



# Warm Water Cove Graffiti Vandalism Project 2007

Reclaiming a waterfront park and adjacent properties from graffiti vandals



Department of Public Works & the Port of San Francisco

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Department of Public Works & the Port of San Francisco

## Warm Water Cove Graffiti Vandalism Project 2007

*Reclaiming a waterfront park and surrounding properties from graffiti vandals*

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## Overview

As the agency responsible for enforcing Article 23 of the Public Works Code (Graffiti Ordinance for abatement of graffiti on private property), the Department of Public Works initiated a multi-agency effort, in partnership with the Port of San Francisco, to reclaim a small park on the eastern waterfront from graffiti vandals who were using it as a base to practice their style on the nearby properties. The Warm Water Cove Graffiti Vandalism Project was conceived in May, 2007 and culminated in a volunteer cleanup activity and surveillance operation conducted from August 3 through 5, 2007.

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Warm Water Cove Park is located at the end of 24th Street, just two blocks east of the new Third Street Light Rail line. The park is situated in an industrial area occupied by major enterprises such as Mirant Corp., which operates the old PG&E power plant, PG&E, DHL, and Sheedy Cranes. Because of its out-of-the-way location, Warm Water Cove Park had become a favorite destination for alternative music musicians who put on all-night rave parties, and graffiti vandals, who went there to tag the fences, walls, and interiors of the surrounding private properties, often in broad daylight. They also vandalized the park – tagging its picnic tables, trash cans, signs, pathways, rocks, and trees – leaving their empty spray cans on the ground.

Other issues that plagued the area were the presence of people living in their motor homes, scrap metal thieves, and homeless individuals, who left drug paraphernalia in the park. Two years ago, the San Francisco Police Department successfully moved out the motor homes, and moved many of the homeless into housing. To prevent the motor homes and campers from returning, the Police allowed Sheedy Drayage to park their trailers along 24th Street, but this equipment became another canvas for the taggers.



## Organizing Process

The Warm Water Cove Graffiti Vandalism Project planners had two primary objectives.

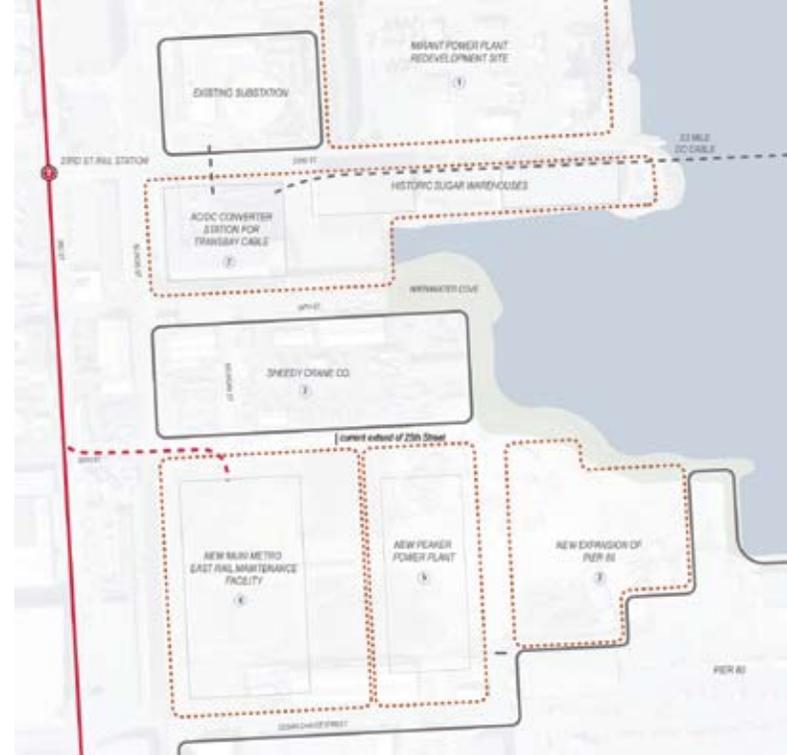
Objective #1: Facilitate a process to collaborate with the property owners on 23rd and 24th St. between Illinois St. and the Bay in abating the graffiti on their buildings and in conducting a volunteer cleanup to paint over the graffiti, clean and green the Park, and reclaim it as an inviting public open space.

Objective #2: Conduct a surveillance operation over the same weekend to arrest any taggers who attempted to deface the newly painted walls, park furniture and structures.

DPW and Port staffs planned and executed the project in three phases:

Phase I. Met with the City's law enforcement agencies, Warm Water Cove property owners, and the Port's community stakeholders to ask for their input and participation in the project;

Phase II. Organized the surveillance operation and obtained a written declaration from each property owner agreeing to participate in the prosecution of any person apprehended vandalizing their property;



Phase III. Recruited volunteers and organized the community cleanup, which was held on Saturday, August 4th at Warm Water Cove Park.

DPW and Port staffs shared the responsibility for hosting planning meetings, recruiting volunteers, and arranging logistics and staffing for the volunteer activity. The Community Clean Team, a DPW-led community program that conducts volunteer cleaning and greening activities once a month in San Francisco's 11 Supervisorial districts, provided logistical support for the August 4th activity.

