

Sweeney Ridge

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Golden Gate National Recreation Area



Dennis Zieminski, 2019



Ohlone and Portolá Expedition members view San Francisco Bay from Sweeney Ridge on November 4, 1769.

In Their Footsteps

Sweeney Ridge has felt the footsteps of mountain lions and Ohlone people for thousands of years, and more recently, explorers, soldiers and citizen activists. Each has left their mark upon this spacious landscape. As you follow their footsteps, we hope you discover what drew people to this magnificent place and why this land was important to them.

Re-interpreting the Bay “Discovery Site”

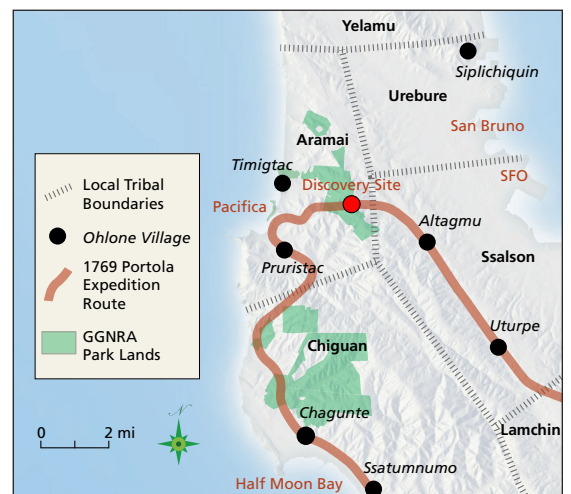
What is the legacy of colonization?

In 1769 Spain sent explorer Juan Gaspar de Portolá overland to find and settle Monterey Bay. Native peoples along the way befriended the expedition. When the hungry and sick party failed to recognize Monterey Bay and continued on to the Bay Area, the local Ohlone shared their food and accompanied the explorers to the top of Sweeney Ridge, where they were the first Europeans to view San Francisco Bay on November 4, 1769.

Over the centuries, the lens of history has sharpened. The notion that America was vast and empty, waiting to be discovered and settled by Europeans was based on the pretense that no one of significance was here before. The truth is that indigenous people with thriving and highly developed cultures lived across the continent for thousands of years before colonization started.

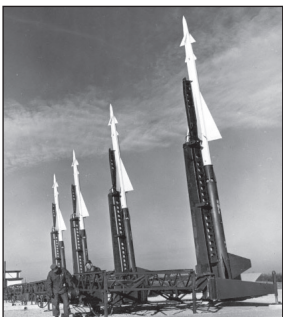
The Spanish “discovery” of San Francisco Bay would soon mean the loss of Ohlone lives,

homelands and traditional ways. Yet, a new chapter would begin as four of the expedition’s men would marry native California women and raise families that contributed to the coming Californiano culture.



Tribal territories and villages of the Ramaytush Ohlone on the San Francisco Peninsula and the route of 1769 Portolá Expedition.

