



GMP Amendment Planning Area



The GMP Amendment will update guidance for the preservation of natural and cultural resources, the management of infrastructure and visitor use, and as appropriate, direct specific strategies for managing agricultural lease/permits and tule elk for lands in the planning area.





Overview

Beef and dairy ranching operations are authorized under specific provisions of the enabling legislation for Point Reyes National Seashore (Point Reyes) and Golden Gate National Recreation Area (Golden Gate). Approximately 28,000 acres of National Park Service lands, including 18,000 acres in Point Reyes and 10,000 acres in the north district of Golden Gate, are currently used for beef and dairy ranching under agricultural lease/special use permits.

- Twenty-four families currently hold lease/permits or reservations of use and occupancy for dairy and beef operations, including 18 ranches with residential use. Current authorizations allow approximately 6,000 cattle on a year-round basis.

- Per the multi-party Settlement Agreement approved by the court on July 14, 2017, NPS agreed that, in lieu of a Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan, it would prepare a General Management Plan Amendment (GMP Amendment) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addressing the management of the lands currently leased for ranching.

- The Settlement Agreement requires the NPS to give full consideration to, and disclose the impacts of, three alternatives in the EIS: no ranching, no dairy ranching, and reduced ranching. The NPS must also address the four statutorily required GMP elements (see the “What is a General Management Plan” text box below).
- The Settlement Agreement allows the NPS to consider additional alternatives as well as agricultural diversification, increased operational flexibility, the promotion of sustainable operational practices, succession planning, and similar ranch management practices as part of any action alternative except the no ranching alternative.

WHAT IS A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT?

NPS policies allow for amending an existing GMP, rather than undertaking a new GMP, to address particular locations or issues. This GMP Amendment will update management guidance and meet the statutory requirements of a GMP within the planning area, to the extent applicable.

The statutorily required elements of a GMP are: (1) measures to preserve park resources, (2) guidance regarding the types and levels of public use and development, (3) discussion of visitor carrying capacities, and (4) potential external boundary modifications. The NPS has already conducted an initial boundary analysis and does not expect to propose any external boundary modifications.