## Reclaiming a waterfront park and surrounding properties from graffiti vandals



### Partners and Key Roles

*Department of Public Works*

DPW's Community Programs Department and the Bureau of Street Environmental Services' Graffiti Unit shared the responsibility of planning the Warm Water Cove Park project under the direction of the Deputy Director for Operations. A Community Programs staff member organized the planning meetings and produced the volunteer event. She also distributed outreach materials to community groups, and managed media relations in coordination with DPW Public Affairs and the Port Public Information Officer. DPW's Graffiti Unit assisted some of the Warm Water Cove property owners in abating the graffiti on their buildings and led the graffiti cleanup at the August 4th volunteer event. Following the cleanup, Graffiti Unit staff monitored the park twice a day for a month, removing any new graffiti.

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# WWC



### *The Port of San Francisco*

Warm Water Cove Park is within the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco. The Port is responsible for the Park's maintenance as well as for maintenance of 24th Street from Michigan Street east to the Park. The Port Maintenance special project coordinator, with assistance from Maintenance Superintendents and staff executed the Port's actions in the project under the direction of the Deputy Director for Maintenance. This included: helping to identify Warm Water Cove private property owners and tenants; hosting meetings; obtaining written permission from property owners for the San Francisco Police to arrest anyone caught vandalizing their property; involving members of the Central Waterfront Advisory Committee in the planning process; making improvements to the Park; and leading the Park cleanup and landscaping work at the August 4th event. It also involved monitoring the Park's condition several times a day following the cleanup, removing graffiti and continual maintenance.



**Reclaiming a waterfront park and surrounding properties from graffiti vandals**



Mohammed Nuru (DPW) and Tom Carter (Port) meet with representatives of the City's law enforcement agencies.

### ***Agency Partners:***

DPW and Port staffs began the planning process for the Warm Water Cove Graffiti Vandalism Project by calling a meeting with representatives of the City's law enforcement agencies to request their assistance in conducting a surveillance operation and enforcing the graffiti laws at Warm Water Cove Park following the abatement action. A plan was devised to monitor the Park with human and electronic surveillance with the advice and consent of the following agencies.

### *District Attorney*

The District Attorney's lead attorney provided the prosecutorial requirements for charging graffiti arrests, and stipulated that each Warm Water Cove property owner submit a written declaration permitting the police to make an arrest if their property was vandalized. He also required that each property owner agree to refuse civil compromise if the case went to trial. (The "civil compromise" code allows defense lawyers to pay the property owner monetary damages in order to avoid going to trial and have the case dismissed.) The DA's office provided the language for the property owners' written declarations and gave written instructions on what constitutes a graffiti arrest to the police.



## SHEEDY

June 29, 2007

San Francisco Police Department  
Bayview Police Station  
201 Williams Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94124

Attn: Officer Susan A. Lavin, Star No. 4197

Dear Officer Lavin,

In an ongoing effort to clean up the area in and around our business, Sheedy Drayage Co. authorizes SFPD officers to arrest anyone for graffiti or vandalism to our property and equipment. Sheedy Drayage Co. is located at 1215 Michigan Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. Our office hours are from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday.

Our main office building entrance is located on Michigan Street between 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Streets. The property fence lines run parallel to 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Streets in the east/west direction and parallel to Michigan Street and the bay in the north/south direction. These fences are chain link on 24<sup>th</sup> Street from our office building to our yard gate opening and continues to the warehouse sidewalk. From the opposite warehouse wall there is an eight-foot plate fence, which runs to the rear property line. This plate fence runs adjacent to Warm Water Cove Park and then continues parallel to the bay. The plate fences have been covered with graffiti both on 24<sup>th</sup> Street side and the rear, bay, side. This problem has been ongoing for years and we are currently working with SFPD, Port of San Francisco and Department of Public Works to resolve the graffiti and vandalism issues. The eight-foot plate fence is our property and we do not want, allow, or encourage any graffiti or vandalism of any of our buildings, equipment or property, regardless of whether it is found within the above described boundaries.

Additionally, Sheedy Drayage Co. has not in the past, and will not in the future, agree to or enter into discussions to civilly compromise any case involving graffiti, vandalism or other damage to our property, real or personal.

Please arrest these individuals when committing such acts. If you need to contact anyone at our office to press charges, please contact me on my cell # (415) 559-9794 or Co-President, Richard Battaini at (415) 648-7171.

Best regards,

  
Roberto J. Bernard  
Safety Coordinator

CRANE AND RIGGING CONTRACTORS - SPECIALIZED & HEAVY HAULING  
TRUCKING SERVICE - CRANE RENTALS

Sheedy Drayage Co.  
1215 Michigan Street • P.O. Box 77004  
San Francisco, CA 94107-0004  
24 Hrs.: (415) 648-7171  
Fax: (415) 648-1535  
www.sheedydrayage.com  
Email: info@sheedydrayage.com

### *The San Francisco Police Department*

Having SFPD presence and support at all planning meetings was critical to gaining the property owners' support of the project. Bayview Station's liaison to the project attended every planning meeting and worked closely with the Port and the District Attorney's office to obtain the property owners' declarations so that arrests could be made. The SFPD Graffiti Unit was also an important partner, leading the surveillance operation and training Bayview officers on how to make an effective graffiti arrest. Throughout the Warm Water cove abatement and surveillance operation, SFPD was on the alert for potential vandalism. They created a strong Police presence during and after the cleanup by assigning foot patrol officers and patrol car units to monitor the area.

