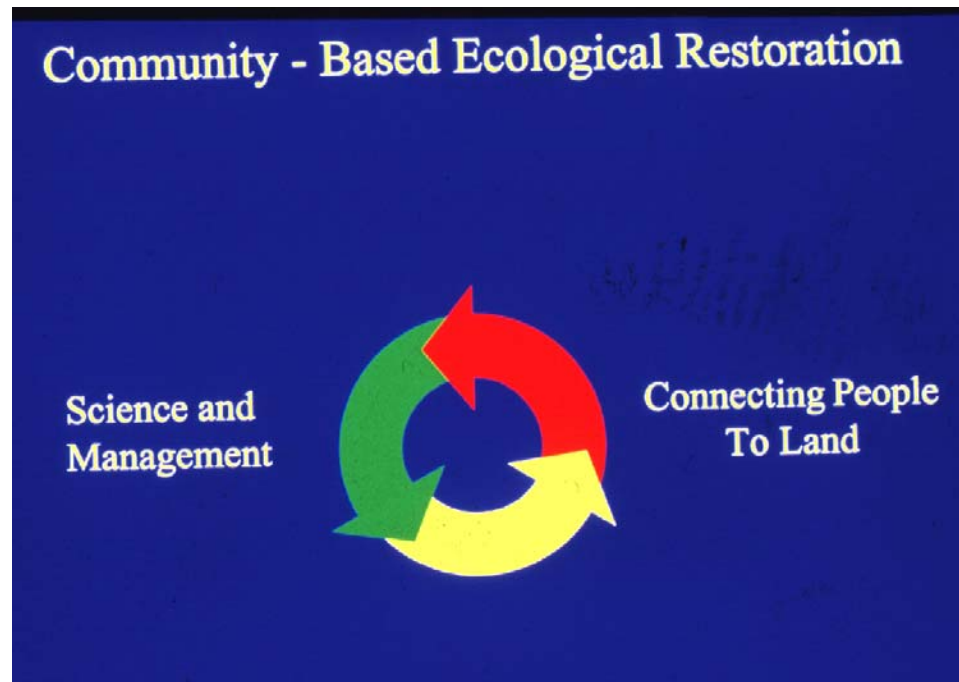


History of Volunteers in the GGNRA

- Since 1985, the National Park Service has utilized community members to manage weeds in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- The Natural Resources Division has managed to log nearly 170,000 hours of invasive plant removal (over 250,000 hours of habitat restoration total), primarily using volunteer labor.





- There are three habitat restoration programs spread throughout the North District (**Habitat Restoration Team**), the Presidio (**Presidio Park Stewards**), and the South District (**Site Stewardship**) of the GGNRA.
- The GGNRA's volunteer base is fed by the 5 million people living in the Bay Area, primarily in urban neighborhoods with very little access to nature.

- With an operating budget of nearly \$1 million dollars annually, only 16% (about \$173,000 is spent on volunteer coordination and support).
- Program Coordinators estimated that 40% or less of their time is spent managing volunteers.
- In other words, not that much Park Service **money or time** is spent on volunteers.