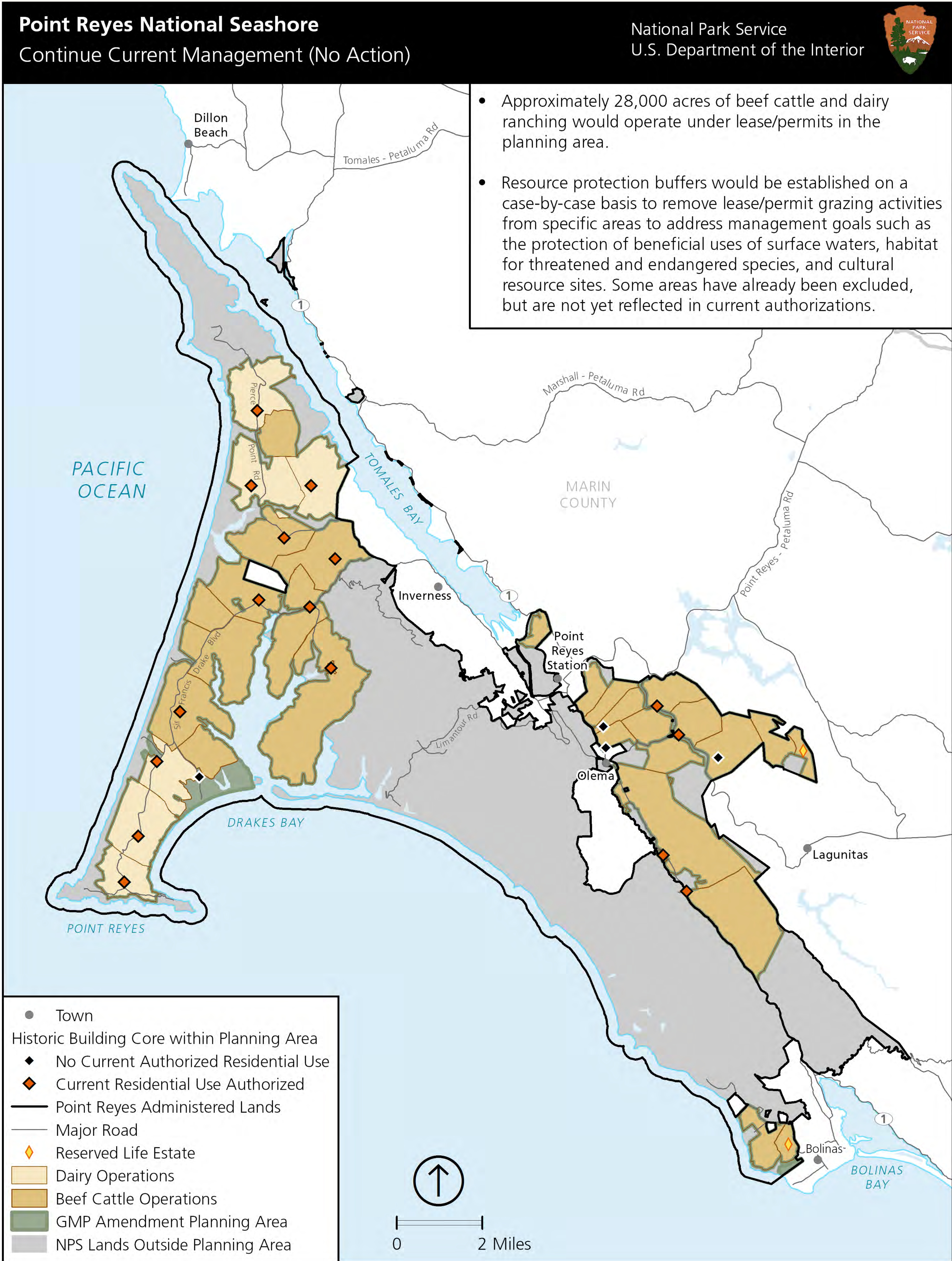




Continue Current Management (No Action)

Under this alternative, the NPS would continue to issue short-term agricultural lease/permits (5 to 10 years) for ongoing activities on Point Reyes and the north district of Golden Gate.

- Management of tule elk affecting Point Reyes ranch lands would be limited to current available management techniques.
- Existing park operations would be maintained, and management of park resources and visitor use would generally continue at current levels.

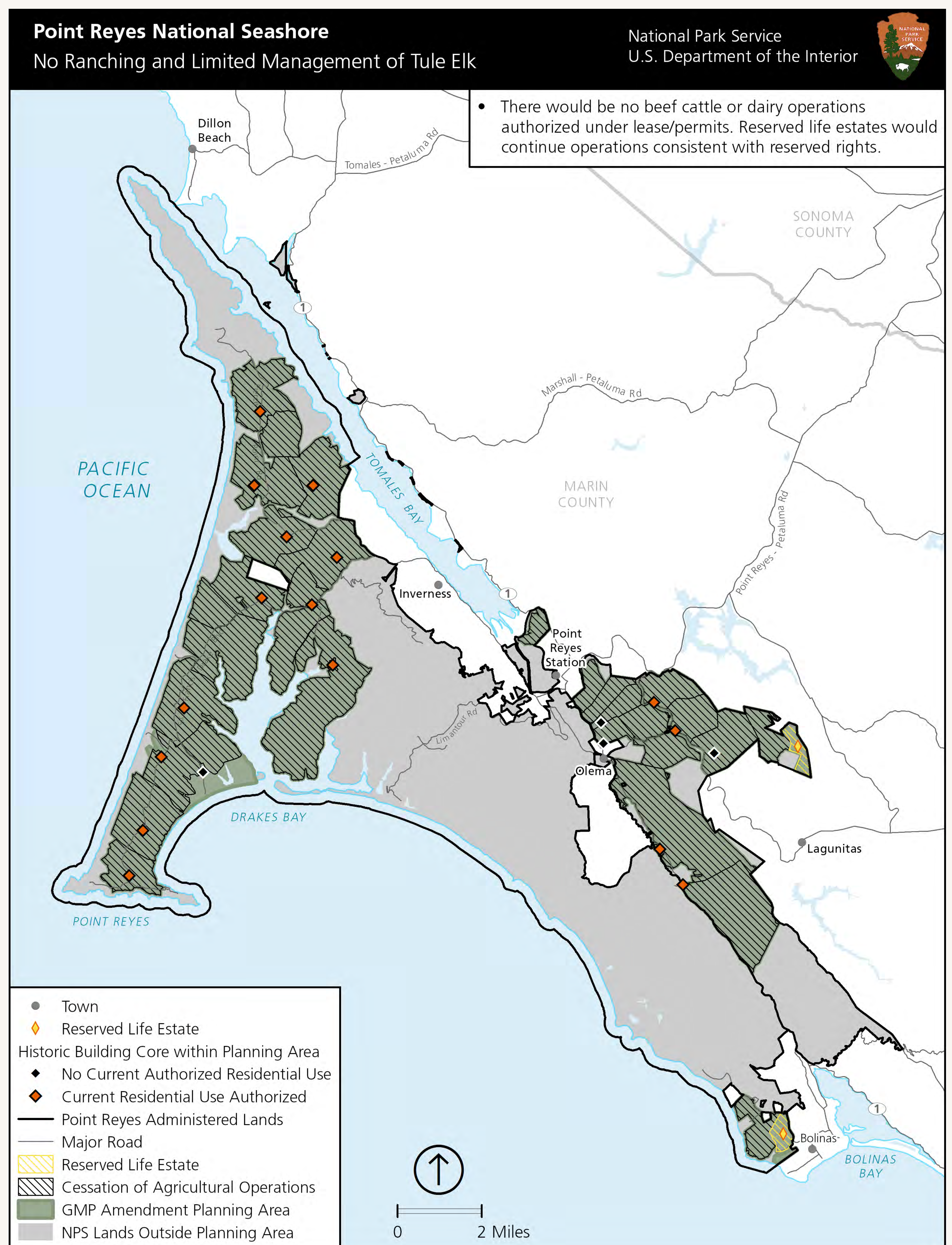




No Ranching and Limited Management of Tule Elk

This alternative is required by the Settlement Agreement. Under this alternative, ranching in all areas of Point Reyes and the north district of Golden Gate would cease.

