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Habitat restoration at golf course target of legislation

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The days of hitting the links at the city-owned Sharp Park Golf Course could become a thing of the past.

The future of city-operated golf courses has long been a topic of debate, with some arguing for the closure of at least one for other uses — especially since the Recreation and Park Department struggles to operate them.

Last year, the Center for Biological Diversity threatened to sue San Francisco after accusing The City of killing the endangered California red-legged frog and the San Francisco garter snake, which populate the park area that is located in Pacifica. The group is campaigning to restore the species' habitat.

Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi on Tuesday introduced legislation that would require Rec and Park to develop “a plan, schedule and budget for restoring the habitat.” It also requires the department to develop a plan to transfer Sharp Park to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, or develop a joint management plan with the federal agency.

Rec and Park’s restoration plans must include ways to keep, redesign or eliminate the golf course, the legislation said.

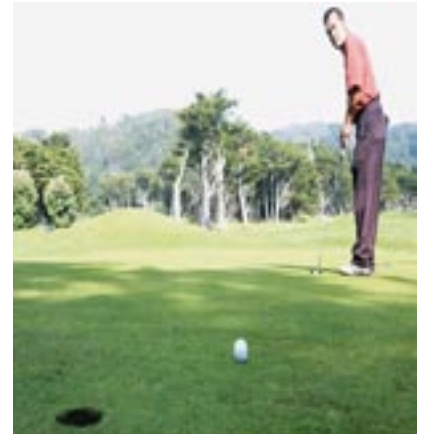
“There has been a lot of talk that Sharp Park should be managed by the GGNRA,” Mirkarimi said.

He said that it would help The City “alleviate the extra woe” in trying to take care of the park and “especially reconciling the question of what is to become of the golf course.”

Rec and Park Interim Director Jared Blumenfeld said the department is about a year away from finalizing a long-term restoration plan and will be implementing short-term measures along the way.

He pointed out that the operation of the golf course and protection of the endangered species “are often pitted against each other,” but federal agencies and scientists have said the two could coexist and both “thrive.”

Chris Powell, a spokeswoman for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, said the agency is open to discussing the idea of taking control of the park, but it must explore such factors as staffing and costs. Powell said the agency has been in discussions with The City about management of the habitat, as it owns an adjacent piece of property.



Saving species: The City has taken flack, and been sued, for allegedly killing the endangered red-legged frog and garter snake that live in Sharp Park. Juan Carlos Pometta Betancourt/Special to The Examiner