### *Juvenile Probation*

Juvenile Probation attended the law enforcement meeting to prepare their staff for potential arrests of juveniles as a result of the surveillance operation.

### *Pretrial Diversion*

Pretrial Diversion's Citi Program lent its support to the Graffiti Unit by leading groups of volunteers during the graffiti cleanup on August 4th.

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Corinne Woods thanks community volunteers.

### **Community Partners:**

Neighborhood Parks Council's (NPC) BlueGreenway project coordinator, Corinne Woods, joined the planning committee to develop community support for the cleanup and to encourage stewardship of the park. NPC sent alerts to its membership about the project and arranged for a San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association summer fellow to conduct a survey of what long term uses the community would like to see for the park.

*GreenTrustSF*, a community-based organization dedicated to realizing a greener Central Waterfront, supported the project by promoting the cleanup to its membership and by posting announcements in Dog Patch and Potrero Hill.

*Supervisor Sophie Maxwell* lent her support, and her appointee to the Graffiti Advisory Board, Robin Talmadge, helped conduct outreach by contacting community organizations on Potrero Hill.

*SF Green Connect* helped to promote the August 4th cleanup and sign up volunteers on its website. Green Connect staff also organized and served the barbecue lunch that followed the cleanup.

Clean Team Sponsors: *Norcal Waste Systems* provided their staff and barbecue equipment to help prepare lunch, while *Walgreens* provided water for the volunteers.



## Property Owners

### *Warm Water Cove Property Owners / Businesses*

After securing the cooperation of City's Law Enforcement agencies, project organizers invited the businesses who owned or leased properties on 24th and 23rd Street to a meeting to learn about the Warm Water Cove Park graffiti vandalism project. (All of the properties are privately owned with the exception of the Park, 2/3rds of which is Port property; Mirant Corporation owns 1/3 of the park as a BCDC easement.) All but one of the property owners attended the meeting and agreed to support the project by abating their graffiti. Public Works offered the department's assistance on a one-time basis to those property owners who needed help. They were also asked to participate in the surveillance operation by giving the Police written permission to enforce the graffiti laws if anyone was caught vandalizing their property and by declaring that they would not civilly compromise the case in the event that an arrest was made. Each business agreed to sign a written declaration to that effect.

Two of the property owners contributed to the success of the project by doing above and beyond what was asked of them.



Mirant facility after abatement.



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Sheedy Fence

*Mirant Corporation*

In the month leading up to the volunteer cleanup, Mirant Corporation, the energy company that owns and operates the power plant at the end of 23rd Street, removed all of the graffiti that covered their complex of buildings and erected a security fence to prevent vandalism from reoccurring. They also supported the surveillance operation by allowing the police to use their 24-hour surveillance cameras to monitor Sheedy's fence during the surveillance operation. Their parent company, Southern Energy, showed its support by underwriting the cost of the volunteers' lunch. They even sent a team of volunteers to participate in the cleanup event.

*Sheedy Drayage*

Sheedy Drayage, the 100 year-old engineering company that owns the property and heavily tagged fence bordering the south side of Warm Water Cove Park, painted their building on 24th Street and allowed the volunteers to paint over the graffiti that covered their fence. During the weeks leading up to August 4th, they enabled the police to make several arrests by reporting acts of vandalism in progress. The company also made a financial contribution to the event and expressed an interest in commissioning a labor mural on their fence.



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WWWCG



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### *Old Sugar Warehouses*

The properties that occupy the city block bounded by 23rd and 24th Street and Illinois Street to the Bay are owned by the Patricia Steinmuller Trust of Beverly Hills and are managed by Harrigan Weigenmuller Property Management of San Francisco. These structures include three former sugar warehouses and a large storage shed. The facades of two of the warehouses were extensively vandalized. The vacant warehouse occupying the point across from Warm Water Cove Park was under renovation throughout the summer and could not be abated by the owner until repairs to the exterior were completed. By the end of November the building was painted for the new tenant. However, DPW and SFPD Graffiti Units were permitted to abate the shed on the south side of the block as part of the August 4th cleanup. Volunteers painted over the graffiti on the lower portion of the other warehouse; however the high graffiti on the rear of the building could not be reached. The property owner said that it would be removed in January 2008.



## Park Improvements

During June and July, Port Maintenance staff made improvements to the park in preparation for the community cleanup. First, their gardeners weeded and mowed the main park area and brought in the California Conservation Corps to remove overgrown fennel around the cove. Next, Port heavy equipment operators removed rubble and the remains of an illegal skateboard ramp from the back end of the park, leveling the ground and creating a path. In the weeks leading up to the event, crews slurried the heavily-tagged park pathways and the sidewalks on 24th St. Eighteen trees were trimmed and power washed to remove graffiti from their trunks; a tree house was removed from one of them. The Port's Maintenance Department also replaced every vandalized sign in the park. The Port is working with PG&E to improve lighting on 24th Street leading to the Park and in the Park itself as a means to deter vandalism.