- With the exception of the two locations with life-estates, ranching operations would be phased out over a 5-year period. No agricultural activities would be permitted after the life-estates expire.
- The NPS anticipates many of the areas and their associated facilities would be converted and offered for public not-for-profit education, research, outdoor experiential activities, and other public recreation and visitor opportunities. The NPS may coordinate prescriptive grazing to address management goals such as maintenance of native and rare plant communities.
- The free-range tule elk herd would continue to expand with limited to no population management.
- The NPS would identify broad management strategies to preserve park resources, as well as indicators and standards to guide visitor carrying capacities.
- The NPS would identify compatible opportunities to improve visitor experience in the planning area (e.g., enhanced trail connections, improved signage, and new interpretive waysides).





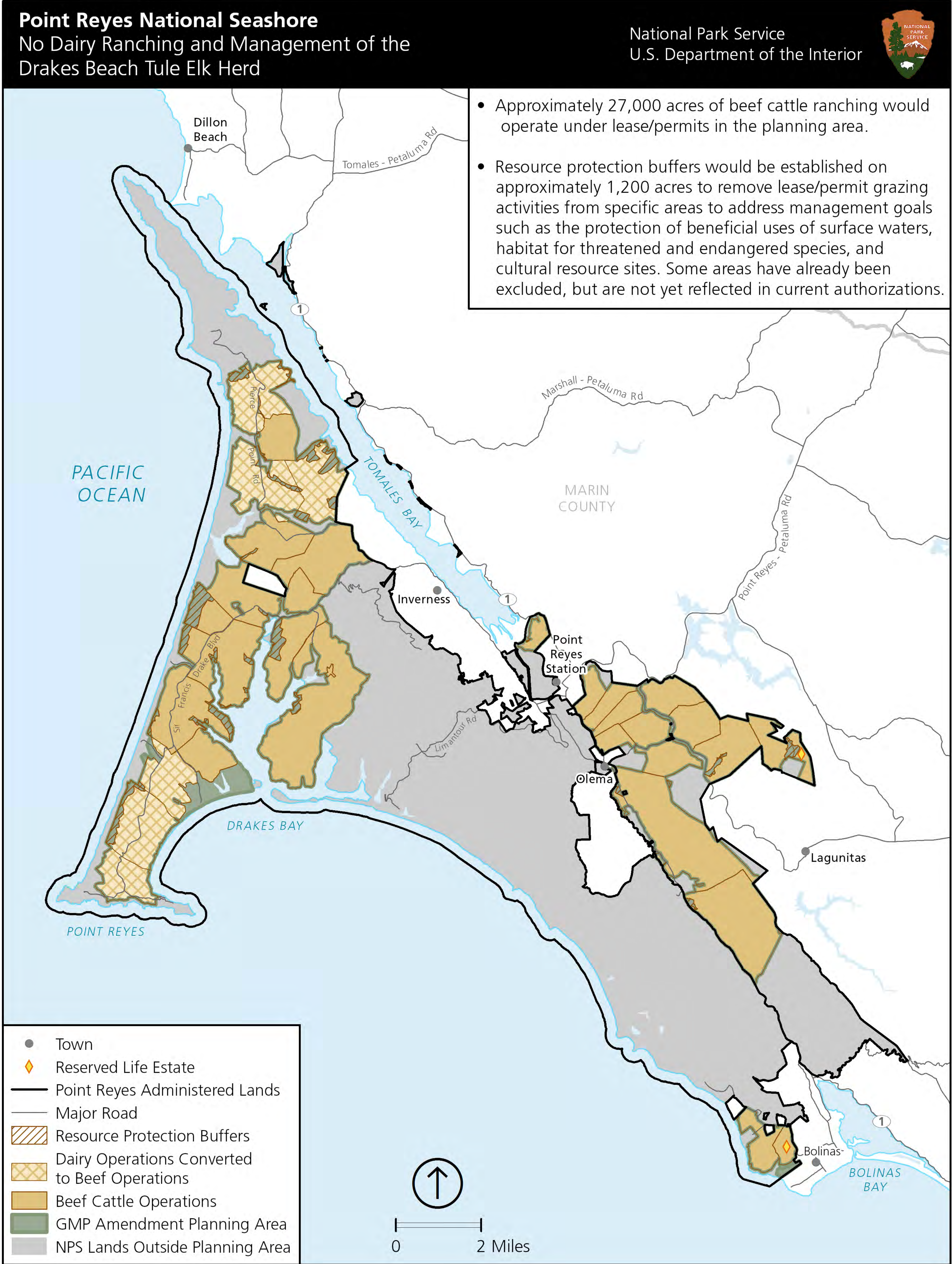
No Dairy Ranching and Management of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd

This alternative is required by the Settlement Agreement. Under this alternative, all beef cattle ranching operations would continue. The six active dairies within Point Reyes would cease operations. Dairy operators would be eligible to convert dairy operations to beef cattle grazing over a period of 5 years.

