



# GMP Amendment Planning Area

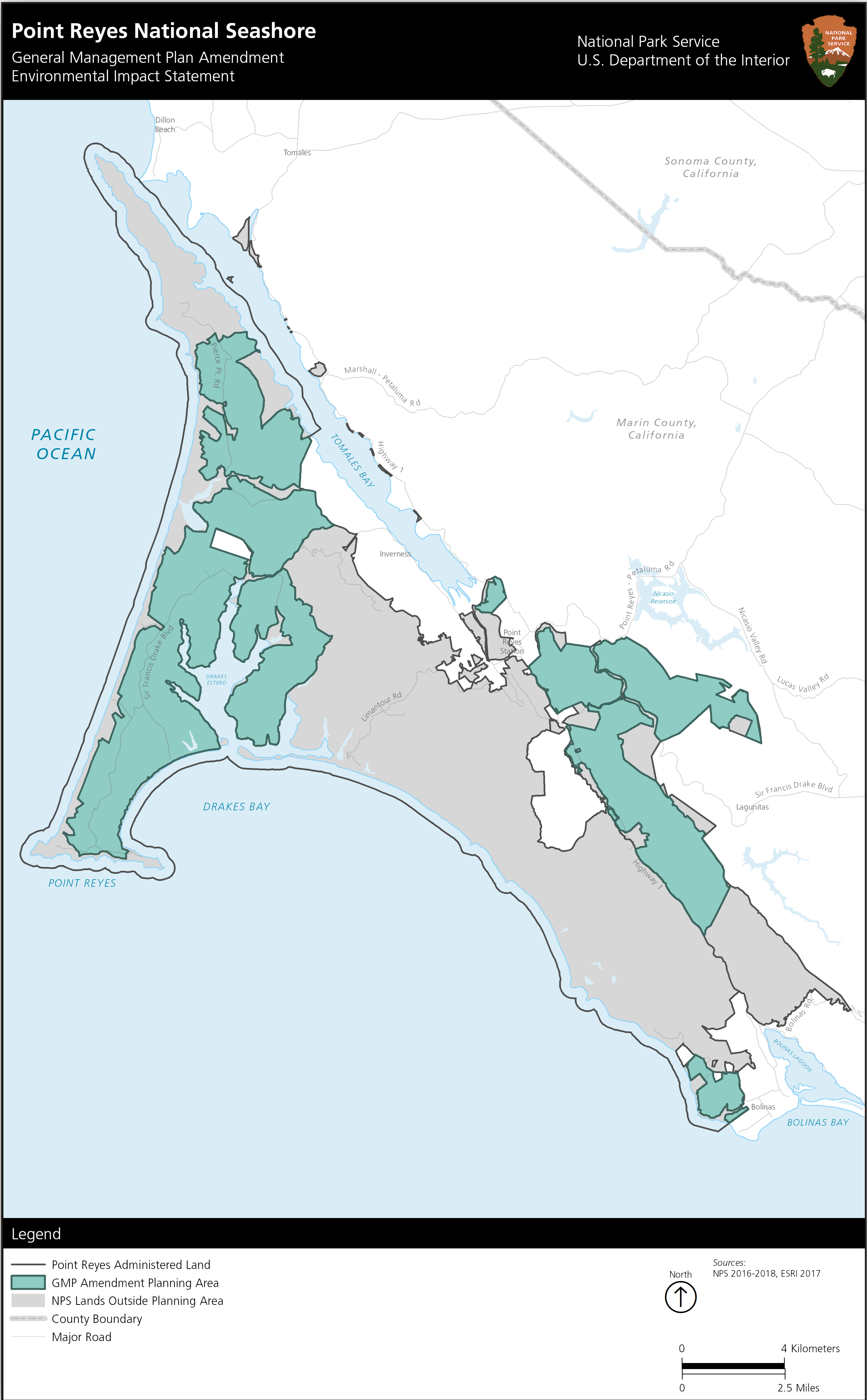
The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a General Management Plan Amendment (GMP Amendment) for Point Reyes National Seashore and the north district of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the EIS for the GMP Amendment is to establish guidance for the preservation of natural and cultural resources and the management of infrastructure and visitor use within the planning area. The alternatives evaluated in the EIS will also address the future management of tule elk and leased ranch lands.

## NEED

Action is needed at this time to address the park’s highest priority planning issues, which include the management of approximately 28,000 acres of land currently leased for ranching. Action is also needed to comply with the terms of the Settlement Agreement, which requires the GMP Amendment and EIS be completed on or before July 14, 2021.