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## Community Outreach

The Neighborhood Parks Council’s BlueGreenway coordinator led the effort to gain community support for the Warm Water Cover project, asking neighborhood groups to notify their members about the cleanup and encourage them to volunteer. The District 10 representative to the Graffiti Advisory Board also helped with outreach. Together, they recruited many of volunteers who participated in the cleanup, including members of Plan Potrero, Potrero Boosters, Dogpatch Neighbors and Dog Patch Dogs. DPW provided and distributed an event flyer to Warm Water Cove businesses and to heads of organizations to post in their neighborhoods and e-mail to their members. The event was also promoted on the Neighborhood Parks Council and SF Connect websites and e-mail messages went out to their mailing lists to reach a citywide audience and recruit volunteers.



**The difference between graffiti and art is permission.**

In the days leading up to the cleanup, a group of graffiti vandals, local artists and residents sent e-mails to Green Connect to oppose the project, because they viewed the graffiti as an important part of Dogpatch culture and history. They accused the City of “whitewashing art” and used the media to promote their point-of-view. Director of Public Works Fred V. Abadi and Director of Port Monique Moyer responded to their e-mails by issuing a joint statement regarding the City’s position on Warm Water Cove graffiti vandalism. DPW and Port officials were interviewed for news stories that ran in the two daily newspapers and on television news broadcasts, highlighting the City’s efforts to clean up the park and make it safe and a place that families can enjoy.

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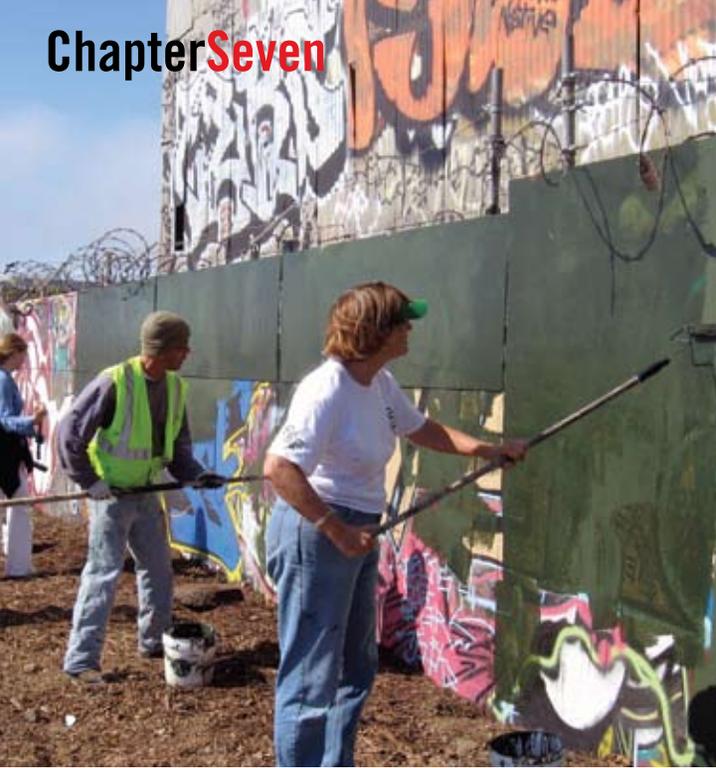


### Volunteer Event

More than 100 community volunteers responded to the invitation to remove the graffiti from Warm Water Cove, joining organizers at the park at 9 a.m. on August 4th. Despite threats to disrupt the volunteers' efforts, only a few protesters made an appearance, and the cleanup was a big success.

Under the supervision of DPW's Graffiti Unit, Port painters, and Pretrial Diversion, scores of volunteers, supplied with buckets of green paint, covered more than 46,000 square feet of graffiti that covered the long Sheedy fence and many private property walls on 23rd and 24th Streets. According to DPW, this was the most graffiti ever removed during a volunteer cleanup activity.





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Other volunteers, including Mayor Gavin Newsom, worked to beautify the park, painting the picnic tables, benches and trash cans; spreading bark chips over the lawn to prevent weeds from growing; and removing litter from the shoreline. The Black Rock Foundation was present and is interested in participating in the potential development of the Park as an art venue.

After the graffiti was removed from the park, Port ironworkers replaced the defaced park signs with new signage, and posted anti-graffiti signs on the Sheedy fence to warn the taggers that graffiti would no longer be tolerated at Warm Water Cove.

The cleanup was completed by noon, and the new park was dedicated with a ‘Ceremony to the Four Winds’ led by DPW Community Programs Director Liz Lerma, after which volunteers spread 2,000 native wildflower seeds on the park grounds. The event concluded with a barbecue picnic lunch for everyone who helped out.



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WWWC



### Surveillance

The surveillance operation, led by the San Francisco Police Department, began at 2 p.m. on Saturday afternoon of the cleanup and was conducted through Sunday afternoon. Those involved in setting up the surveillance included the Police liaison, the SF Graffiti Unit, property owners with surveillance capabilities, and a retired law enforcement officer who conducted surveillance from his boat. The SFPD Graffiti Unit conducted the surveillance, with the help of Mirant's video camera operators, who monitored the freshly painted Sheedy fence. Two foot patrol officers and squad cars patrolled the area; however, due to all the publicity generated by the media coverage and the presence of police in the area before, during and after the volunteer cleanup no acts of vandalism occurred.