- For areas remaining in beef cattle ranching, agricultural lease/permits with 20-year terms would be issued. Lease/permits would identify authorized measures for operational flexibility and diversification and establish programmatic approaches for streamlined implementation of best management practices.
- The Drakes Beach tule elk population would be managed at a level compatible with authorized beef cattle ranching operations.

Minimum and maximum population thresholds for the Drakes Beach herd would be established, and the NPS would manage within that range using methods defined through this process. The NPS could implement actions to manage tule elk from the Limantour-Estero Road herd on the ranchlands.

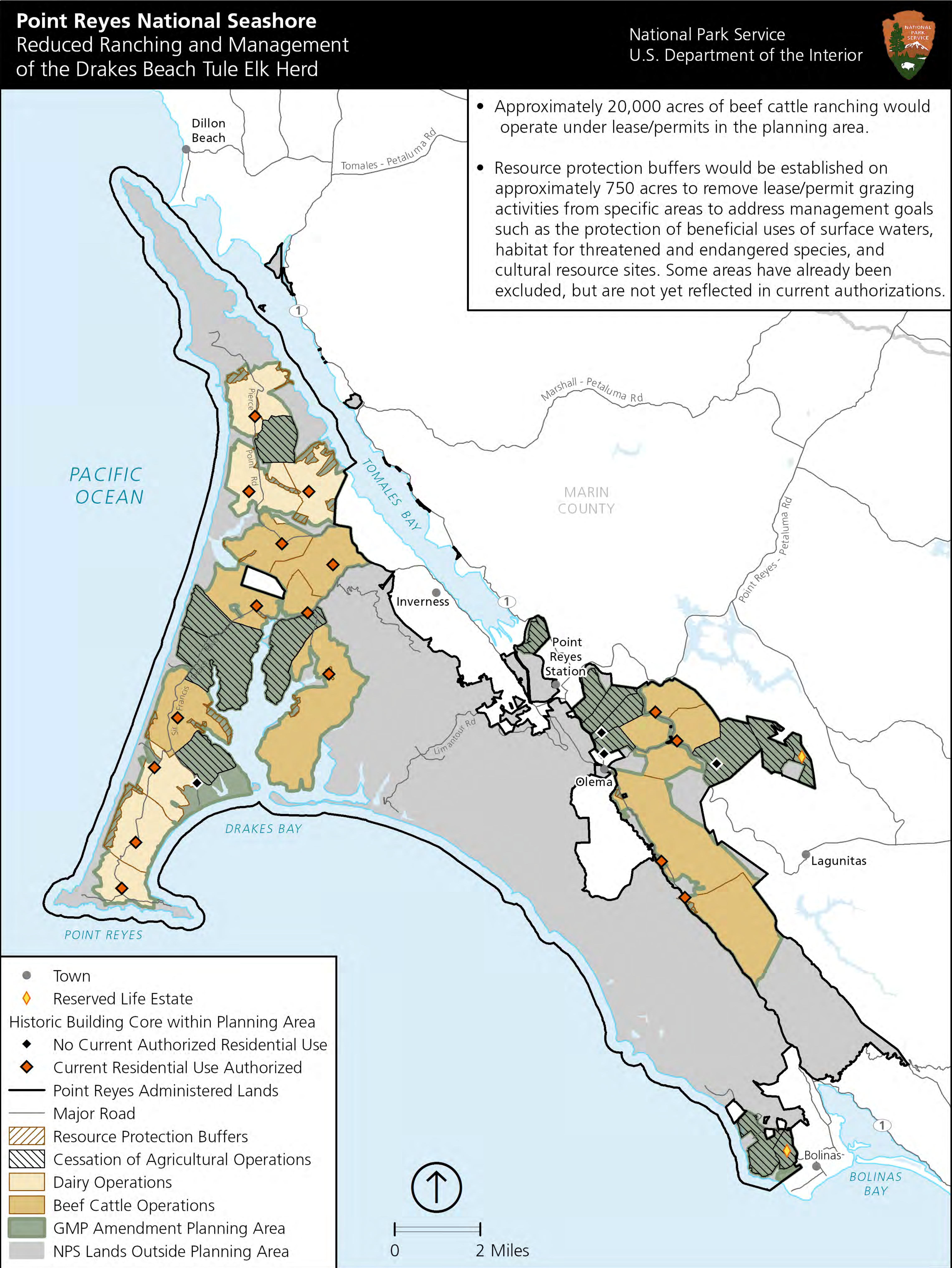
- The NPS would identify broad management strategies to preserve park resources, as well as indicators and standards to guide visitor carrying capacities.
- The NPS would identify additional compatible opportunities to improve the visitor experience in the planning area (e.g., enhanced trail connections, improved signage, and new interpretive waysides).





Reduced Ranching and Management of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd

This alternative is required by the Settlement Agreement. Under this alternative, ranching operations would cease on approximately 7,500 acres in the planning area.



- The areas identified for closure of ranch operations would minimize the overall impact on the Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches and Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic Districts, both of which are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Most of the areas identified for closure do not have developed complexes or permitted residential uses.