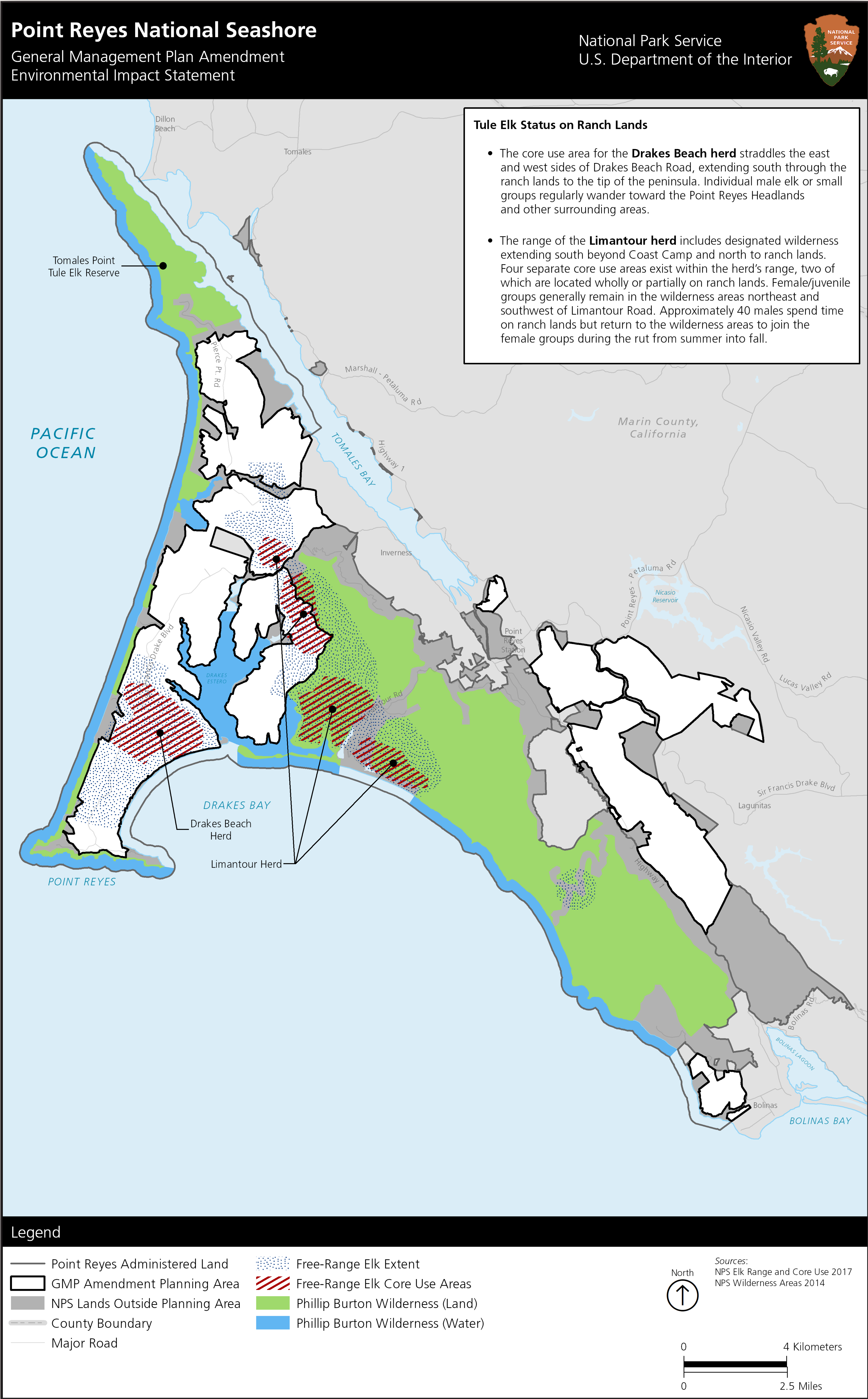






# Tule Elk on Ranch Lands

- Tule elk, the smallest subspecies of North American elk, live only in California. Tule elk were extirpated from Point Reyes by the 1860s. Consistent with Public Law 94-389, ten tule elk were successfully reintroduced to a 2,600-acre fenced wilderness reserve on Tomales Point in 1978. This enclosed herd has grown to one of the largest in California, currently comprising approximately 400 animals.
- The park’s 1998 Tule Elk Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA) established a free-ranging herd outside the reserve with an interim management limit of 250 to 350 elk. The 1998 Tule Elk Management Plan/EA did not consider the expansion of tule elk into the ranch lands.
- The free-ranging tule elk herd was established from 28 animals in 1999. There are now two independent free-ranging herds. The Drakes Beach herd was estimated at 112 animals at the end of 2017. The Limantour herd was estimated at 145 animals at the end of 2017.
- Final 2018 tule elk census numbers will be available in winter 2018/19.







# A Conservation Framework

A conservation zoning framework, described as Land Management Units (LMUs), will be applied to all action alternatives that include ranching. LMUs will be categorized as **ranch core**, **pasture**, and **range** depending on resource sensitivity. Implementation of this framework accommodates greater operational flexibility for the park ranchers while protecting park resources.

## RANGE

(nearly 70% of planning area)

Grazed or potentially grazed land supporting native vegetation, managed as a natural ecosystem.

- Authorized activities limited to regular grazing and typical range infrastructure (e.g. fencing, water development).

## PASTURE

(nearly 30% of planning area)

Grazed lands outside of range LMU used primarily for the production of livestock, comprising introduced or domesticated native forage species.

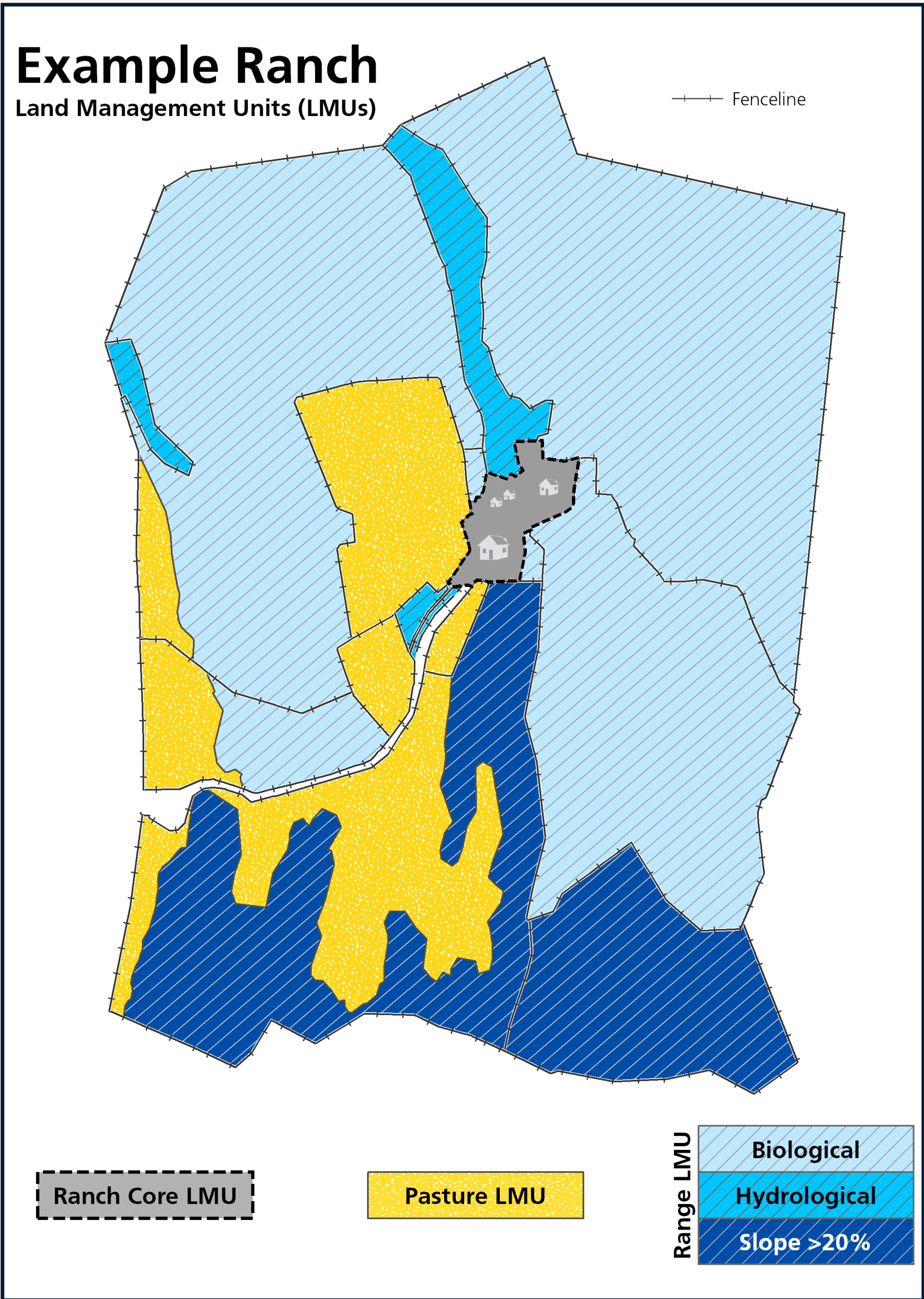
- A suite of pasture management activities, including seeding, mowing, and nutrient management would be evaluated for compatibility with resource goals depending on alternative.
- On dairies, manure management would be limited to pasture LMU.
- Pasture LMU may be refined further under individual ranch plans.
- Under some alternatives, certain livestock diversification activities and silage could occur in the pasture LMU.