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### Ongoing Maintenance and Enforcement

Since August 4th, the park has remained free of graffiti thanks to the vigilance of the Department of Public Works, Port staff and the Police, who are united in their resolve to keep taggers from returning to the park. Isolated acts of vandalism have occurred on park property and on the Sheedy buildings and fence. However, any new graffiti has been quickly removed.

DPW and Port staffs and SFPD officers continue to visit the park on a daily basis, and report any new vandalism to Port Maintenance. Sheedy Cranes is monitoring and abating the fence. Pretrial Diversion volunteers returned to the Cove to paint over the graffiti that could not be removed on August 4th due to the tides.



## ChapterNine



As the word spreads, Warm Water Cove Park is beginning to attract more local people, who walk their dogs, have a picnic lunch or just come to enjoy the view. Groups of taggers no longer vandalize the park in the daylight as they used to do in the past. It is the hope of Warm Water Cove Park organizers that the community will some day become a steward of the park.



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### Future Planning

The Warm Water Cove cleanup was the first step in the creation of a new community park that will be part of the BlueGreenway extension of the Bay Water Trail from AT&T Park to Candlestick Point. It is the Port's vision to have parks at five to seven minute walking intervals along the eastern shoreline.

Planning for Warm Water Cove Park is a community-based process. San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal (SPUR) fellow Mike Ernst initiated the planning process at the August 4th event by inviting volunteers to participate in a survey regarding future community uses for the park. Ernst has since developed a conceptual plan for the park, which he presented at a SPUR event on September 25, 2007 and repeated at the Neighborhood Park Council's October Coalition Meeting on October 10, 2007.



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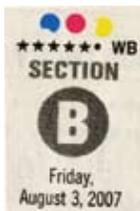




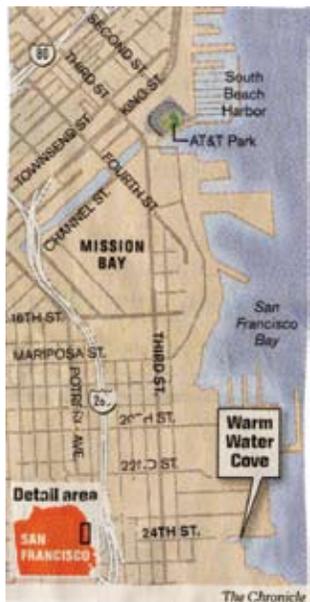
## In the News

The Warm Water Cove graffiti cleanup received prominent coverage in both print and electronic media. Pre and post-event stories ran in the San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner. Television coverage included pre-event stories by KTVU Channel 2 and event coverage by KPIX Channel 5, KTVU Channel 2, and KNTV Channel 11.

**Reclaiming a waterfront park and surrounding properties from graffiti vandals**



San Francisco Chronicle  
**BAY AREA**  
 AND CALIFORNIA



**SAN FRANCISCO**

# Graffiti fans scorn cove cleanup efforts

By Jonathan Curriel  
 CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Warm Water Cove is a park on the southern waterfront of San Francisco that doesn't get much traffic from tourists, or even San Franciscans. It does have a devoted group of regulars, however — dog walkers, musicians who enjoy the acoustics, and graffiti artists who have transformed walls into a cacophony of scribbles and images.

It's the graffiti that has led to a bat-

tle in the park on the far edge of the Dogpatch neighborhood. The city plans to provide volunteers with buckets and paintbrushes Saturday to whitewash the walls as part of a broader attempt to make the park a cleaner place where someone might want to bring a family. The graffitiists' defenders say the cleanup is another attempt to gentrify San Francisco and erase its unique character.

"This is a war," Mohammed Nuru, the Department of Public Works' deputy director for operations, said

Thursday as he stood at the cove, near the intersection of Third and 24th streets. "A lot of these (graffiti) tags we see in other San Francisco neighborhoods. I respect art and appreciate art, but this is unacceptable. It's against the law to tag or paint or do anything on anybody's property."

For the past few weeks, the Department of Public Works has been spiffing up the park — putting down new asphalt, clearing tires out of the cove, and painting over some of the graffiti

► **GRAFFITI:** Page B4

## Admirers defend graffiti at cove

► **GRAFFITI**  
 From Page B1

that covers the walls.

New graffiti, however, has returned, and the cove and its grounds are still littered with cans, papers, rusting shopping carts and other refuse. On Saturday, a group of volunteers — with the blessing of Nuru and Public Works — is going to help complete the makeover of Warm Water Cove.

Graffiti advocates are united: The weeds and trash can go. The wall etchings should stay.

"It's a case of naivete," said Brian Barnecl, an artist from Hayes Valley who often bikes to Warm Water Cove. "They think they're doing something right, but they have a narrow point of view."

Graffiti advocates have bombarded Nuru's office with complaints. Some may attend Saturday's cleanup to protest. Many have come by the cove this week, prompted by alerts on artist-oriented Web sites and by word of mouth, to inspect the work that Public Works crews have already done.

Ert O'Hara, who works close to the cove in her job as Web editor for the online art magazine Juxtapoz, called Saturday's cleanup "an inappropriate action."