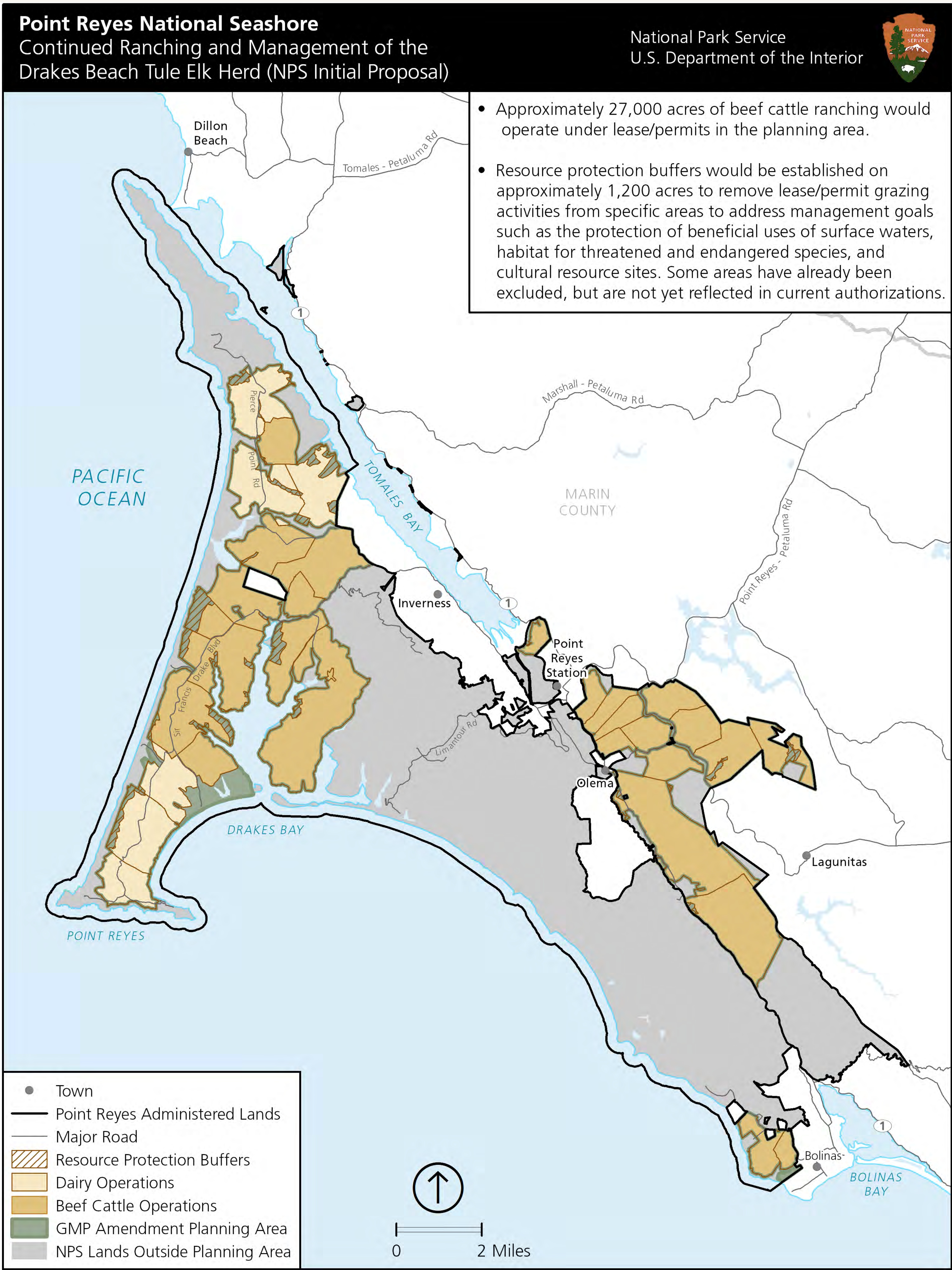
- For areas remaining in agricultural use, agricultural lease/permits with 20-year terms would be issued. Lease/permits would identify authorized measures for operational flexibility and diversification and establish programmatic approaches for streamlined implementation of best management practices.
- The Drakes Beach tule elk population would be managed at a level compatible with authorized ranching operations. Minimum and maximum population thresholds for the Drakes Beach herd would be established, and the NPS would manage within that range using methods defined through this process. The NPS could implement actions to manage tule elk from the Limantour-Estero Road herd on the ranchlands.
- The NPS would identify broad management strategies to preserve park resources, as well as indicators and standards to guide visitor carrying capacities.
- The NPS would identify compatible opportunities to improve the visitor experience in the planning area (e.g., enhanced trail connections, improved signage, and new interpretive waysides).



Continued Ranching and Management of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd (NPS Initial Proposal)

Under this alternative, existing ranch families would be authorized to continue beef cattle and dairy ranching operations under agricultural lease/permits with 20-year terms.

- Lease/permits would identify authorized measures for operational flexibility and diversification and establish programmatic approaches for streamlined implementation of best management practices.



- The Drakes Beach tule elk population would be managed at a level compatible with authorized beef cattle ranching operations. Minimum and maximum population thresholds for the Drakes Beach herd would be established, and the NPS would manage within that range using methods defined through this process. The NPS could implement actions to manage tule elk from the Limantour-Estero Road herd on the ranchlands.