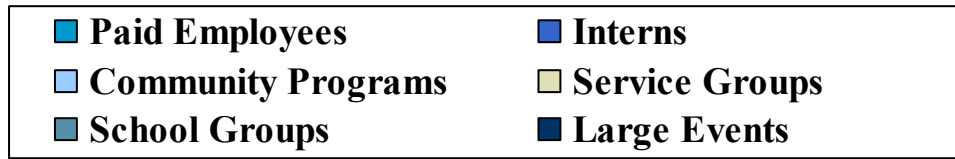
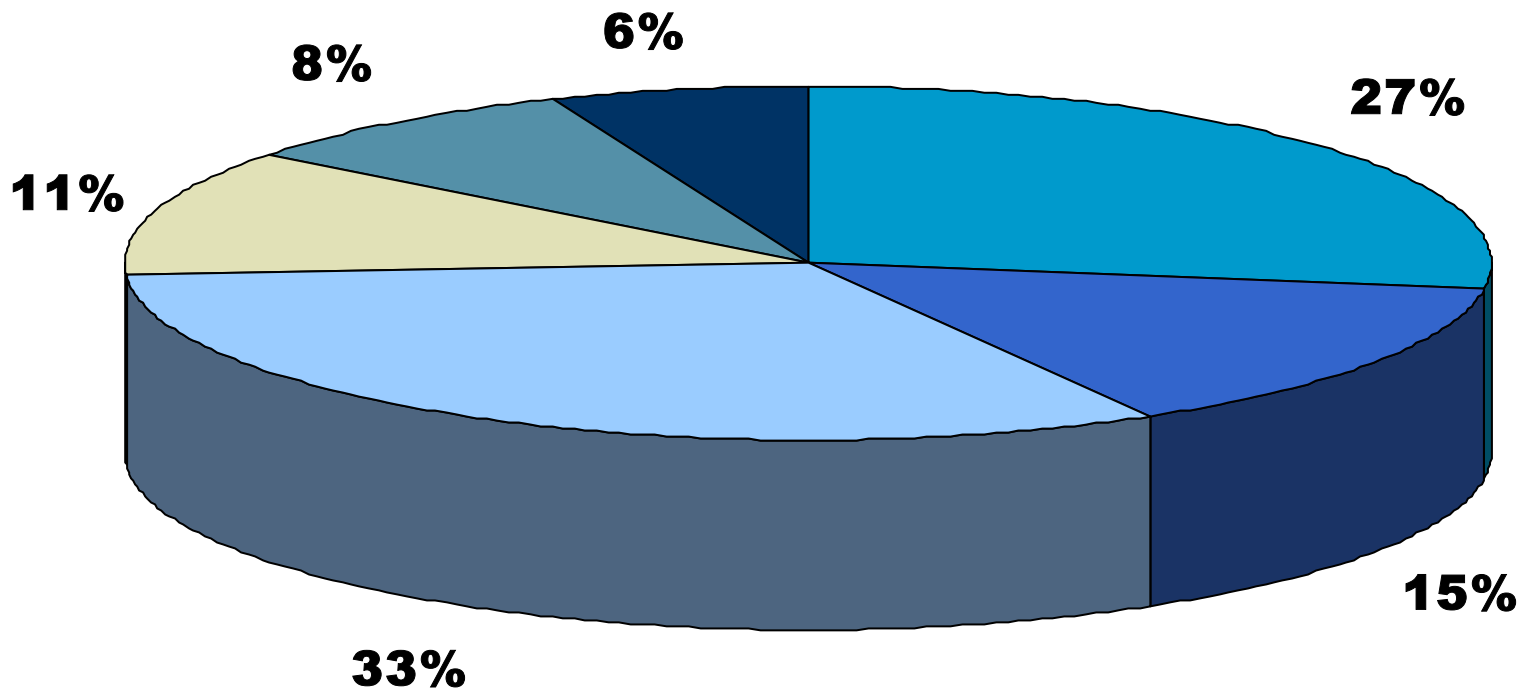
- Yet the sheer acreage of land managed is enormous: **community programs remove invasive plants on sites covering a whopping 5,759 acres!**
- Presidio Park Stewards manage 216 acres
- Site Stewardship manages 745 acres
- Habitat Restoration Team manages 4, 798 acres





- The bulk of **invasive plant removal (about 70%)** has been done by **volunteers** rather than paid employees or contractors.
- There was initial uncertainty about the role of volunteers, but the park's community habitat restoration programs have grown only as they have demonstrated the ability for increased quantity and quality of work that volunteers can do.

Who is doing the work?



Paid employees (26% of work)



- Trained professionals doing invasive plant removal, site prep, or inventory and monitoring work.
- Familiar with resource management concepts and techniques as well as local ecology.
- Employees and contractors require big paychecks when budgets are small.

Interns (14% of work)

- Assist project managers with priority tasks, but may also be given a large amount of independent responsibility.
- Paid volunteers receiving small stipends. Interns are often funded through a supporting organization such as a Parks Association, Student Conservation Association, or Americorps.
- It can take a lot of staff time to adequately supervise an intern and ensure that they are increasing their production and knowledge.



Community Programs (31% of work)



- Drop-in programs occur on a weekly basis and anyone is welcome. Core volunteers consider it a given part of their weekly schedule.
- Group sizes normally range from 5 - 30+ participants.
- Volunteers steward remnant and restored natural areas, focusing on invasive plant removal. Volunteers may also engage in planting during the rainy season, or activities such as seed collection, mapping, and monitoring.

- Weekly programs build the sustainability of your project (some GGNRA volunteers have been coming out for nearly a decade!)
- Participants may become important political advocates.
- Require organization, longevity, and money for volunteer recruitment and development.
- It's like creating a family ... a large personal commitment!



Service Groups (11 % of work)



- Corporate groups and nonprofit organizations from around the Bay Area participating in 2-6 hour projects.
- Groups sizes normally range from 5 - 50+ people.
- Large groups get a lot of work done quickly.
- Consideration must be given to possible resource impacts from volunteers unfamiliar with local ecology.
- Much time must be given to detailed planning although group participants are usually one - timers.

School Programs (8% of work)

- Middle and High School students from around the Bay Area participating in 2-4 hour projects.
- Group sizes normally range from 5-40 people.
- Time is split between environmental education and resource management activities.
- The future is bright ...
- Weeding may not be meaningful to youth without an ecosystem context.
- Extended partnerships work better so that young people can see the site change over time.



