

Stewardship and Resource Education at the Presidio

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The Presidio of San Francisco was transferred to National Park Service in 1994. With it came the complex management of remnant sand dunes, serpentine outcrops, and twelve rare or endangered species - all extensively threatened by numerous invasive exotic species. While a one-time funding transfer of \$300,000 from the Department of Defense provided the initial resources to employ youth conservation corps crews to construct protective fencing and remove priority exotic species, it was clear that community involvement would be essential to successful long-term resource management. Resource managers reached outward to local community groups and members, and other agencies to build partnerships. These partnerships, with local schools and universities, court programs, neighborhoods and environmentally-minded individuals have created the foundations of the Presidio Park Stewardship Program. For almost four years, volunteers have physically removed tens of thousands of square feet of iceplant, German ivy, and other invasive species; advocated and educated the public about the value of exotic tree removal, as well as helping to remove the trees; participated in workshops and curriculum development regarding invasive exotic species management; created GIS maps of priority species; written bulletins and informational articles - all towards both raising public awareness of biological threats to natural systems, and inspiring others to become involved.

The Presidio Stewardship Education Program is a curriculum based resource education program that links and involves urban high school youth with long-term ecological restoration projects. This collaborative project between the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the San Francisco Unified School District works to restore remnant endangered species habitat on the Presidio, much of which is impacted invasive plants. High school classes participate in ongoing restoration efforts during six 4-hour visits. Curriculum-based activities include propagating and outplanting native plants, examining invasive exotic species biology and removing priority species, mapping and monitoring restoration efforts, and developing final projects that reflect the students stewardship experiences. Over the past three years, the program has evolved to incorporate two additional components, a high school internship program and a mentorship, program. At the end of the school year, students are invited to apply to paid, or "for credit" summer internships, where they assume more active leadership roles in GGNRA restoration projects. Past interns have co-managed the Presidio, Native Plant Nursery, led community groups in removing exotic species, mapped and monitored endangered species populations and contributed artwork illustrating exotic tree removal project publications.

This presentation will discuss the evolution of the Presidio Park Stewardship program and the development its resource education program, and their effectiveness as tools to complete restoration projects and build broader community support and advocacy.