- The NPS would identify broad management strategies to preserve park resources, as well as indicators and standards to guide visitor carrying capacities.
- The NPS would identify additional compatible opportunities to improve the visitor experience in the planning area (e.g., enhanced trail connections, improved signage, and new interpretive waysides).

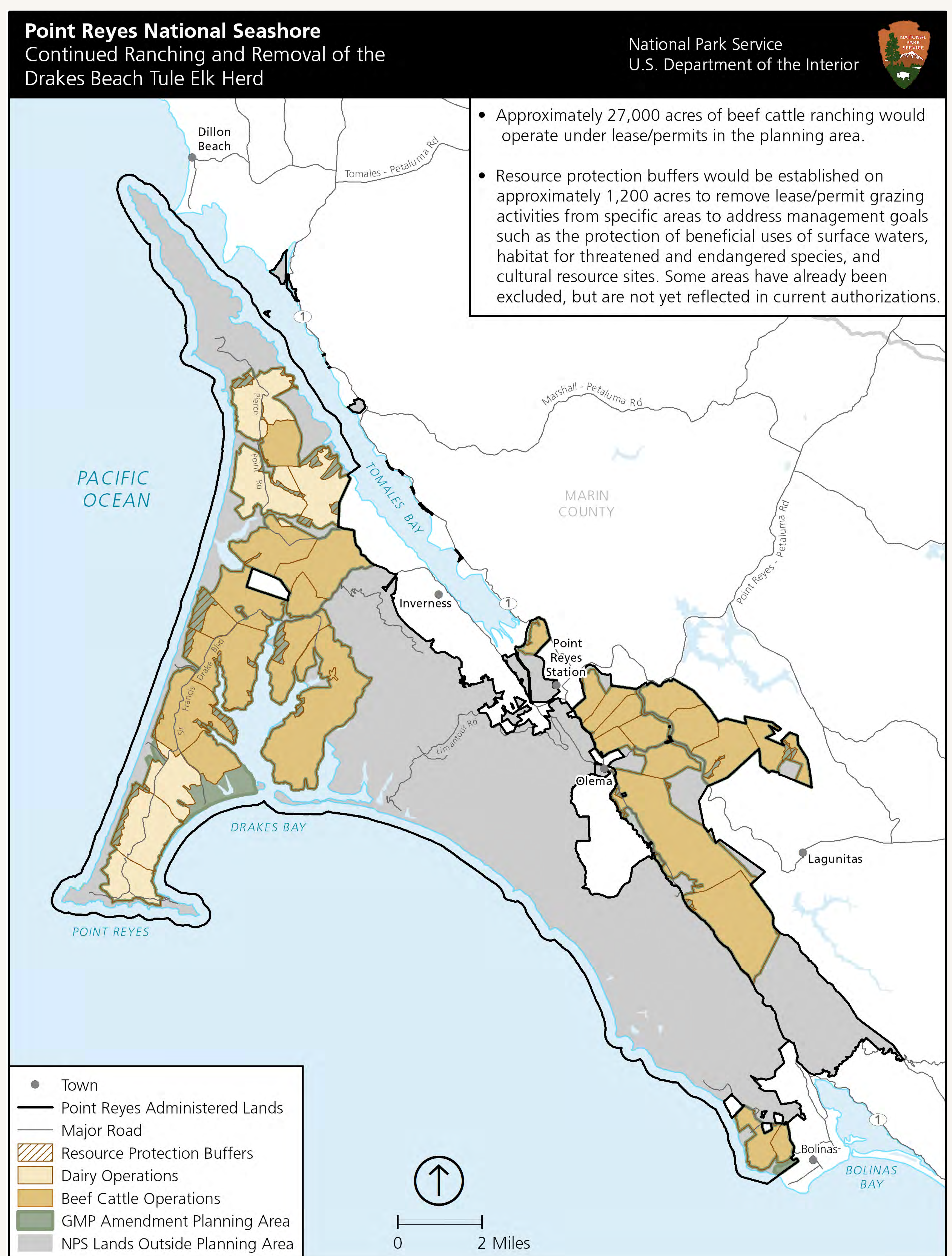




Continued Ranching and Removal of the Drakes Beach Tule Elk Herd

Under this alternative, existing ranch families would be authorized to continue beef cattle and dairy ranching operations under agricultural lease/permits with 20-year terms.

- Lease/permits would identify authorized measures for operational flexibility and diversification and establish programmatic approaches for streamlined implementation of best management practices.
- The Drakes Beach tule elk herd would be removed using methods established through this planning process. The NPS could implement actions to manage tule elk from the Limantour-Estero Road herd on the ranchlands.
- The NPS would identify broad management strategies to preserve park resources, as well as indicators and standards to guide visitor carrying capacities.
- The NPS would identify additional compatible opportunities to improve the visitor experience in the planning area (e.g., enhanced trail connections, improved signage, and new interpretive waysides).