Large Events (6% of work)

- Events such as Earth Day can draw a LARGE number of one-timers into weeding projects.
- Again, large groups are bulk power! You will be amazed at how much a large focused group can accomplish.
- Require even more organization and staff time and resource protection than scheduled service groups.
- Never know if more or less people than planned will show up.



Recruitment (how do we get them?)



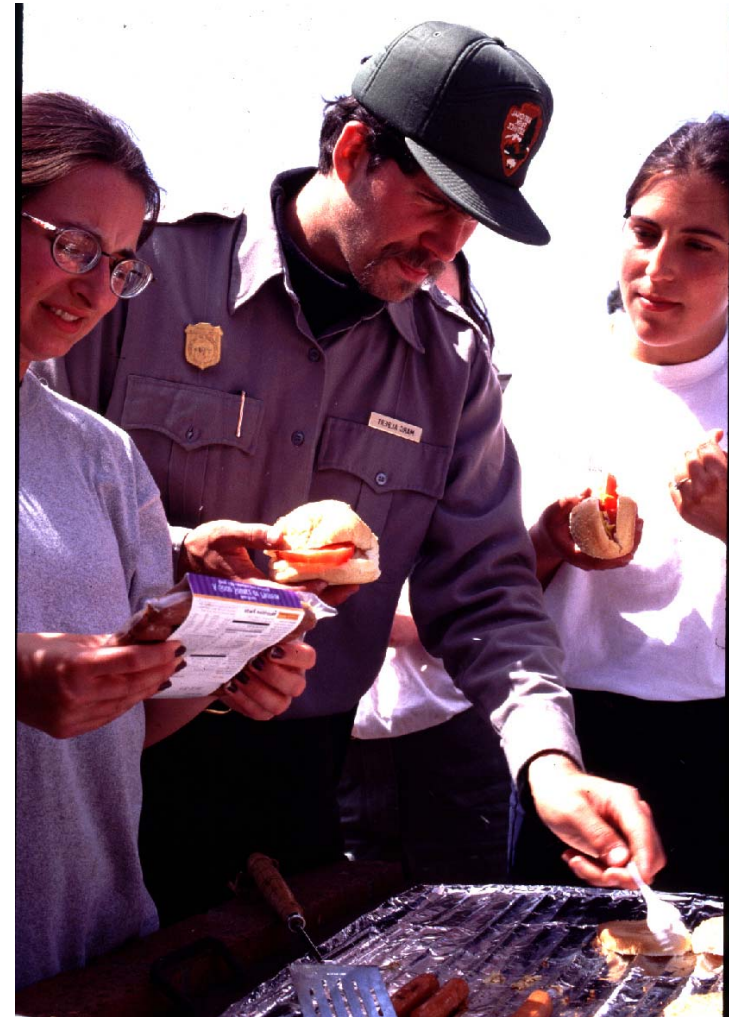
- Submit public service announcements
- Post flyers
- Table at community events
- Connect with volunteer support groups and volunteer centers
- Connect with other environmental organizations (CNPS, SERCal, Audubon, Sierra, etc.)

Retention (how do we keep them?)

- Well-planned work days with clear descriptions of tasks
- Communication about the project inside the larger ecological context and long term goals
- Ice-breakers or team-building activities
- Small group work and social time to chat with other volunteers
- Educational signage or brochures to look over



- **FOOD, FOOD, FOOD!**
- Ritualized appreciation of the beauty of the sites (blooming wildflowers, wildlife sightings, etc)
- Explanation of scientific background
- Willingness to address political issues if appropriate
- Volunteer GIFTS and PARTIES!



Mismanagement (how do we lose them?)



- Lack of organization
- No communication about project progress or next steps
- Tasks inappropriate for certain ages and strengths
- Lack of safety consciousness
- Long project introductions: 5 mins good, 10 mins long, 15+ unacceptable!



- Overly serious tone (restoration is recreation!)
- Inaccessible language (agency lingo and acronyms)
- Unfulfilling and tedious tasks
- Missing the radical ethics behind restoration (healing the land)

The Funding Food Chain

Do the research and you'll be overwhelmed by the number of funding sources you meet the guidelines for!

- Federal Government - \$230 billion annually
- Private Individuals - \$110 billion annually
- Private Foundations - \$13 billion annually
- Estate Bequests - \$13 billion annually
- Corporations - \$8 billion annually



What Do Funders Want From You?



- Measurable and specific results
- A well-planned budget
- Evidence of broad partner base and public support
- Assurance that staff is qualified to plan and execute the project

Take-home part one

- **Sense of accomplishment:** volunteers realize their work is making a difference over both the short and long terms



Take-home part two

- **Sense of Community:** volunteers create a future for your project and make the work a lot more fun



Take-home part three

- **Sense of place:** volunteers develop a genuine relationship with the land that enriches their lives