## RANCH CORE

(approximately 1% of planning area)

The developed complex of buildings and structures on each individual ranch.

- Under some alternatives, up to 2.5 additional acres of disturbed land immediately adjacent to the developed complex would be available for diversification activities such as row crops and other livestock.
- Ranches without a developed complex or rancher occupied buildings would not include a Ranch Core area.
- Geographic or resource protection constraints could limit ranch core options on some individual ranches.



## RESOURCE INFORMATION USED TO IDENTIFY RANGE LMU

### Biological Resources

- Threatened and endangered species
- Rare plants
- Native grasslands
- Forest

### Cultural Resources

- Archaeological sites (locations not shown on map)

### Hydrological Resources

- Ponds
- Streams
- Wetlands

### Topography

- Slopes >20%

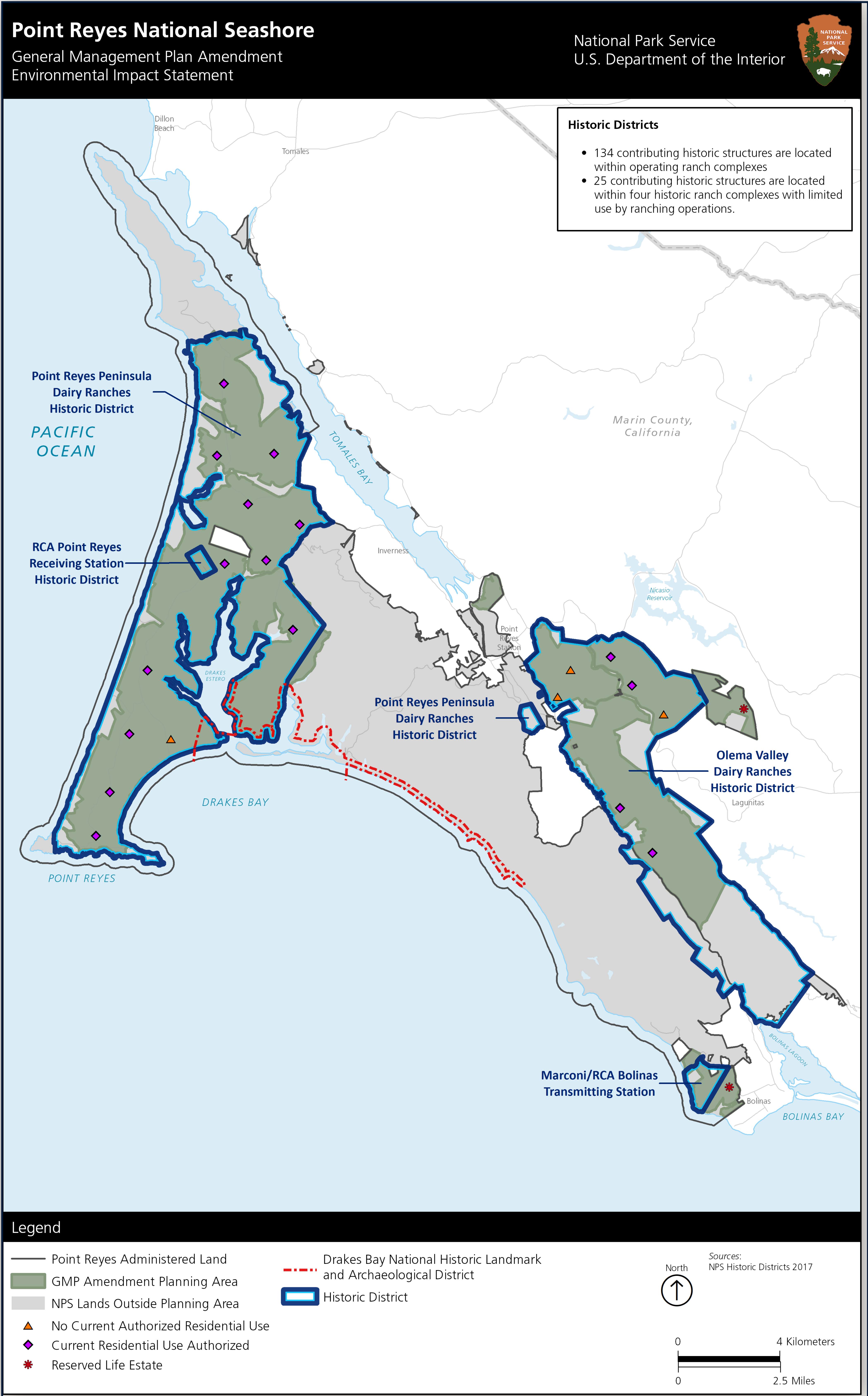




# National Register Historic Districts

## CURRENT STATUS

- The significant role the ranches played within the history of the region has been formally recognized with the listing of the Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches Historic District and the Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. More than 150 historic structures associated with the historic districts are located within the planning area.
- In addition to their values as cultural resources, many of these structures are used by the active ranch operations. The park recently conducted a preliminary condition assessment on many of the historic structures in the ranch complexes to identify the condition of critical systems. During this assessment, the NPS determined that most ranch infrastructure was in fair to poor condition and in need of repair.



## STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF STRUCTURES WITHIN OPERATING RANCH COMPLEXES

- Management of historic structures will be achieved in collaboration with park ranchers. Maintenance of historic ranch buildings would be prioritized based on condition, historic preservation goals, and the needs of ranch operations.
- In some cases, adaptive reuse of historic buildings would be considered to support diversification activities or operational changes within the ranch core.

## STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT OF STRUCTURES THAT ARE IN HISTORIC RANCH COMPLEXES WITH LIMITED USE BY RANCHING OPERATIONS

- Strategies for the management of these structures would be identified based on prioritization of specific buildings, structures, and landscapes for preservation based on their importance to the overall integrity of the historic districts and opportunities for adaptive reuse.
- As appropriate, the NPS would evaluate the potential for decommissioning/deconstruction of low priority or substantially degraded structures/complexes.

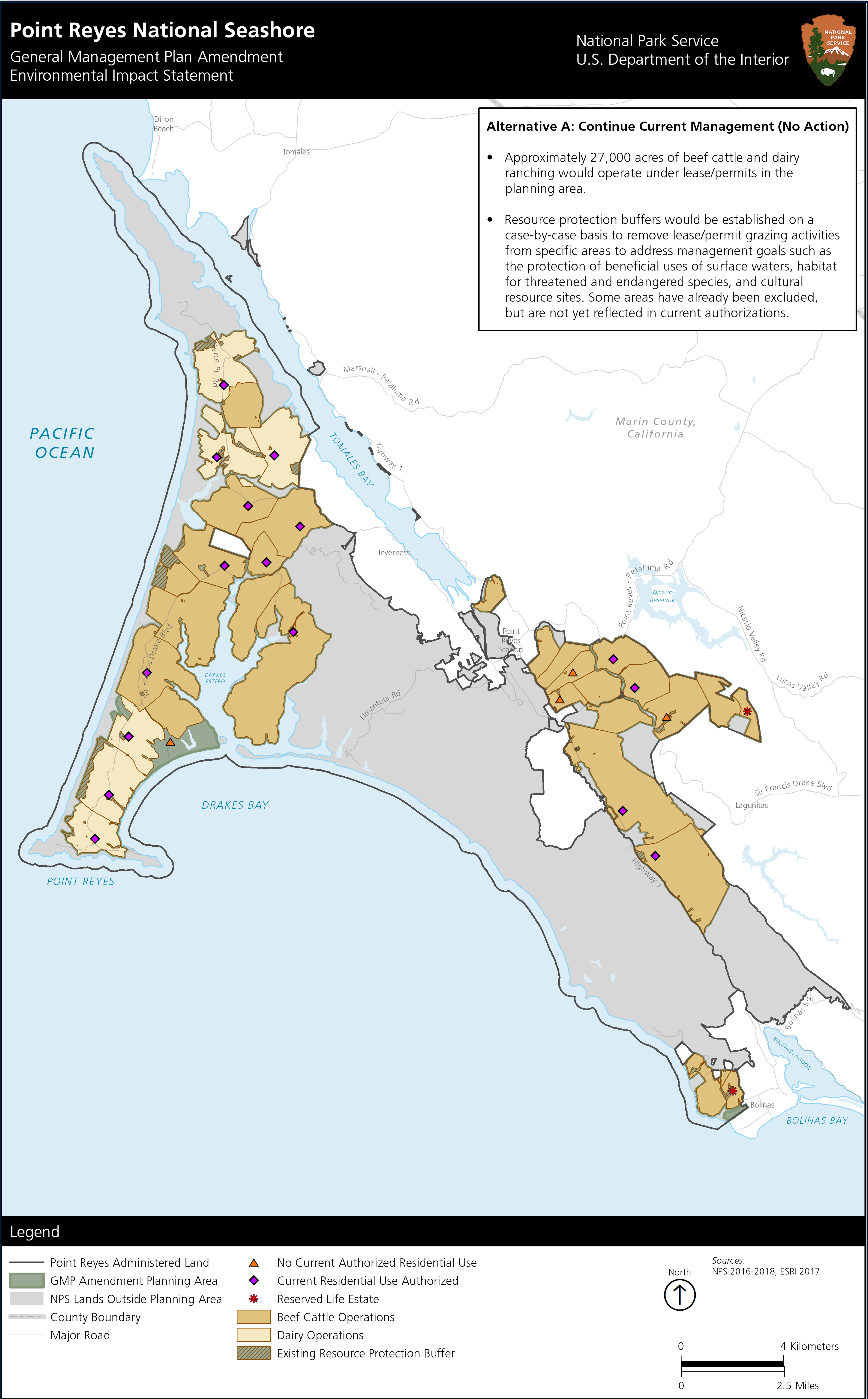






# Alternative A: Continue Current Management (No Action)

- Existing ranching operations would be maintained and management of park resources and visitor use would generally continue at current levels.
- Ranching would be authorized under 5 and 10 year permits.
- Authorizations for individual management actions and improvements would be considered and issued on a case by case basis.
- Management of free-range tule elk affecting park ranch lands would be limited. The NPS would continue efforts that prevent or mitigate elk damage to ranches.







