

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Park Users Value San Mateo County Park Resources; Department to Engage New Visitors**

**REDWOOD CITY, Calif.** – A recent study of visitors at San Mateo County Parks shows that the majority of park users consider the 20 parks managed by the County as ideal locations for exercise, relaxation, enjoying nature and spending time with family and friends. The data collected in parks from more than 2,400 surveys over a six-week period also reveals that park use is on the rise and that 99 percent of visitors rate the quality of their overall experience as very good or good.

San Mateo County Parks worked with a team of researchers at San Francisco State University's Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism led by Nina Roberts, PhD, and Patrick Tierney, PhD, who designed a study that applied three assessment methods: focus groups in select County communities, in-park visitor surveys in 20 San Mateo County Parks and an on-line follow up survey. Data was gathered over a six-month period.

The Department embarked on the in-depth study to better understand visitor experiences and attitudes and to learn why some County residents aren't using parks. The information will guide the 93-year-old park agency in its planning efforts to meet the needs of San Mateo County residents in the areas of health, wellness and overall quality of life.

Recently, the Department tapped into the data to plan a new Park Shuttle service which originates in East Palo Alto and the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park and travels to unincorporated North Fair Oaks and downtown Redwood City before arriving at Edgewood Park in Redwood City and Wunderlich Park in Woodside. Acting upon information gathered through the focus groups, a welcome station at both parks is staffed by bilingual staff and stocked with English and Spanish language print materials.

Survey data also shows that one-third of visitors are regular park users with 37 percent living within one mile of the park. While English is the primary language spoken by visitors surveyed, 40 percent of those who speak another language at home, speak Spanish, followed by Mandarin/Cantonese. Fifty-three percent use parks for physical activities, such as walking, hiking and cycling and 26 percent gather in parks for social events, including activities with family, friends and church. Eighty percent of visitors consider the entrance fees paid as a good to exceptional value. Campers' responses are similar at 81 percent.

Roberts and Tierney will present the study findings at the October 6 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting at 4 p.m. in the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors' Chambers.

San Mateo County Parks manages parks, trails and historic sites to preserve public lands and provide opportunities for education and recreation. The Department manages more than 17,000 acres.

For more information and for questions, please contact:

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