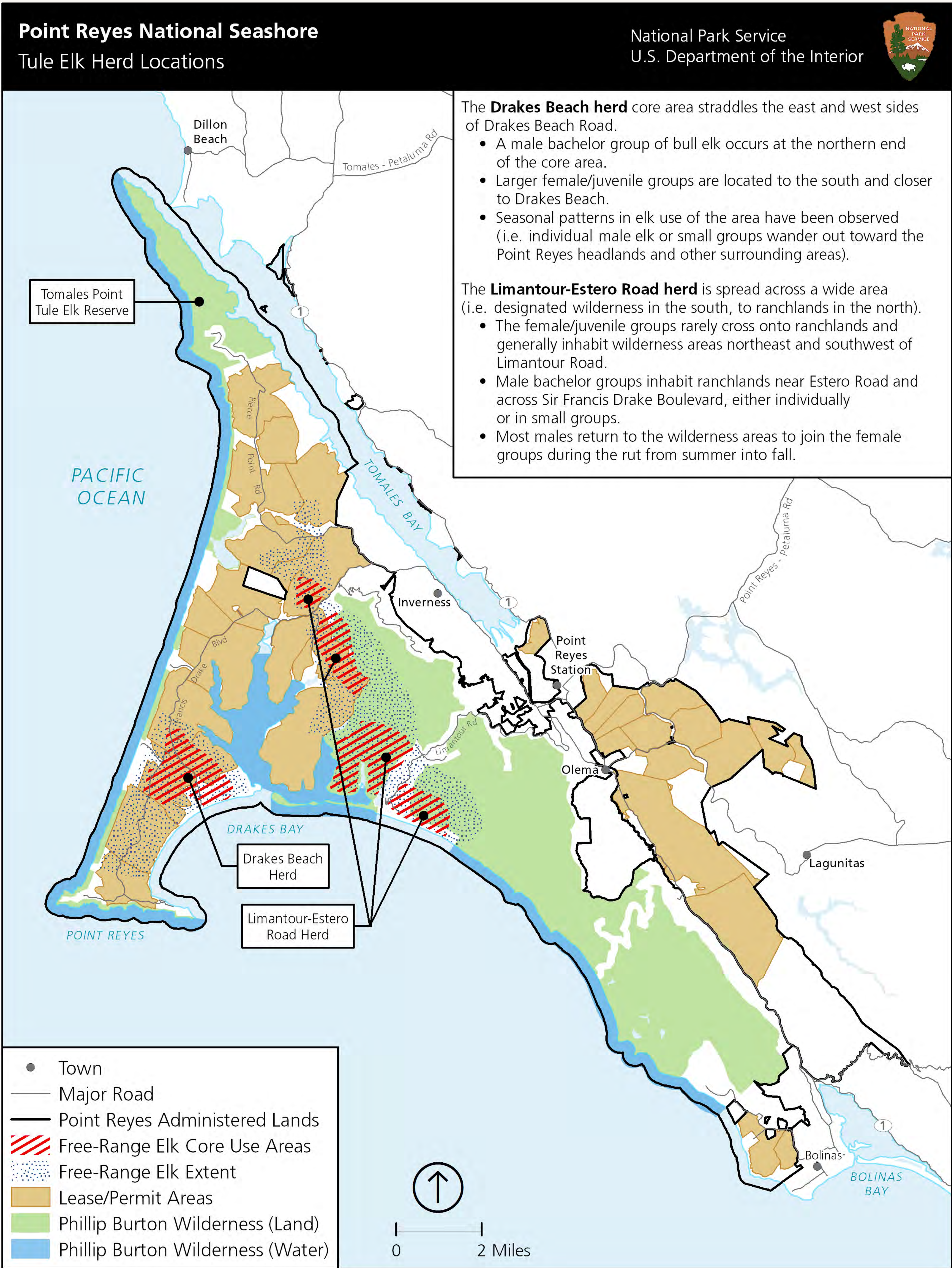




Tule Elk



- 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 more than 300 animals.



- The park’s 1998 Tule Elk Management Plan/Environmental Assessment 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 ranchlands.
- 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, near Drakes Beach, has approximately 110 animals. The Limantour-Estero Road herd has approximately 130 animals.