# Elements Common to All Action Alternatives

- The EIS would identify broad management strategies that would be undertaken to preserve park resources, as well as indicators and standards to guide visitor carrying capacities.
- The NPS would strive to improve hiking, biking, and equestrian access in the planning area.
- Trail opportunities would focus on loop routes, connectivity with adjacent public lands, and facilitation of north-south connectivity across the landscape. Potential routes would primarily use abandoned or administrative roads (including ranching roads); new trail construction would be very limited.
- The NPS would expand interpretation of historic districts and current ranching in the park, and would collaborate with ranchers and other partners to interpret the story of ranching in the park.
- The NPS would look for opportunities to expand day use facilities such as picnic areas and overnight accommodations in the planning area.

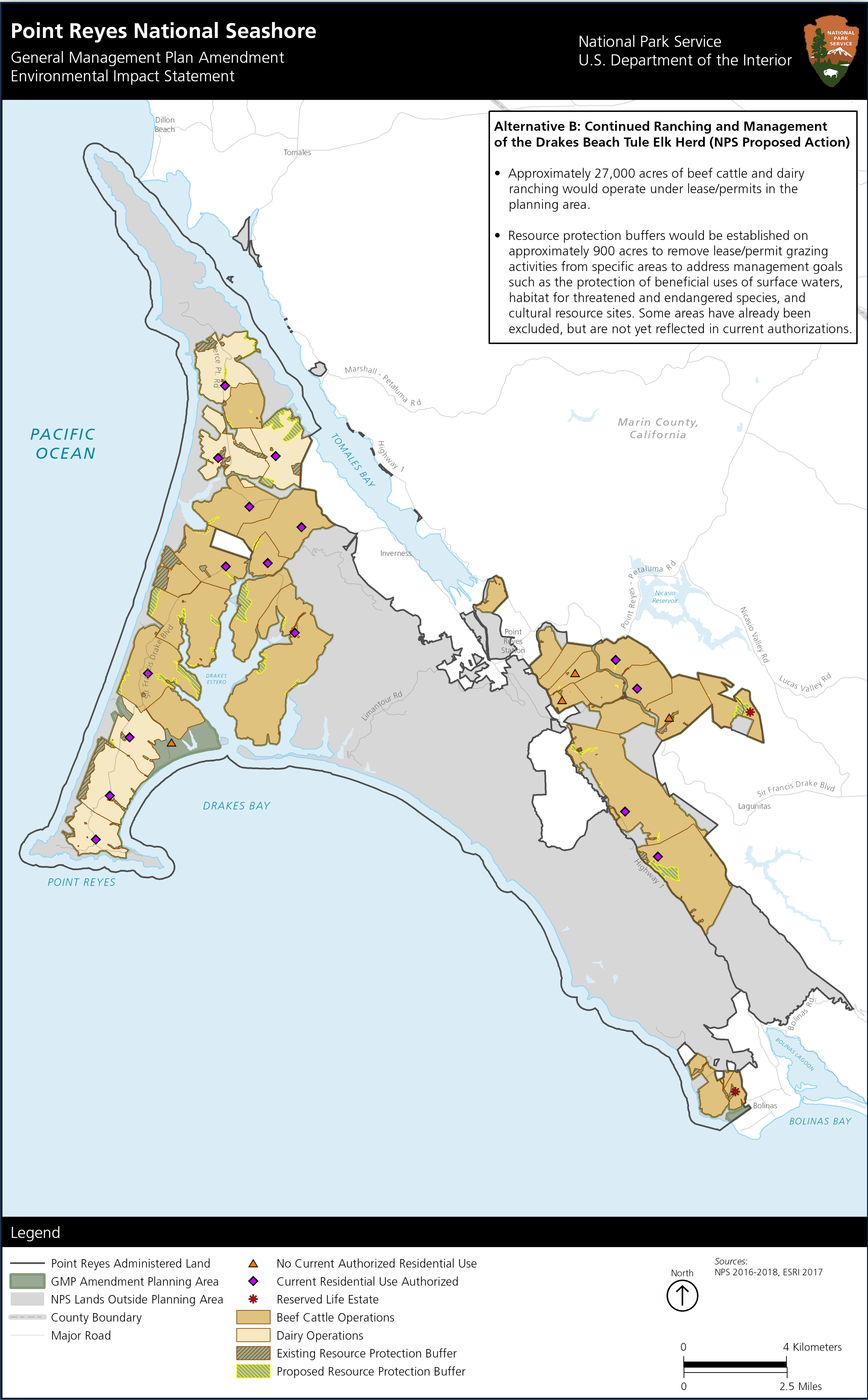






# Alternative B: Continued Ranching and Management of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd (NPS Proposed Action)

- Issue agricultural lease/permits with up to 20-year terms to existing ranch families to continue beef and dairy operations.
- Implement a conservation framework on ranch lands allowing for different intensities of land use depending on the LMU.
- Minimize elk-related impacts through hazing, fence repair and modification, water development, and habitat improvement.



- The Drakes Beach free-range tule elk herd would be managed at a level compatible with authorized ranching operations, with an initial target population range of 100-160 animals. The NPS would manage the herd within that range using translocation outside of the park if practicable, or by agency-managed lethal removal.
- The NPS will evaluate management of tule elk from the Limantour free-range herd if they affect ranch lands. No additional herds would be allowed to establish in the planning area.
- In collaboration with park ranchers, the NPS would prioritize maintenance of historic ranch buildings.
- Strategies for the management of historic ranch complexes within the planning area but not part of ranch operations would be identified.
- The NPS would evaluate the potential for decommissioning/deconstruction of low priority or substantially degraded structures/complexes.

