

**Staff Report Summary of General Scoping Process
Point Reyes National Seashore
General Management Plan Update
January 2000**

Introduction

This staff report is an interim step in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process between the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare and the publication of the draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS). The Staff Report facilitates the public and Citizen's Advisory Commission involvement in the scoping process. The General Management Plan scoping included a 60-day public comment period that ended on November 30, 1999. This Staff Report consolidates the major issues brought up by the public. It does not list all the specific comments made by the public.

It includes the following:

1. Summary of public comment, both written comments and verbal comments from the three public workshops held in early October 1999 in Point Reyes Station, Santa Rosa, and San Rafael, as well as verbal testimony from the October 23rd Citizen's Advisory Commission meeting in Point Reyes Station.
2. Identification of issues raised by public comment, where Citizen Advisory Commission action/input is appropriate or which may influence decision points.
3. Discussion of the issues, including response/clarification of questions raised during the public scoping period.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Following is a summary of public comments on the Point Reyes National Seashore General Management Plan update, received during the 60-day public comment period. The summary includes written comments, verbal comments from the three public workshops, and verbal testimony from the Citizen's Advisory Commission meeting. There is some overlap as individuals may have attended one or more meetings as well as provided written comments. Written comments and verbal comments are given equal consideration during the scoping process.

Over 100 letters were received during the scoping period – including letters from agencies, organizations, and individuals. The agencies and organizations that submitted written responses included: American Endurance Ride Conference, American Lands Alliance, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Bolinas Community Public Utility District, Brown Bag Farms, California Department of Transportation, Californians Organized to Acquire Access to State Tidelands, Cheesemans' Ecology/Birding Safaris, Coastwalk, Committee for the Preservation of Tule Elk, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Forum of Marin, Gardener's Guild Incorporated, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore Citizens' Advisory

Commission, Marin Audubon Society, Marin County Farm Bureau, Marin Horse Council, Muir Beach Enviro, National Parks and Conservation Association, North American Trail Ride Conference, Sonoma County Horse Council, and the Tomales Bay Association.

Park staff held three public workshops at the onset of the scoping period. The workshops focussed on what qualities the participants valued most about the Seashore and what issues people thought should be addressed in the GMP. The workshops were held in Point Reyes Station (October 9), Santa Rosa (October 12), and San Rafael (October 14). Attendance at the meetings varied - 29 people attended the meeting in Point Reyes Station, 9 people each attended the meetings in Santa Rosa and San Rafael. Representatives from the following agencies/organizations participated in these public forums: Bicycle Trails Council of Marin, California Department of Fish & Game, California Native Plant Society (Marin Chapter), Californians Organized to Acquire Access to State Tidelands (COAAST), Coastwalk, Environmental Action Committee, GGNRA/Pt. Reyes Citizen's Advisory Commission, Inverness Ridge Association, Marin County Farm Bureau, Marin Horse Council, MOW!, Point Reyes Village Association, Sierra Club (Marin Group), and Sonoma County Horse Council.

Verbal testimony was also taken at the Citizen's Advisory Commission meeting in Point Reyes Station on October 23rd. Three individuals spoke on the GMP at that meeting.

COMMENT GROUPS

Land Use Planning

The following is a summary of public comments related to relationships with adjoining public lands, park actions affecting local communities, wilderness, transportation issues, regional planning, and zoning inconsistencies.

- Limit development within the Seashore (e.g. no new roads or parking lots).
- Maintain all current activities and level of development in the Seashore.
- Preserve the rural character found in the West Marin area.
- Address transportation issues (e.g. traffic congestion) and explore possible alternative solutions (e.g. shuttle services within Seashore and public transit to Seashore).
- Assess and improve physical condition of ranch structures.
- Improve coordination with local agencies on planning issues.
- Accommodate trail use by hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists.
- Do not renew agricultural leases when they expire.

- ❑ Conflict between park policy and procedures and adjoining or nearby residential areas (Vision Fire).
- ❑ Develop a Comprehensive Trails Plan for the Park – which includes an inventory of existing trails and identifies potential new trails. Ensure proper erosion control measures are taken for existing trails – consider rerouting existing trails around erosion areas. Summarize and analyze existing trail system in Seashore and GGNRA and existing impacts to vegetation and wildlife resources. Increase public/private partnerships with recreational trail users.
- ❑ Update Range Management Plan to do the following: 1) Establish baseline for runoff and regulate and monitor runoff from the various agricultural operations on the park watershed; 2) Develop a plan to fence off critical soils and slopes so that the intensity of grazing can be appropriately adjusted to protect the resource; 3) Fence off riparian areas; and 4) Park should minimize impacts to fledglings killed by farm equipment. Feedstock ready for harvest provides nesting habitat for native birds. Concerned about range management activities that may contribute to sedimentation, nutrient runoff, destruction of native habitat and impacts on listed species. Park should increase effort to integrate ranching activities with natural resource protection.
- ❑ Concerned about commercial airplane traffic/noise and increasing overflights by smaller private planes.
- ❑ Maintain US Coast Guard’s access to lighthouse area to conduct maintenance and emergency repairs.
- ❑ Park should coordinate with State Parks to jointly administer all lands surrounding Tomales Bay.
- ❑ Lease out east side of Tomales Bay to increase available area for oyster farming.
- ❑ Park should acquire private lands around the entire peninsula, especially around Tomales Bay.
- ❑ Park should develop alternatives that provide the highest level of protection for park’s designated wilderness area and the wildlife found there.
- ❑ Park should make effort to better integrate recreational activities with resource protection. Wherever new recreational facilities are proposed, natural resource protections should be a condition of use.
- ❑ Park should petition California Department of Fish & Game to fully protect the Seashore’s marine resources by establishing no-take/no-harm areas.
- ❑ Fish Docks on Drakes Bay – many fuel leaks occur there – they should be eliminated. These moorings should also be enhanced to ensure safety of seal colonies.

