

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE

Early History

The Institute at the Golden Gate is—quite literally—built upon its ideals. Founded to advance environmental protection through cross-sector collaboration, the Institute’s history is a living testament to those principles and purposes.

Fort Baker, the Institute’s home tucked in the Marin Headlands of California, has a long history as a place of protection. In this harbor area by the Golden Gate, native American peoples camped; 18th-century Spanish explorers repaired their ships; and the U.S. government established a post to guard the San Francisco Bay and keep safe the vast country beyond.

Established in 1897, Fort Baker served as a vital cog in a network of bay defenses. In 1972, Fort Baker was included in the boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (commonly called the Golden Gate National Parks), and in 2002 the final Fort Baker parcel was transferred from the Army to the National Park Service (NPS).

A New Chapter of Public Service

Even before the final transfer, the NPS—along with its nonprofit partner the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy—had been planning for Fort Baker’s next chapter of public service. The resulting collective vision aimed to restore its grand architecture, preserve its historic character, protect endangered species habitat, and revitalize the site through a “post to park” transformation.

By bringing aboard the Fort Baker Retreat Group, the NPS and Parks Conservancy established a unique private-public-nonprofit triumvirate that would result in the stunning Cavallo Point—the Lodge at the Golden Gate. Through this groundbreaking cross-sector collaboration, the buildings of this former military post now house a sustainably built and operated national park lodge.

The lodge, which officially opened in June 2008, was just one facet of Fort Baker’s revitalization plan. The symbolic power of the place—as guardian of the Golden Gate, sentinel for a continent, and heart of a UNESCO international biosphere reserve—demanded an even greater purpose for Fort Baker. A new environmental institute was an integral component of the original plan.

A New Environmental Institute

Planners envisioned an institute, based at Fort Baker, that would draw from the strengths of its partnering organizations (the Parks Conservancy’s model of community engagement and the NPS’ legacy of conservation stewardship), as well as the unique character of its setting (Cavallo Point’s “green” lodging and meeting facilities and the Bay Area’s reputation for ecological consciousness and leading-edge innovation).

Forged of place and with purpose, the Institute was then tempered by pressing circumstance. It is being founded in an era that demands immediate responses to environmental challenges such as climate change, energy crises, and species extinction.



636 MURRAY CIRCLE, FORT BAKER, SAUSALITO, CA 94965

TEL: (415) 339-4786 FAX: (415) 339-4791 www.instituteatgoldengate.org



Given the urgency of the moment, the Institute has hit the ground running. Since it began operations in 2008, the Institute has taken concrete steps to fulfill its mission of advancing environmental preservation and global sustainability by facilitating cross-sector dialogue and collaboration, encouraging new partnerships, and promoting action.

Accomplishments to Date

Connect. In its first months of operation, the Institute has worked with over 35 nonprofits to hold events at Cavallo Point. More than 5,000 room-nights have been allocated at heavily discounted “green” rates to organizations holding meetings focused on environmentally related topics, establishing the Institute has an intellectual space (to complement Cavallo Point’s physical place) that fosters interaction and inspiration.

Collaborate. In just its first year, the Institute at the Golden Gate has supported or brokered a wide array of significant meetings. It helped facilitate climate-change discussions of the Conservation Study Institute, host 80 ambassadors on a U.S. State Department visit, convene a program on greening the travel industry (sponsored by Tauck World Discovery & American Express), and organize a “designing the parks” conference with the National Park Service (see **Programs** sheet). In the coming months, the Institute is planning an Urban and Protected Areas Forum and partnering with the Aspen Institute on a collaborative event.

Inspire. In collaboration with Conservation International, the Institute has launched a unique public lecture series, *Head in the Sky, Feet in the Mud: Conversations with Eco-Innovators*. The series, underwritten by Northern Trust, features preeminent conservationists, academics, and environmental innovators discussing subjects like “Boosting Green Enterprise,” “The Art of Conservation,” and “People-Centered Conservation Programs.”

Act. The Institute is currently preparing for its premier signature program, *Turning the Tide*, April 2 –3, 2009, which will be a showcase of its core ideals: cross-sector collaboration, innovation, and focused solutions and action. The event is organized around the concept of “guilds”—working groups of leaders and doers brought together on environmental topics such as Planetary Survival, Health and National Resilience, and Next Gen Legacies (see **Guilds** sheet). The guilds take the think tank concept one step further, functioning as “action tanks” to forge solutions.

Fort Baker is rich with a history as a harbor, a legacy of shelter and defense. From this post once dedicated to safeguarding a nation, the Institute at the Golden Gate strives to expand that responsibility to protecting the environment. A sustainable future for Earth demands nothing less than a broader definition of what we call our home.



636 MURRAY CIRCLE, FORT BAKER, SAUSALITO, CA 94965

TEL: (415) 339-4786 FAX: (415) 339-4791 www.instituteatgoldengate.org