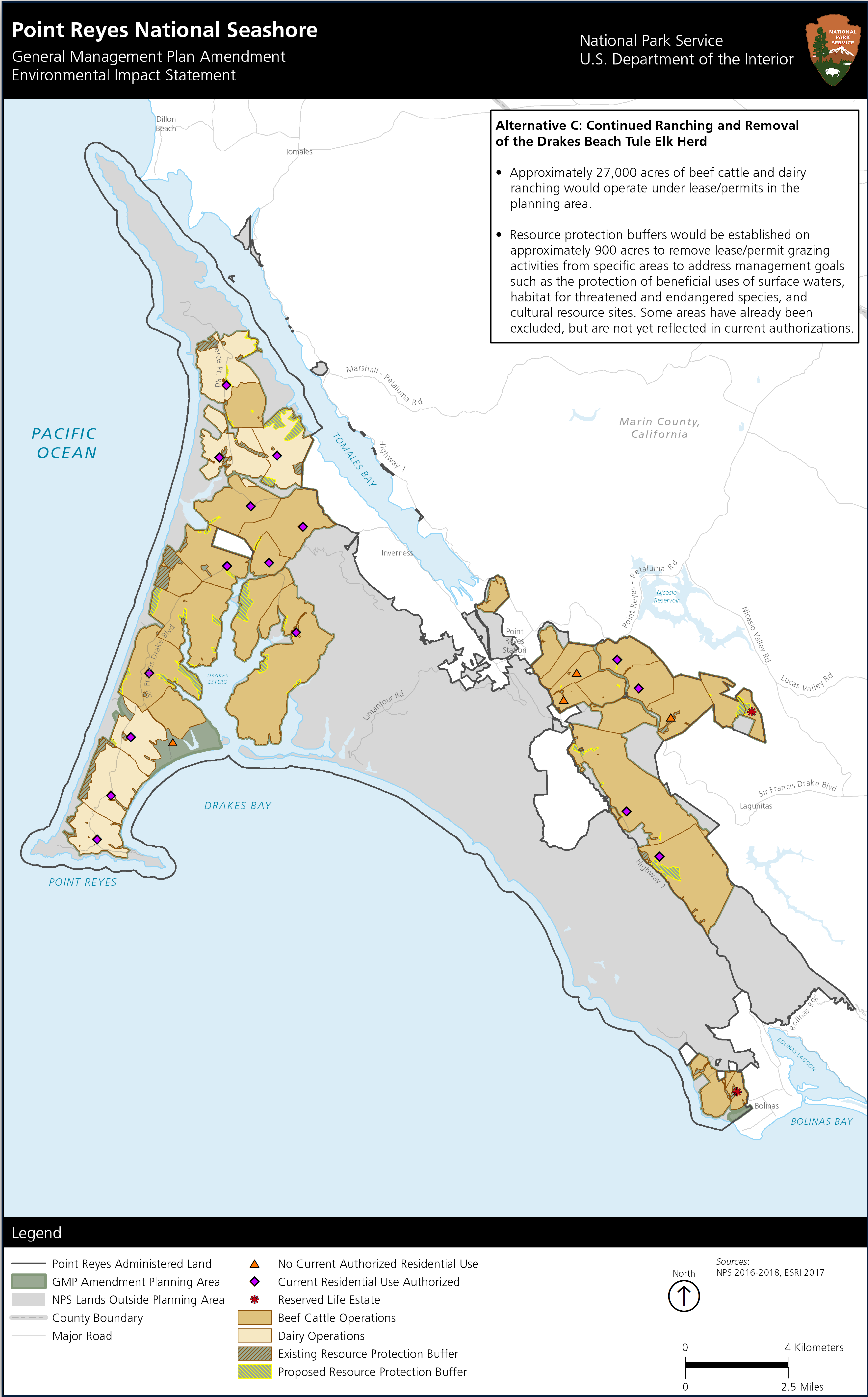
The proposed action is the initial NPS proposal to address the purpose and need. It is only an initial proposal and will be further developed and refined throughout the NEPA process.





# Alternative C: Continued Ranching and Removal of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd

- The park would authorize existing ranch families to continue beef cattle and dairy ranching operations under agricultural lease/permits and address the management of historic structures as described in the proposed action.
- The Drakes Beach tule elk herd would be removed using translocation outside of the park if practicable and agency-managed lethal removal methods. The NPS would continue to manage the Limantour herd in the Estero Road area as described in the proposed action. No new herds would be allowed to establish in the planning area.