"I'm not glad they're covering up the artworks," O'Hara said. "I strongly support any environmental cleanup, but I don't think the graffiti is an environmental issue, nor do I think it's a personal safety issue."

Nuru said the graffiti at Warm Water Cove is a blight that illegally defaces property. Some of it is on trees; it's on fences, building walls



MIKE KANE / The Chronicle

Mohammed Nuru of the Department of Public Works shows a wall with graffiti at Warm Water Cove.

### Cove cleanup

The Warm Water Cove cleanup is scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday. The park is located near Third and 24th streets on San Francisco's southern waterfront.

and picnic tables. By ignoring the spray-painting, he said, the city only encourages taggers to spread their marks to other parts of San Francisco.

The city is planning to put surveillance cameras around the cove to catch the graffiti artists and taggers who visit at all hours of the day and night, Nuru said. "We are going to get these guys."

Saturday's cleanup is being coordinated by Green Connect and other volunteer environmental groups in San Francisco. Among those planning to help is Stephen Antonaros, an architect who lives on Third Street near the cove.

After going online and seeing photos of the graffiti surrounding Warm Water Cove, he initially

had second thoughts about joining a team that would paint it over.

"I could see the artistic element looked enticing," Antonaros said. "Some of the stuff is colorful and doesn't seem to be hurting people."

But after visiting the cove and seeing the graffiti for himself — and after seeing the recent additions, some of which feature such phrases as "addicted to crime" — Antonaros recommitted himself to Saturday's cleanup.

Antonaros has also seen remnants of drug use at the cove.

"It's really a place where junkies and homeless people have congregated," he said. "It's quite messy. The graffiti is out of the way — it's not public-presentation art. It's really quite lost and inaccessible."

It's the cove's inaccessibility — its off-the-beaten-path location that, nevertheless, offers stunning views of the bay and the East Bay hills — that helps give the graffiti there a special appeal, say those who want the spray-paintings to stay.

Clayton Blaha, 22, a music ana-

lyst for a music Web site whose offices are near the area, visited the cove Thursday, while Nuru was there, and hinted that he had contributed to its array of colorful markings. Blaha said the sprayed images were real art, like the images that once graced the Berlin Wall and today are valued work.

Standing near a wall at the cove that was freshly painted and graffiti-free two months ago — but is now full of spray-painted symbols, sayings and images — Blaha said Saturday's anti-graffiti effort was a waste of time, money and resources.

"It's counterproductive," Blaha said. "The things they associate with graffiti — all the social ills like gang violence — are pretty much remedied by having a place for us to do this sort of thing here. It's essentially a playground for those who are interested in street art and art in general. They're shooting themselves in the foot by pushing it farther into the city."

E-mail Jonathan Curriel at [jcuriel@sfgchronicle.com](mailto:jcuriel@sfgchronicle.com).

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SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2007

San Francisco Chronicle B3

## BAY AREA AND CALIFORNIA



### SAN FRANCISCO

## Graffiti or art? Park cleanup renews debate

By Bob Egelko

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

As a city volunteer rolled dark green paint over a bright jumble of scrawlings and imagery on a fence at Warm Water Cove Park on Saturday, Paul Barron stood alongside holding a yellow sign with an ornately lettered message: "Celebrate Graffiti!"

"Painting over artwork isn't gonna prevent any crime," Barron, who described himself as a professional muralist and graffiti artist, told reporters who had come to witness a culture clash on a balmy morning at San Francisco's southern waterfront. "They're taking away our voice . . . killing the only pure form of art."

One of the cleanup volunteers had a retort.

"I do artwork. This isn't art," said the 57-year-old man, a nearby resident who asked to be identified only as Gary N. because he feared retaliation. Defining art, and deciding where it belonged, shouldn't be

► **CLEANUP:** Page B3

Photos by MICHAEL MACOR / The Chronicle

Volunteers pitch in to paint over graffiti on a long stretch of wall facing Warm Water Cove Park. Teams also cleaned up litter and cleared away weeds in the park.

## Reclaiming a waterfront park and surrounding properties from graffiti vandals

# Park cleanup renews debate over graffiti

► **CLEANUP**  
From Page B1

left up to "punks, thugs and vandals," he said.

Mohammed Nuru, deputy director of the city's Department of Public Works, was equally stern as he surveyed the scene.

"Whether this is art or not, no one has the right to put it on someone else's property," he said. "Graffiti adds to the deterioration of a neighborhood. It's urban blight. . . . If anyone gets seen defacing someone else's property, we will come down here and we will prosecute."

The scruffy park, near the corner of Third and 24th streets at the edge of the Dogpatch neighborhood, has been getting a makeover in the last few weeks from Public Works, which has put new asphalt on dog-walking paths and removed brush and refuse from the grounds and old tires from the cove. About 75 volunteers turned out Saturday to clear away litter and weeds and paint over the graffiti covering two long fences that border the Sheedy Drayage Co.

"We're going to make the park cleaner and more family friendly," said Dariush Kayhan, executive director of San Francisco Connect, a nonprofit that pro-

vides volunteers for city projects.

Mayor Gavin Newsom showed up at midmorning, strolled the grounds shaking hands and talked about alternatives for graffiti artists, like those the city started hiring six months ago to decorate the metal boxes alongside traffic signals in the Mission District. The city is trying to "invest in programs that promote appropriate places for graffiti," which might include a public wall in Warm Water Cove Park, he told a reporter.

