to walk dogs off-leash. Over the past 30 years, it is believed that hundreds of dogs have been lost, injured, or killed because irresponsible dog owner groups promoted a voice control agenda at the park without providing standard safeguards for dogs.

MYTH: Off-leash access at the GGNRA is necessary because San Francisco parks do not provide sufficient off-leash access.

FACT: The City of San Francisco has designated at least 27 legal off-leash dog play areas throughout the city, and intends to establish more under its 2002 Dog Policy. San Francisco already has more off-leash areas than Seattle, Boston, Miami, and Chicago combined.

Myth: Bay Area residents support roaming off-leash dogs at the GGNRA.

FACT: More than 71% of bay area residents support enforcing leash laws at the GGNRA.

MYTH: The Voice Control Agenda is sufficient to protect the park from harm.

FACT: The voice control agenda advanced by irresponsible dog owner groups has been discredited by responsible animal welfare organizations for decades. As explained by the Humane Society of the United States, “voice control . . . [is] not reliable for dogs whose basic predatory, sexual, or territorial defense drives have been triggered.”

MYTH: Dogs can only be well socialized if they roam off-leash.

FACT: Allowing dogs off-leash can be harmful to a dog’s socialization process. Many dogs are too shy, bold, or aggressive to roam off-leash, and many more dogs learn to react aggressively on-leash after roaming off-leash. Too few dog owners understand what good dog interactions look like, and even fewer feel empowered to intervene when poor interactions occur, leading to anti-social dog behavior outside of off-leash areas but caused by roaming off-leash.