

The Yodeler

About Us

Current Issues

Keep Informed

Get Involved

Get Outdoors

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5 **Search****Zoo or open space? Protect Oakland's largest park**

The Sierra Club and the Oakland Zoo share many goals for conservation education and protection of wild animals. It is therefore with regret that we have to express severe reservations about the zoo's expansion plans.

Unfortunately, the zoo, situated within the western edge of Knowland Park, Oakland's largest city-owned park, has proposed fencing off 56 acres of the park's public open space, trails, and wildlife habitat to build an aerial gondola ride, a multi-story ridgetop restaurant and visitor center, a veterinary facility, and animal exhibits organized around a "California" theme. Much of the fenced area would not be used by the zoo, but would still be withdrawn from public access, and much existing native wildlife would be excluded. To date, no full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared. The expansion

plans are backed up only by a Mitigated Negative Declaration drafted way back in 1997, and much has changed since then.

It is hard to imagine appropriate circumstances for building a restaurant, a clinic, or a transportation facility on any ridgetop in the Bay Area, let alone in a park. In any case, the California Environmental Quality Act clearly requires an environmental analysis based on current conditions. The impacts of the zoo's project would be extensive enough to require a full EIR documenting the proposal's impacts on air quality, traffic, watersheds, native plants and animals, and ridgetop vistas.

Given the constraints of the location, the Sierra Club has called for a reconsideration of the project. Continuing expansion is not sustainable. We urge the zoo to enhance its facilities and programs within its current boundaries and to educate its visitors about the importance and significance of that decision.

WhatYouCanDo

The proposed expansion is likely to come before the Planning Commission and City Council this fall. Write to them at:

*Oakland City Hall
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza*

Oakland, CA 94612.

Urge them not to approve the current plan for zoo expansion into Knowland Park. Ask them instead to encourage the zoo to refocus on developing programs that do not require loss of open space and wildlife habitat.

To learn more about protecting this open space, visit the web site of Friends of Knowland Park

To work with the Sierra Club on these concerns, contact conservation organizer Jeramiah Dean or call (510) 848-0800, ext. 304 or Northern Alameda County Group chair Kent Lewandowski at kentlewan@yahoo.com

Kent Lewandowski

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