

Questions and Answers Unrelated to the TNC Operation

April 16, 2026 Open House

Governance and Policy: Budget Priorities

Q: Early on there was talk of new trails, new campgrounds, and park employees living in former ranch dwellings — who is going to pay for all that?

A: Planning considerations are for the duration of the planning document and are not all anticipated for implementation in year one. The GMPA analyzed a 20-year horizon, which means these uses can be implemented over a long timeframe if funding is available.

Governance and Policy: Land Stewardship

Q: Will the Park Service lease land to new tenants that commit to clean, sustainable practices?

A: The National Park Service considers proposals in light of applicable law, including its enabling legislation.

Governance and Policy: Park Governance

Q: Could a third party manage the land in Point Reyes National Seashore, similar to how the Presidio Trust manages the Presidio?

A: Point Reyes National Seashore was established by Congress as a unit of the national park system under PL 87-69 [as amended]. As a unit of the national park system, the Seashore is managed by the National Park Service consistent with Applicable Law.

Governance and Policy: Dairies/Expanded Ranching

Q: Albert Straus's proposal for 3–4 working demonstration dairies with public education components is offered as a viable compromise. They would help to maintain local food production, preserve agricultural knowledge, and educate future generations on sustainable food systems. In addition, there is a CA organic milk shortage and ~60% of CA organic milk historically came from Marin/Sonoma.

A: The Department of Interior considers all proposals submitted by the public for management of Point Reyes and has not yet made a decision about the proposal for demonstration dairies.

Q: Allowing commercial ranching in a National Seashore sets a dangerous precedent for commercialization of national parks across the country.

A: Commercial agricultural ranching is identified in the Point Reyes enabling legislation as an appropriate use in the park. This is also true in the Golden Gate enabling legislation for the North District of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Q: Why would dairies be allowed to return to a national park after the previous dairies agreed to vacate?

A: The Department of Interior considers all proposals submitted by the public for management of Point Reyes and has not yet made a decision about the proposal for demonstration dairies.

Q: Dairy and beef ranching should be fully reinstated in the Seashore. Ranchers were promised they could stay when the park was created; removing them was a betrayal of that commitment and of the community.

A: The settlement reflects decisions made independently by multi-generational ranching families that held leases in the park to wind down their operations in the park. NPS is committed to implementing the law, including the Point Reyes and Golden Gate NRA enabling legislations which authorize commercial ranching at Point Reyes and Golden Gate. There are 2 commercial beef operations currently in the Seashore and 7 in the North District of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Q: Ranching in Point Reyes National Seashore has been a public subsidy: ranchers were given below-market rents for decades, paid out twice, and used public land for private profit. Private ranch lands in the counties of Marin (~58,900 acres) and Sonoma (~39,000 acres) makes public-land use unnecessary.

A: Commercial agricultural ranching is identified in the Point Reyes enabling legislation as an appropriate use in the park. This is also true in the Golden Gate enabling legislation for the North District of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. NPS is committed to implementing the law, including the enabling legislation for these two units of the National Park System.

Governance and Policy: Rancher Relations

Q: Why did the park not allow septic upgrades on ranches or ranchers to mow for invasive plant management, and then complete this work as soon as the ranchers left?

A: Upgrades or replacement of septic systems was approved by the NPS and installed by ranchers during the confidential mediation period. Because of settlement discussions, the NPS worked with the County to allow ranchers that were contemplating settlement offers to manage under temporary systems rather than replace infrastructure. For ranchers that chose to leave and had installed new septic systems, the NPS covered the costs they had incurred. The NPS has always allowed ranchers to complete invasive plant management after consultation with the park and this is a common practice.

Q: In its 60-year history, has the National Park Service ever engaged agriculture as a beneficial, resource management tool?

A: Point Reyes National Seashore has maintained a range management program as part of the Resource Management Division for more than 40 years. In fact the Range Program was the first resource program at Point Reyes. The range program staff have worked extensively with ranchers, agencies, NRCS and the Marin RCD to support implementation of range and water quality best practices on park ranches.

Governance and Policy: Settlement Agreement

Q: The 2025 settlement (and 1962 founding intent) must be honored. Ranchers accepted very generous buyouts and surrendered their leases.

A: Thank you for your comment.

Q: Is this settlement legal? I thought that when the Seashore was created the ranchers were promised they could stay.

A: All litigating parties—environmental groups, the National Park Service (NPS) and most of the ranchers who leased land on the Seashore—were parties to the Settlement Agreement. The difficult conditions that dairy and beef producers were facing in Point

Reyes National Seashore were decades in the making. Because TNC is an organization that has worked hard to build trust and effective solutions across the conservation and agricultural communities, the parties invited TNC to help develop a solution that all the parties to the lawsuit could agree upon. There is separate litigation regarding the legality of the 2025 Record of Decision which accompanied the settlement. NPS does not comment on ongoing litigation.

Historic Buildings and Cultural Preservation

Q: Ranch buildings are deteriorating rapidly. The park is moving too slowly to stabilize or occupy vacant buildings — graffiti and further damage are imminent.

A: In summer 2026, NPS conducted condition assessments of all structures on these ranches to document existing conditions. NPS is currently considering the findings of those assessments and beginning a process of determining future uses for buildings, where the condition of particular buildings allows for future use. The NPS plans to pursue adaptive reuse of historic structures to support visitor activities, rancher use, or park/partner operations. If ultimately no use can be found for a ranch complex or individual building, NPS may consider demolition of the property. Additionally, NPS will remove or allow to deteriorate in a safe manner noncontributing buildings, structures, and landscape features not needed for ranching or park purposes. Because of the importance of this issue to the public, NPS will provide information and solicit public feedback during this process, with a goal of completing the process by late 2027.