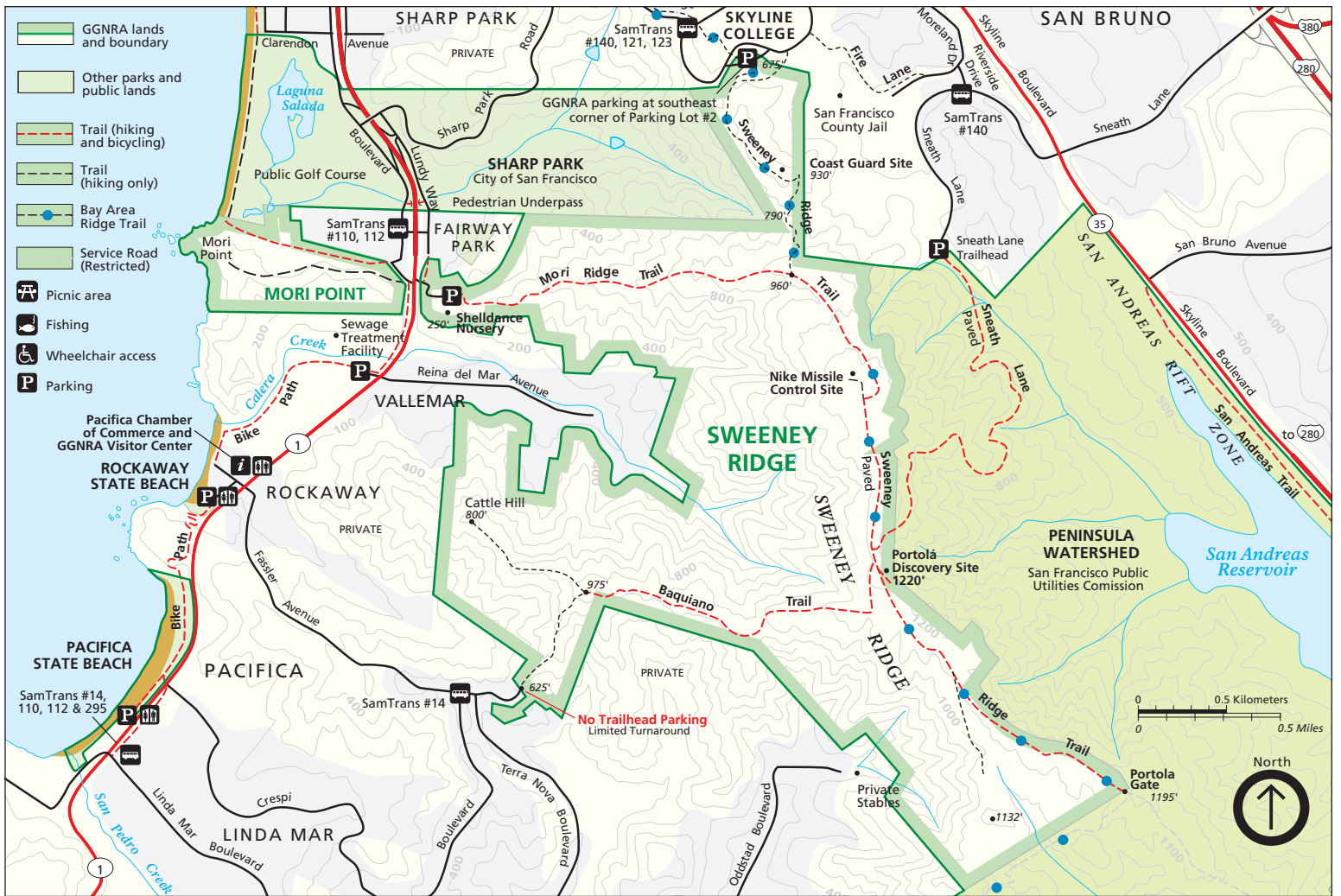
Fear Factor



Nike missiles stand ready

All of us have felt fear at some time. During the 1950s, Cold War-era fears of Soviet long-range “Bear” bombers caused the U.S. Army to develop a weapon to destroy those planes. Nike anti-aircraft missiles were deployed across the country, including 11 sites protecting the Bay Area. Nike Site SF-51 included a control station atop Sweeney

Ridge and a missile launching site at nearby Milagra Ridge. By the 1960s, nuclear capable Nike Hercules missiles stood guard on this ridgetop. Obsolete by 1974, SF-51 was abandoned under the provisions of an arms-reduction treaty.



Protecting Their Priorities



In the 1970s and 80s, local citizens recognized new threats to Sweeney Ridge as new housing developments sprawled up nearby hillsides and a proposed 8-lane freeway extension would bisect the ridge. Community activists organized, signed petitions and voted to

protect this 1200-acre ridgetop. Many of these same citizen activists now volunteer to improve wildlife habitat, maintain trails and lead walks.

How can you help your community?

Ranging on the Ridge



California Acad. of Sciences

A refuge for mountain lions

Like their human counterparts, wildlife explore and defend territories. On Sweeney Ridge, the web of life is remarkably intact: mountain lions, coyotes and bobcats range in search of rabbits, mice, voles and shrews, which in turn search for their own food and water. All of these creatures find protection

in Sweeney Ridge's native coastal scrub vegetation. Today, the National Park Service protects this ecosystem and park volunteers remove invasive plants that threaten the delicate ecological balance by displacing the native plants on which wildlife depend.

About Your Visit

Please protect Sweeney Ridge by staying on designated trails and picking up litter. Mountain bikes allowed on fire roads, but not on single-track trails. Dogs allowed on leash. Fires, camping, and off-road vehicles not permitted. Protect yourself by wearing layers year round. Bring sunscreen and water.

Finding Your Way

From Pacifica, Sweeney Ridge trailheads are located at Sheldance Nursery off of Highway 1, and at the east end of Fassler Ave. From San Bruno, trails start at west end of Sneath Lane off of Hwy 35 (Skyline Blvd), and from Skyline College Parking Lot #2.

For More Information

Pacifica Visitor Center
(650) 355-4122
www.pacificachamber.com

Presidio Visitor Center
(415) 561-4323
www.nps.gov/prsf

Site Stewardship Program
(415) 561-3073
www.parksconservancy.org

