



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Point Reyes National Seashore
Point Reyes, California 94956

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7617
Ranch CMP

APR 21 2014

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service (NPS) is beginning the preparation of a Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (Ranch CMP) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The planning area includes approximately 28,000 acres of active beef cattle and dairy operations on NPS lands in Marin County administered by Point Reyes National Seashore under agricultural lease/special use permits (lease/permits). Public scoping is the first step to involve the public in the NEPA process. Scoping includes holding meetings and providing opportunities for the public to comment so that their concerns are identified early and the analysis is focused on important issues.

The NPS encourages comments on the draft purpose, need, and objectives and requests that the public identify topics and concerns that should be addressed in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Commenters are also encouraged to bring forward new information that the NPS may not be aware of that would be of use in preparing the EA.

Scoping Meetings

The National Park Service will be hosting two public meetings during the initial scoping phase of this planning process. The open house style meetings will be identical in format and are intended to gather comments from the public that will be used in shaping the Ranch CMP. The meetings are scheduled at the following locations:

Tuesday, May 6, 2014, 5-7 pm
Dance Palace Community Center
503 B Street
Point Reyes Station, CA 94956

Wednesday, May 7, 2014, 5-7 pm
Bay Model Visitor Center
2100 Bridgeway
Sausalito, CA 95965

Public Comment

The six-week comment period will close on **Monday, June 2, 2014.**

If you cannot attend one of the public scoping meetings or would like to provide comment in another form, you are encouraged to participate by submitting comments online or by letter. The preferred method for submitting comments is via the internet through the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment site at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ranchcmp>. Click on the "Open for Comment" link to comment. You may also mail or hand deliver comments to "Ranch CMP c/o Superintendent, Point Reyes National Seashore, 1 Bear Valley Road, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956". Written comments will also be accepted at public meetings.

Comments will not be accepted by FAX, email, or in 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, email 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 publically 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.

Scoping Questions

Below are some scoping questions you may consider as you are reviewing the draft purpose, need and objectives of the proposed project.

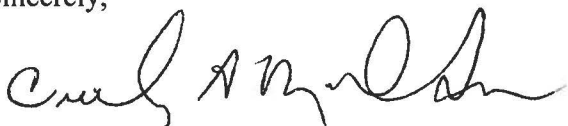
- What do you think the NPS should be considering as it develops this Ranch CMP?
- What are the most important issues regarding the lands under agricultural lease/permits that you believe need to be addressed in this plan?
- What are reasonably foreseeable future ranching activities that should be considered and reviewed as part of this plan?
- What are reasonably foreseeable actions related to the management of tule elk affecting park ranch operations that should be considered as part of this plan?
- What are potential park actions related to the management of cultural and natural resources on ranch lands that should be considered as part of this plan?
- What do you, as a member of the public, need from NPS to be meaningfully engaged in the planning process?

Project Timeline

- April/May 2014: Public Scoping
- Summer/Fall 2014: Alternatives development, including public workshops
- Spring/Summer 2015: Release Environmental Assessment for public review and comment
- Fall 2015: Planning process complete

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact Outreach Coordinator Melanie Gunn at 415-464-5162. We appreciate your participation in this process.

Sincerely,



Cicely A. Muldoon
Superintendent

Enclosure – Draft Purpose, Need and Objectives

**RANCH COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN/
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE**

Draft Project Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to establish a comprehensive framework for the management of existing ranch lands administered by Point Reyes National Seashore under agricultural lease/special use permits (lease/permits), with terms up to 20 years.

Draft Project Need

Ranching has a long and important history on the Point Reyes peninsula and adjacent National Park Service lands. These working ranches are a vibrant part of Point Reyes National Seashore and represent an important contribution to the superlative natural and cultural resources of these NPS lands. Protection of these diverse and unique resources is an important responsibility shared by the NPS and park ranchers within the agricultural lease/permit areas. On November 29, 2012, the Secretary of Interior issued a memorandum authorizing the NPS to pursue long-term lease/permits for dairy and beef ranching operations. The Secretary's memorandum demonstrates the support of the NPS and the Department of the Interior for the continued presence of dairy and beef ranching operations within these NPS lands.

A comprehensive management plan is needed:

- To articulate a clear vision for ranching on existing ranch lands administered by Point Reyes National Seashore.
- To implement the Secretary of the Interior's direction to pursue issuance of lease/permits with terms up to 20-years.
- To address concerns related to tule elk impacts to existing ranch operations.
- To provide clear guidance and streamline processes for park and regulatory review of proposed ranching activities, including best management practices that promote protection of park resources.

Draft Project Objectives

Consistent with NPS policies and the protection of park resources and the Secretary's Memorandum of November 29, 2012, the objectives of this planning process are to:

Range Management and Operations

- Clarify NPS expectations and rancher commitments to ensure consistency of agricultural lease/permits;

- Identify and evaluate activities that provide operational flexibility to support long-term dairy and beef cattle operations in a manner consistent with the protection of park resources;
- Define best management practices to promote protection of park resources and streamline park and regulatory review and approvals of proposed ranching activities;
- Promote the health and safety of agricultural workers on ranch lands;
- Define a process for maintaining ranching if a ranch operator chooses not to continue operations;
- Support sustainable operational practices such as maintaining organic certification, promoting increased energy efficiency, and working towards carbon neutral operations; and
- Review and update permit structure to reflect decisions made through this plan.

Visitor Experience

- Coordinate and promote interpretation and education opportunities for visitors and the public to learn about historic and contemporary ranching operations; and
- Address visitor access and recreational opportunities on ranch lands to protect the interests of park and ranch facilities, while ensuring protection of ranch operations and their privacy.

Natural and Cultural Resource Management

- Establish long-term management approach for tule elk affecting agricultural lease/permit areas;
- Evaluate management approaches that improve maintenance of ranch operations and protect native wildlife and vegetation populations; identify collaborative management opportunities that promote protection of sensitive and rare cultural and natural resources through adaptation of ranch management activities;
- Identify management and maintenance strategies for protecting historic ranch structures leased as part of park agricultural lease/permits and archeological sites; and
- Identify collaborative management opportunities that promote protection of Shafter era ranching Historic Districts including the Point Reyes Dairy District and the Olema Valley Historic District.