

Talking And Writing Points In response to Final NPS Plan for Point Reyes Seashore

SUMMARY

In its final general management plan amendment (gmpa) for point reyes, the National Park Service has handed over 28,000 acres of public land to a special interest group—ranchers.

RANCHING

- Ranching at the Seashore benefits an entrenched, well-connected minority at the expense of the public and the environment.
- The Organic Act directs the NPS to preserve natural and historic resources. There is no law requiring NPS to keep ranchers in business. There is no requirement that historic ranches be operational. The ranches should be preserved to serve as educational and cultural resources, not commercial businesses.
- Wealthy, politically connected ranchers with industry allies continue to occupy the Seashore 58 years after it became a national park in 1962. Under the NPS's management plan, the ranchers received unprecedented 20-year leases and will remain in the park. They are now looking at how to extend those leases and remain in the park permanently.
- The public paid the equivalent of \$400 million in today's dollars to buy the ranches for the national seashore. Ranchers willingly sold their land to the NPS during the 1960s and 70s. Their agreement allowed them to remain in the park for up to 25 years. They never left.
- The public has since paid millions of dollars in subsidies to keep the Seashore ranches going, but many ranchers bought land outside the park. Some collected millions more through MALT (Marin Agricultural Land Trust) conservation easements.
- Seashore ranchers unfairly compete with ranchers outside the park. They pay no property taxes; and pay token rents and below-market grazing fees. The NPS maintains the ranches, including buildings, fencing, roads, and managing "problem" wildlife.
- The NPS says it received \$500,000 from leasing the ranches last year. It spent more than double that amount to maintain and manage them.
- Ranches at the Seashore contribute a fraction to the county's more than \$620 million budget—about \$16 million in 2019. Tourism at Point Reyes Seashore alone brought more than \$100 million to the county. Surveys show that the primary reason visitors come to the Seashore is to see wildlife.
- Because of decreased demand for beef and dairy products, ranchers are hedging their bets for the future. The new plan allows them to raise sheep, goats, chickens, pigs, and commercial crops. Park predators— coyotes, cougars, bobcats, foxes—will be killed when they inevitably prey on small livestock. The plan also allows ranchers to host private events and guest stays. This so-called "diversification" (of revenues) is intended to keep the ranches in the Seashore in business.
- Allowing Elk to be shot for competing with ranching activities opens the door to culling other wildlife such as coyotes, cougars, bobcats and foxes for preying on small livestock.
- Commercial crops diminish wildlife habitat and lands for public recreation.

TULE ELK

- Tule elk are endemic to California and are found in no other national park.
- A half million Tule elk once roamed Northern California. They were hunted to near extinction in the 19th century. A remote herd was discovered and some elk were moved to Point Reyes National Seashore in 1978 in an effort to save the species.
- Under its new management plan, the NPS will shoot the free-roaming elk to manage the population at 120. (It will likely be more than this)
- The largest elk herd at the Seashore—about 500 animals—is confined behind an 8- foot fence at the Tomales Point in order to prevent the elk from foraging on park grasslands ranchers say they need for their cattle.
- During the 2014-2016 drought, half the confined elk herd died from malnutrition and thirst. The NPS covered it up.
- Ponds and other water sources in the elk reserve have now gone dry.
- As a policy, the NPS does not supplement food or water for the wildlife. This policy has thus far extended to some 500 elk, though the elk are fenced in.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS FROM RANCHES

- Cattle are the number one source of greenhouse gases at the Seashore.
- Cattle manure is sprayed on parkland and runs off into creeks.
- Kehoe Creek is one of the most polluted creeks in California. It flows into the Pacific, impacting both freshwater and marine species.
- Cattle manure carries a contagious fatal disease, Johne's disease, that has infected Tule elk in the park. For this reason, the elk cannot be relocated.
- The earth is undergoing an unprecedented species die off. Animal agriculture is a major cause of species loss globally.
- One hundred plants and animals at Point Reyes are listed as rare, threatened and endangered.

PUBLIC SENTIMENT

- The public submitted 7,600 comments to the Park Service's draft plan for ranching at the Seashore. More than 90 percent of the comments opposed ranching or killing wildlife to accommodate cattle ranching.
- There are more cattle in the national seashore than there are Tule elk in the world.
- The 6,000 Cattle at the Seashore outnumber native Tule elk 10 to 1.

PUBLIC LAND IS FOR THE PUBLIC

- The public is unwelcomed on public lands leased to ranchers. Locked gates prevent access to trails and park visitors have at times been confronted by ranchers when accessing trails.
- The public is essentially denied access to one-third of the national seashore—28,000 acres Americans bought and own in common.

For more information and to take action, visit <https://restoreptreyesseashore.org/elkfilm>

Resource Renewal Institute, RRI.org