Q: Where would funding come from for more activities and restoration at the ranches that are now vacant? Home Ranch should be a priority. Historic ranch buildings should be repurposed for park staff housing, displaced worker housing, volunteer housing, educational/hostel use, and interpretation. What about other sites such as Pierce Ranch?

A: In summer 2026, the NPS conducted condition assessments of all structures on the vacating ranches to document existing conditions and begin a process of determining future uses, where possible. Any use of these structures by the NPS requires that they meet multiple standards. In order to meet minimum requirements substantial upgrades would be necessary. The Seashore's enabling legislation (16 U.S.C. § 459c-7) generally does not permit the NPS to convey or lease property within the GMPA planning area for residential purposes unconnected to ranching. Many units that workers resided in were personal property of ranchers that have been removed as part of wind down activities. Point Reyes competes with other parks nationwide for funding for renovation projects. For example, in 2026, the park received federal funding to complete a project at Pierce Ranch that will repair damaged exterior elements of the two largest buildings at the ranch, the Hay Barn and Horse Barn, and repaint their exterior. Funds for additional projects could be provided from the NPS over time or raised through philanthropy, partnerships, or leases.

Public Access and Recreation: Entrance Fees

Q: Will the park remain free? It should be taxpayer-supported with no parking fees, trail fees, or commodification of public resources.

A: The park's enabling legislation prohibits charging an entrance fee.

Public Access and Recreation: NPS Capacity

Q: Increased visitor use must be matched with increased ranger staffing, law enforcement, and infrastructure to protect sensitive wildlife and riparian habitat. The park risks being overrun.

A: Thank you for your comment.

Public Access and Recreation: Recreation

Q: Convert former ranch roads and dirt roads to multi-use trails for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Remove barbed wire fencing. Add backcountry and front-country camping. Develop mountain biking, bike packing, and dog-friendly opportunities.

A: The Point Reyes National Seashore Association has initiated a public survey as part of their Trails Forever Initiative developed in coordination with the Seashore and FIGR. While the Initiative will focus on revisioning existing trails and to pursue establishment of new opportunities across the park, it will also include new opportunities in the targeted grazing area. This is an opportunity to connect the public to these lands in a more meaningful way - including through new trails, park and partner-led volunteer opportunities and access to new locations for expanded outdoor education for different user groups including mountain bikers and trail riders. This parkwide initiative is not tied to the settlement. Some of the considerations as we evaluate recreational access include protection of surrounding ecosystems and telling stories of the land, cultural traditions, and the Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches Historic District. Removal of many fences as part of the virtual fencing system over time will improve access to many of these areas. The park and TNC will also look at opportunities for placement of fence step overs or recreational user gates to further these opportunities. Perimeter fencing will be maintained.

Wildlife: Elk

Q: The elk herd is expanding beyond park boundaries into Olema Valley and surrounding areas with no active management plan. Without natural predators the population may grow unchecked.

A: One elk was seen in the Olema Valley earlier this year, and has not been seen since. The park is coordinating with California Fish and Wildlife on management of any elk that leave the Seashore. The park will continue to monitor elk populations and movement. When NPS determines that the park's elk population is nearing carrying capacity, the NPS will initiate a planning process for a parkwide elk management plan. A range of alternatives addressing population management will be analyzed at that time. The NPS will start that planning process when the time is right to ensure that it incorporates accurate assumptions about elk behavior, impacts, and population growth

Wildlife: Species Introduction

Q: Reintroduce extirpated native species (sea otters, beavers, ground squirrels, pronghorn, additional tule elk, muskrat, mink, wild horses, possibly black bears) and natural predators to restore ecological balance.

A: Thank you for your comment.

Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria and indigenous people

Q: The Felix Cove Alliance, Huikuiko, and Graton Rancheria should be given meaningful co-governance roles and/or land access at Felix Cove and the broader Seashore. Additional interpretive opportunities related to Coast Miwok should be created and opened to the public throughout the park.

A: NPS welcomes and will consider the views of all members of the public in determining how to manage Laird's Landing and other park areas. Because this is a unit of the National Park System, NPS makes all management decisions. The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, as the Federally Recognized Tribe with ancestral ties to the Seashore, have a government-to-government relationship with NPS, and are formal partners in park stewardship. The NPS has begun a formal consultation process with FIGR regarding the future use of Laird's Landing. Article IV Section D of the 2021 General Agreement for Government-to-Government Partnership addresses Interpretation, Education and Community Engagement. Specifically - "The NPS intends to partner with the Tribe to enhance/update existing interpretive programs and associated grounds and facilities and expand interpretation and education about Coast Miwok history and culture into other areas of the Park in order to convey a more rich and complex history." As with all stewardship, interpretive and educational programs, development and implementation takes time, and planning and funding.

Q: Laird's Landing should be renamed as Felix Cove and be restored as a Coast Miwok heritage site, with realistic budget and timeline. Consideration should be given related to access and transfer of the Laird's Landing area for re-indigenization and stewardship.

A: NPS welcomes input from all members of the public and makes all final decisions over management of lands at the Seashore, including use and naming of sites. The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria as the Federally Recognized Tribe with ancestral ties to the Seashore, have a government-to-government relationship with NPS, and are formal partners in park stewardship. Consideration of the management, use and naming of these areas would be conducted in coordination with FIGR. Throughout the park, organized events and groups are required to obtain Special Use Permits from the NPS. As part of the 2021 General Agreement for Government-to-Government Partnership between Point Reyes National Seashore and the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, the NPS and the Tribe will consult on special use permits. In addition to the General Agreement, the NPS has mandatory requirements for consultation with FIGR under multiple federal laws, executive orders, and departmental and agency policies. Notwithstanding these consultation requirements, in all cases, NPS makes final decisions over management of lands in the Seashore.