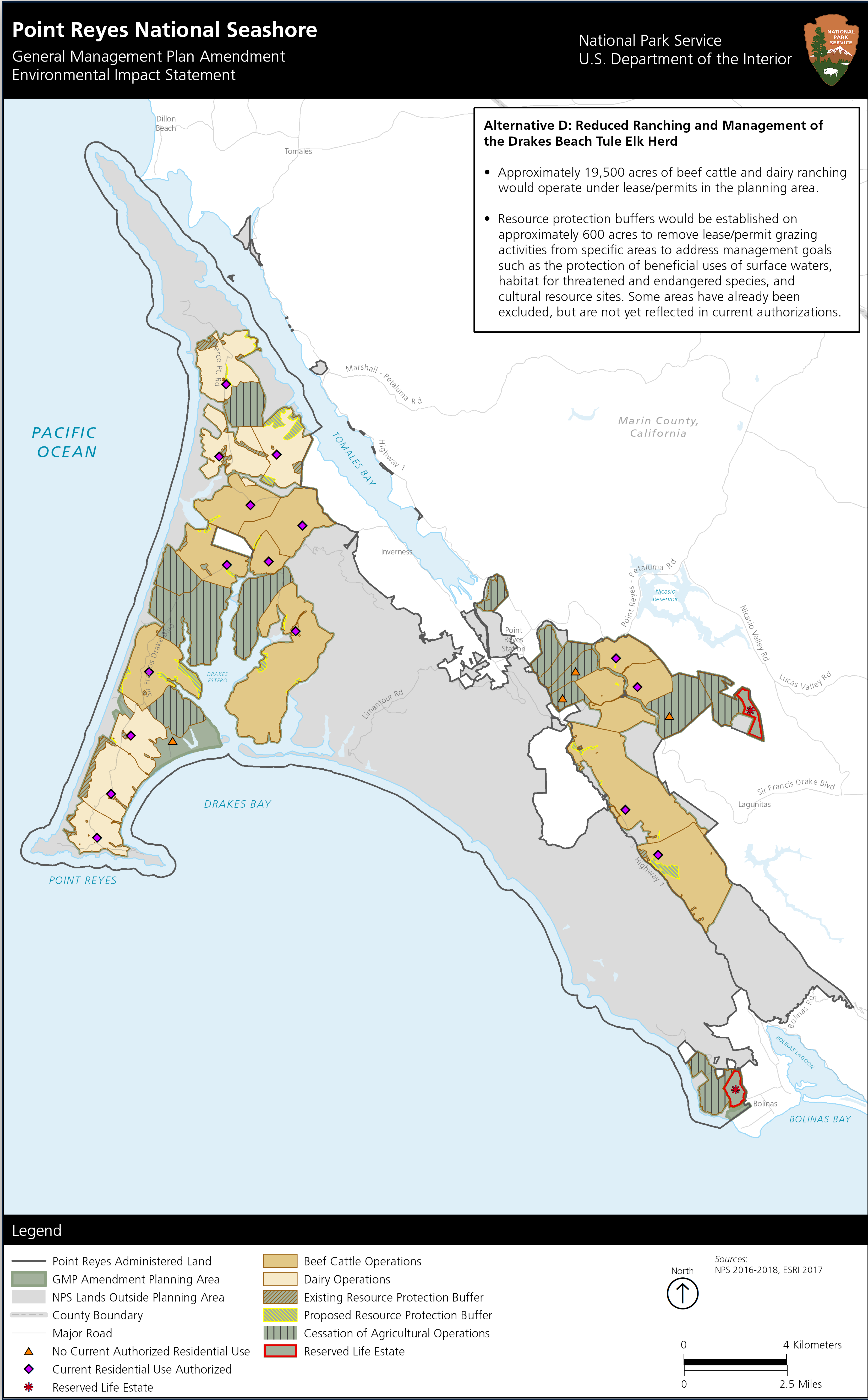






# Alternative D: Reduced Ranching and Management of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd

- Ranching operations would cease to occur on approximately 7,500 acres in the planning area.
- The areas removed from grazing do not have developed complexes or permitted residential uses, minimizing the overall impact to the Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches Historic District and Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic District.



- For areas remaining in agricultural use, the park would authorize the continuation of beef cattle and dairy ranching operations under agricultural lease/permits and address the management of historic structures as described in the proposed action.
- Tule elk would be managed as described in the proposed action but under population targets commensurate with the level of ranching operations. In the event that additional herds form, they would be allowed.

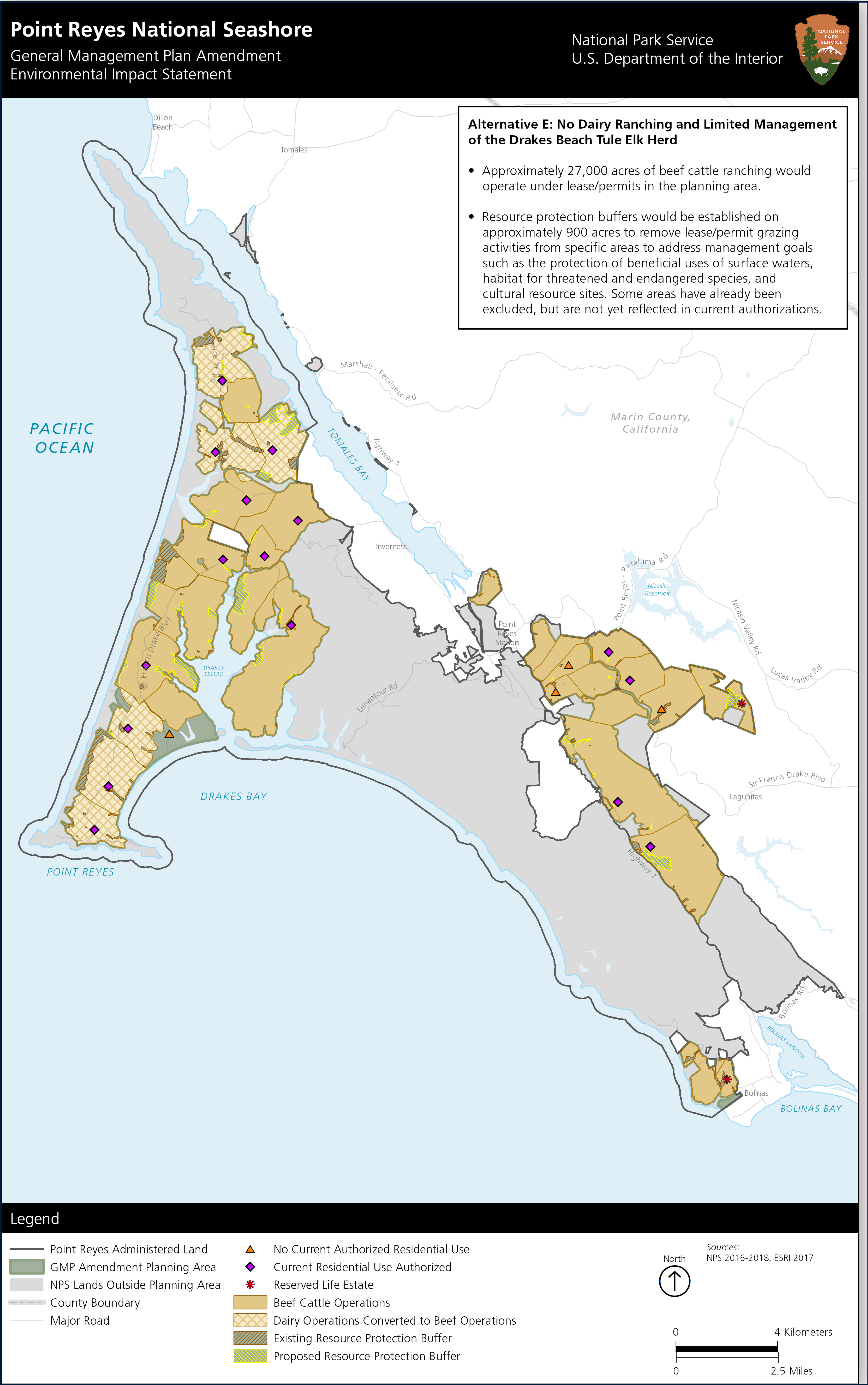






# Alternative E: No Dairy Ranching and Limited Management of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd

- The six active dairies within Point Reyes would cease operations and would be eligible for conversion to beef cattle grazing over a period of five years.
- For areas remaining in beef cattle ranching, the park would authorize the operations under agricultural lease/ permits and address the management of historic structures as described in the proposed action.