- ❑ Park should re-evaluate expiring reservations of use and occupancy and special use permits in long-term vision for park and communities that support park. Homes and other buildings that revert to the park's possession should be maintained and used as residential structures.
- ❑ Develop car campground to provide other than hike-in camping experience.
- ❑ Maintain historic Laird's Landing buildings.
- ❑ Provide trail connections to adjacent public lands.
- ❑ Long-term planning should take a watershed approach.
- ❑ Plan's general goals should address reduction of nutrient loading from agricultural and other uses on bay and within watershed.
- ❑ Limit aquaculture areas on Tomales Bay.
- ❑ Limit commercial recreational operations throughout Seashore.
- ❑ Develop WMP in conjunction with GMP.
- ❑ Remove old radar (radio/antennae) equipment.
- ❑ Encourage partnership with neighboring rancher or a public entity or research foundation to take over ranching operations as they expire.

Comments received related to Golden Gate National Recreation Area lands:

- ❖ Continue use by equestrians on the trails in Olema Valley.
- ❖ Include GGNRA in Point Reyes GMP planning area boundary.
- ❖ Continue to maintain, and expand where practical, all other horse facilities within the GGNRA.
- ❖ Boundary between GGNRA North District lands managed by PRNS and those managed by GGNRA should be drawn on a watershed basis.
- ❖ Responsibility for management and planning of Bolinas Lagoon watershed should be done by a single park. NPS should not compound problem of multiplicity of jurisdictions with responsibilities by further dividing watersheds within its own jurisdictions.

Resource Issues

The following is a summary of concerns/issues raised by the public. The issues include concerns related to cultural resources, prescribed fire management, management of federally threatened and endangered species, and use and management of Tomales Bay.

- Trail use concerns including: types of use, maintenance, funding levels, location, feasibility of implementing seasonal closures – all to protect resources.
- Protect park resources from over commercialization and development.
- Explore restoration of Drake’s Beach Parking Lot to a wetland system.
- Retain current agricultural use to maintain the historic look of area, historic use of land, and to reduce fire load.
- As agricultural leases expire, park should ensure that natural resource protection is a condition of continued use.
- Manage exotic plant and animal species – fallow deer, feral cats – to prevent overpopulation, spread, and damage to resources.
- Define dog areas on beaches and provide enforcement for violators.
- Equestrian use (especially near streams) is resulting in resource damage and erosion.
- Will bikes be allowed in Wilderness in future if “mechanized equipment” definition changes? Park should anticipate decision and develop policy now.
- Manage coyote population to reduce impacts on livestock and public safety.
- Environmental Enhancement – plan should identify areas that are currently degraded or damaged and should address how they will be enhanced.
- Presence of commercial activities (ranching/mariculture) and their effects on maintenance, protection, and recovery of native habitat.
- Protect streams and wetlands from grazing cattle, ranchers need to maintain good fencing.
- Inventory park natural resources, including important wildlife and species.
- Ensuring the long-term protection of habitats and native species, including threatened and endangered species, that depend on them should be a major goal of GMP.
- Protection of biodiversity should be the priority.

- Maximize elk reintroduction and growing population and expand territory to southern areas of park.
- Carefully evaluate all potential environmental impacts from ranching before renewing/extending any future leases.
- Off-shore activities can result in destruction of inter and sub-tidal habitat and impact on already depleted marine resources. Park should increase efforts to better integrate off-shore activities with natural resource protection.
- Use livestock as management tool to control invasive plant species.
- Avoid use of pesticides in park.
- Identify need for protection of salmonids and salmonid habitat.
- Evaluate appropriateness of current fishing in coastal wilderness and impacts of JOC on surrounding park resources.

Visitor Needs

The following is a summary of concerns/issues raised by the public. The issues include concerns related to changing visitor demographics, concession services, and visitation and visitor needs.

- Improve equestrian access and facilities.
- Address the pressures to the park of increasing visitors.
- Morgan Horse Ranch should be maintained to perpetuate their role in American history.
- Add to/develop more at Kule Loklo.
- Remote areas of park need some basic services (e.g. payphones)
- How do the needs of people from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures vary and how do we accommodate them?
- Update/add trail signage on backcountry trails.
- Provide a water shuttle from Tomales Point to Dillon Beach.
- Redesign existing backcountry campgrounds to offer more space and privacy.
- Strengthen policy on mountain bike use.

- Education/publish materials making clear what areas of park are accessible to public – are ranches accessible?
- Park should educate kayakers about their impacts on wildlife.
- Ideas for improving visitor friendly park – more kiosks, alternative work schedules to allow longer VC hours and help with traffic congestion, develop VC station in local communities, develop program to bring school children to park.

Other

The following is a summary of concerns/issues raised by the public:

- Need to be assured of public involvement throughout the planning process.
- How will NPS implement plan if funding isn't available?
- Make sure park is protected for future generations.
- Develop educational programs and interpretive materials for the public, to protect resources.
- Continue high quality of park staff.
- Provide/protect areas for visitors with no noise (free of machines and cars).
- Volunteer programs need money and full-time/paid employee to manage program.
- Require buses to turn off engine when idling.

ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS RECOMMENDED IN THIS REPORT

1. Focussed Workshops with Users during the development of the preliminary alternatives and prior to the release of the Draft Alternatives to the public.
2. Expand planning area to include Golden Gate National Recreation Area's lands in Olema Valley – north of Bolinas/Fairfax Road.