Other officials offered a conciliatory message.

"Artists, please sign up to engage in a dialogue about how art fits in Warm Water Cove Park," Corinne Woods of the city Neighborhood Parks Council told the gathering at the start of the cleanup.

"It's already here," called out Barron, still waving his "Celebrate Graffiti!" sign.

"We understand, but it's private property," said Woods, project manager of Blue Greenway, the planned shoreline trail extension from China Basin to Candlestick Point.

Elsewhere on the grounds, Bill Daniel, 48, a filmmaker and photographer, was lamenting the paint rollers as symbols of diminished freedom. While he regular-



Mohammed Nuru of the Department of Public Works speaks to pro-graffiti protesters, including Paul Barron (background).

ly cleans up graffiti outside the photo shop where he works, there's a difference between prime commercial real estate and public space like a park, he said.

"What difference does this side of the fence matter to that company?" Daniel said. "There was no graffiti on the east side of the Berlin Wall. All the graffiti was on the

west side. . . . San Francisco used to have a reputation as a city of artists."

Nearby, Richard Rockwell, 81, rolled green paint over the last traces of an elaborate red-and-white abstract image on the fence and admitted he has mixed feelings.

Rockwell said he regularly

walks in the park, and "the graffiti never bothered me. Some of it I like."

Acknowledging that cleanups are usually temporary, he said the mono-colored fence probably amounts to "a brand new palette."

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SF 3

LOCAL

# Graffiti showdown set at 'Toxic Tire Beach'

Warm Water Cove neighbors plan cleanup day, but taggers won't take it sitting down

By Alexandria Rocha  
Examiner Staff Writer

A small park in southeastern San Francisco has become the site of a turf war between graffiti artists who consider the space their blank canvas and community members who plan to stage a coup with paintbrushes and trash bags this weekend.

More than 100 volunteers are expected to join city officials at Warm Water Cove on Saturday to clean and paint the park and rally for neighborhood leaders to become stewards of the desolate space where 24th Street hits the Bay.

Graffiti artists and members of the underground community who have been throwing unannounced concerts and parties there without proper permits are also expected to show up in force.

Warm Water Cove — also known as Toxic Tire Beach — is two acres of dry, yellow grass with one concrete bench, ailing trees and heaps of debris. Every inch — from the trees to the sidewalks and the bench — is covered in graffiti, as if the park



Neighbors of Warm Water Cove want to clean up the graffiti that has marred the park for decades. — Cindy Chew/The Examiner

has been used as a training ground for taggers and graffiti artists for decades.

In some ways, it has. The Port of San Francisco, which owns the park, has only one gardener who takes care of six parks and cannot keep up with the graffiti and other vandalism at Warm Water Cove. Graffiti artists and musicians took the lack of cleanup as a sign that The City

was turning a blind eye and claimed the park as their own.

"This is one of the few areas in The City where there is free public art that still goes on in an unregulated and unrestricted way," said singer and guitar player Josh Babcock, whose band, the Society of Rockets, has played an annual show at the park since 2002 — without a permit.

But with the new Third Street

light rail operating a few blocks from the park and more residential developments popping up nearby, the park is an area demanding more attention, said Mohammed Nuru, deputy director of The City's Department of Public Works, which is one of the agencies sponsoring Saturday's cleanup.

"The community is trying very hard to make the park as

usable as it can," he said.

Corinne Woods, who walks her dog at the park and works part time for the San Francisco Neighborhood Parks Council, said people are nervous to visit Warm Water Cove because graffiti artists have dominated it for years.

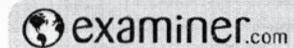
"It just doesn't seem fair that a small group of people can intimidate the rest of the community," Woods said. "I love art in the parks, but it has to go through the appropriate process."

Area merchants have also become fed up with the vandalism, Nuru said, adding that the graffiti has begun to spill out onto neighboring businesses, which are required by law to remove the graffiti within 30 days.

Graffiti artists say a one-day cleanup will only make the situation worse.

One graffiti artist who did not want to give his name said there would likely be a backlash of tagging — considered lower-quality art than graffiti — at the park after the Saturday pickup.

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ONLINE TODAY: Do you think of graffiti as public art or vandalism?

## Reclaiming a waterfront park and surrounding properties from graffiti vandals

Tuesday, August 7, 2007



Above, Gene Forcucci, 79, shows Ralph Graham images he made during last weekend's cleanup of Warm Water Cove, which had been littered with graffiti, right. — Above: Jason Steinberg/Special to The Examiner, right: Cindy Chew/The Examiner

# Cove may not be graffiti-free long

## Weekend work by volunteers to clean up 'Toxic Tire Beach' could be undone by taggers

By Alexandria Rocha  
Examiner Staff Writer

While a weekend crusade to clean up a blighted park in southeastern San Francisco has so far kept graffiti artists at bay, it could be a fleeting effort.

More than 100 volunteers flocked to Warm Water Cove to pick up trash, trim trees and paint over benches, trash cans and a wall covered in graffiti Saturday.

Not a drop of spray paint could be found at the park Monday morning. By the afternoon, however, someone had used a black marker to tag the wall, which had been painted forest green three days before.