- For dairy ranches converted to beef cattle operations, adaptive reuse of historic buildings would be considered.
- The NPS would not limit elk population growth and would take limited action to manage the extent of all free-range tule elk, but only where needed to support resource protection and park goals. In the event that additional herds form, they would be allowed.

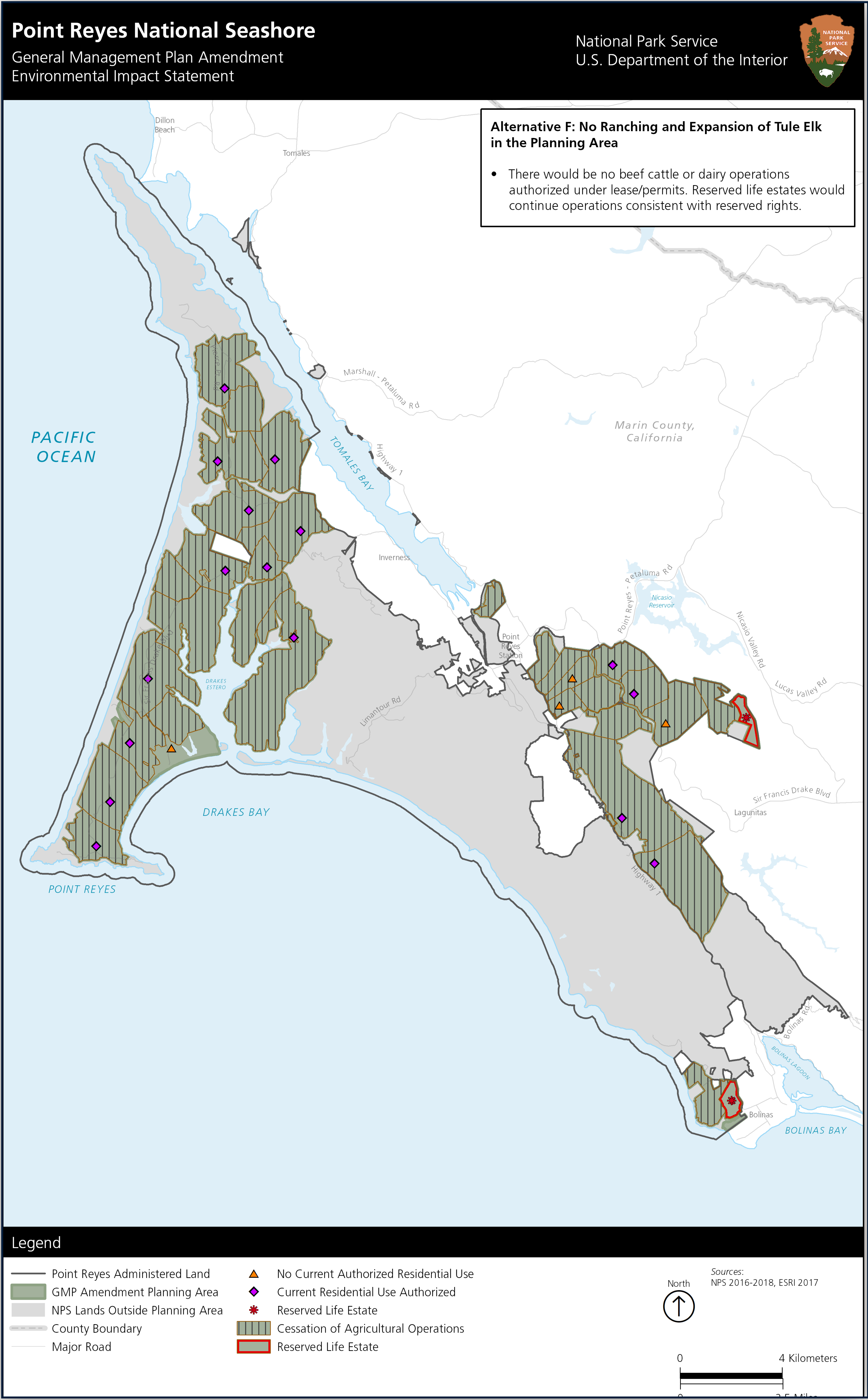






# Alternative F: No Ranching and Expansion of Tule Elk in the Planning Area

- With the exception of the two locations with life estates, ranching operations with developed complexes would be phased out over a five-year period and grazing-only operations would be phased out over a one-year period. No agricultural activities would be permitted after the life estates expire.
- These areas and their associated facilities may be used for public not-for-profit education, research, outdoor experiential activities, and other public recreation and visitor opportunities.
- Depending on the future use of public facing ranch complexes, the NPS would also consider trail linkages that connect visitors to these areas.
- The NPS would interpret the history of ranching in the park using a range of techniques, potentially including exhibits in historic structures.
- Prescriptive grazing may take place in priority areas to address resource management goals, such as the maintenance of native and rare plant communities.
- The NPS would not limit elk population growth and would take limited action to manage the extent of free ranging tule elk when management is needed to support resource protection and park goals.
- The NPS would minimize impacts to the Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches Historic District and the Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic District by prioritizing specific ranch buildings, structures, and landscapes for preservation. The NPS would evaluate potential for decommission/deconstruction of low priority or substantially degraded structures/ complexes.







# The EIS Process

## HOW TO COMMENT


- 1



Submit written comments at an in-person public meeting
- 2

Submit comments electronically at:  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/POREGMPA>
- 3

Mail or hand deliver written comments to park headquarters:  
Point Reyes GMP Amendment EIS  
Superintendent  
Point Reyes National Seashore  
1 Bear Valley Road  
Point Reyes Station, CA 94956



## SCHEDULE

FALL 2018	Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS published in the Federal Register; 30-day public scoping period, including public meetings
WINTER 2019	NPS develops a Draft EIS for the GMP Amendment
SUMMER 2019	Draft EIS released to the public for a 45-day review and public comment period, including public meetings
FALL 2019	NPS develops a Final EIS for the GMP Amendment
WINTER 2019/2020	Final EIS released to the public; 30-day waiting period
EARLY 2020	Record of Decision signed by the NPS Pacific West Regional Director

The public scoping period will close on  
**Friday, November 30, 2018**

*Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or any other way than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.*