Mohammed Nuru, deputy director of the San Francisco Department of Public Works, which helped sponsor Saturday's cleanup, said he has launched an investigation into the tagging — alerting police and checking a surveillance camera located on one of the nearby properties.

"Nobody should be touching the wall, period," Nuru said. "Any form of defacing property, whether it's with marker or spray paint, is considered tagging. We're going to go to battle for this for a while."

The cleanup of Warm Water Cove — also called Toxic Tire Beach — has ignited a battle between community members and graffiti artists who say The City has neglected the park for years. The artists say they gave the park a purpose when it

had none — it has long been used for unauthorized music shows and a workspace for graffiti artists.

"People want to go and practice what they do," said Josh Couto, a San Francisco filmmaker and photographer who said he grew up as a graffiti artist in Southern California. "I thought it had a big upside."

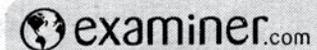
Community members, however, say graffiti artists do not have permission to use the wall as a canvas. Property owners are required to remove graffiti within 30 days, said Nuru, who has also said the park is demanding more attention now that the Third Street light rail is operating a few blocks away.

Community members are determined to take back the desolate park, which sits at the end of 24th Street by the Bay, possibly turning it into an off-leash dog park, adding more barbecue pits and even allowing some form of regulated art projects.

"We're not as enthusiastic about graffiti art," said Corrine Woods, who works part-time for the San Francisco Neighborhood Parks Council. "There were even tags on the art. It creates blight."

In the meantime, the Port of San Francisco has committed more resources to maintaining the park, Port spokeswoman Renee Dunn said. The San Francisco Police Department and the Department of Public Works are also visiting the park on a daily basis.

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**ONLINE TODAY:** How soon before the walls are covered in graffiti?

Warm Water Cove Graffiti Vandalism Project 2007



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THE POTRERO VIEW September 2007

## Volunteers Help Green Potrero

### Neighbors Pitch-In on Park and School Improvement Projects

Last month 120 volunteers descended upon the neglected, graffiti-covered patch of waterfront park known as Warm Water Cove, located at the eastern end of 24th Street. In a matter of hours 750 pounds of debris and 5,000 pounds of weeds were removed, 30 yards of chips were spread and 18 trees trimmed and/or re-staked. Painters, moving in well-orchestrated small bands, covered more than 46,000 square feet of graffiti on walls and fences. After a BBQ the assembled volunteers, who were coordinated by SF Connect, National Parks Council, and GreenTrustSF, and Department of Public Works staff spread 200 pounds of native wildflower seeds throughout the newly cleaned park.

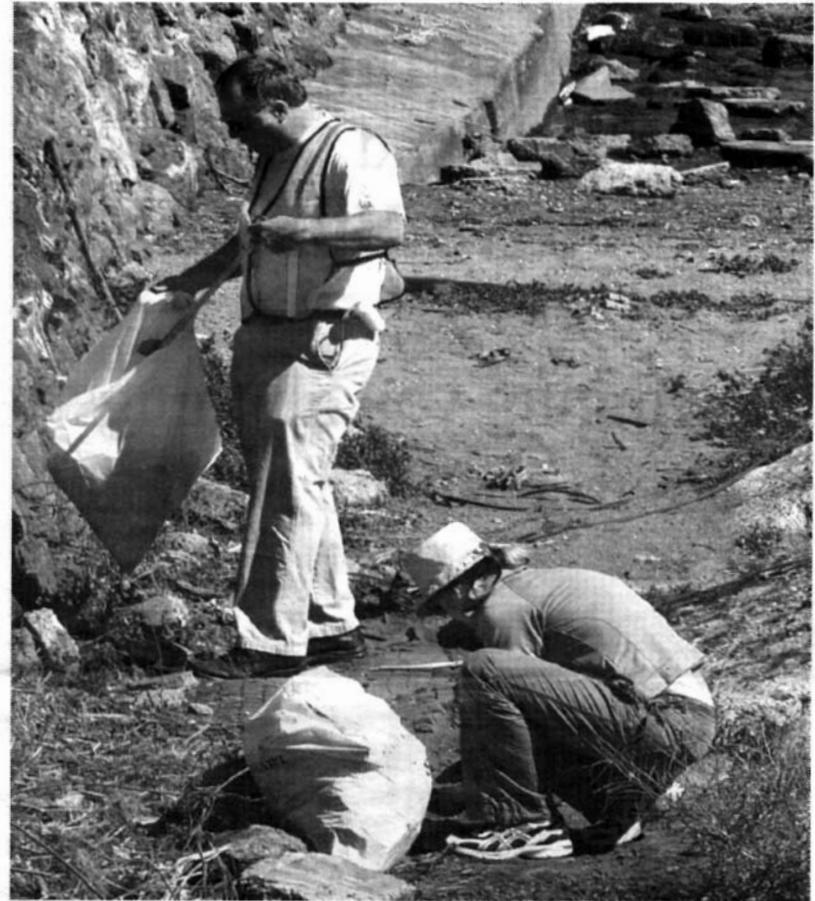


Photo by Michael Rhea

**Reclaiming a waterfront park and surrounding properties from graffiti vandals**





# Warm Water Cove Graffiti Vandalism Project 2007