National Register Historic Districts

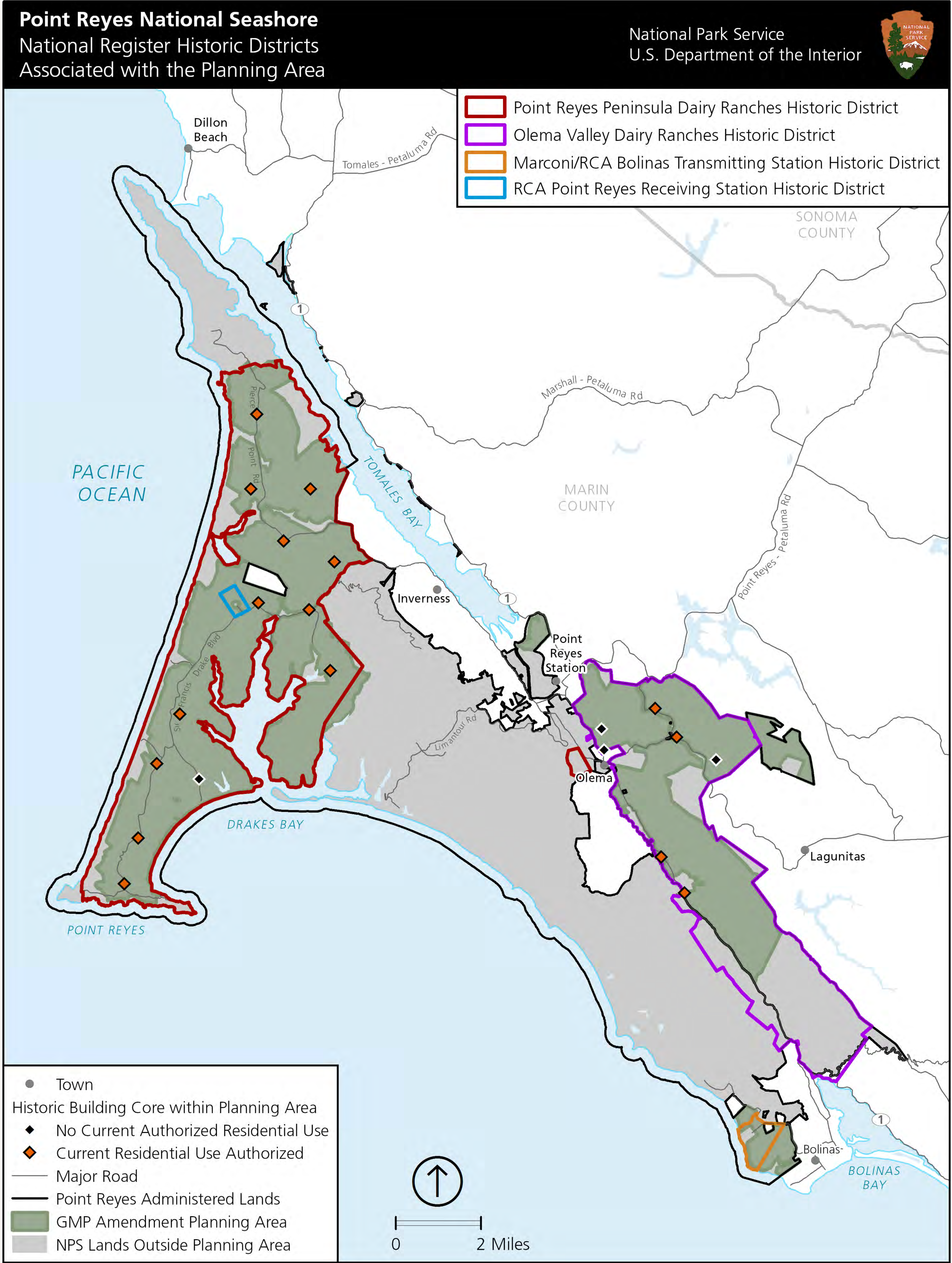
A number of sites within the Planning Area have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The **Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches** and the **Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic Districts** helped catapult Marin County to the forefront of butter and cheese production by the 1870s. The ranches in these districts convey a century of change in the California dairy industry, representing the evolution of dairy farming from the original wood frame milking barns to the concrete Grade A sanitary barns of the 1940s. The **Marconi/RCA Bolinas Transmitting Station** and **RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station Historic Districts** are recognized for their significant role in the early era (1913-1945) of shortwave radio communications in the United States.

POINT REYES PENINSULA DAIRY RANCHES HISTORIC DISTRICT

- A collection of 17 rural ranches developed by the Shafter and Howard families in the mid- to late nineteenth century representing one of the earliest and largest collection of tenant dairy ranches in California.
- The period of significance, 1857-1956, encompasses the initial development of the dairy ranch tenant system to the conversion of the last ranch to a Grade A dairy.
- The district boundary encompasses an approximately 22,237-acre agricultural landscape characterized by rolling hills of open grasslands and coastal scrub grazed by beef and dairy cattle.

OLEMA VALLEY DAIRY RANCHES HISTORIC DISTRICT

- A collection of 19 early dairy ranches that were developed in the mid-nineteenth century as small- to medium-sized, family- or tenant-operated dairy ranches.
- The period of significance, 1856 – 1958, encompasses establishment of the first dairy in the Olema Valley through conversion to a Grade A dairies.
- The district boundary encompasses a 14,127-acre agricultural landscape characterized by grasslands from Bolinas to Point Reyes Station, wooded gulches and drainages that extend from the ridges down to the valley.



MARCONI/RCA BOLINAS TRANSMITTING STATION HISTORIC DISTRICT

- The period of significance, 1913-1945 recognizes its role as the first station in the continental United States to transmit wireless messages between two points of land across the Pacific Ocean. The Bolinas Transmitting Station represents one of only four extant Marconi wireless stations in the continental United States.
- The 422-acre area includes open grasslands hosting an array of radio towers, as well as architecturally distinct structures in the developed core area.

RCA POINT REYES RECEIVING STATION HISTORIC DISTRICT

- The Point Reyes receiving station remains is one of only two known extant examples of a shortwave radio station from the early era of shortwave radio communications in the United States during the interwar period of significance (1929-1945).
- The 160-acre area includes open grasslands hosting an array of radio towers, as well as architecturally distinct structures in the developed core area.

CURRENT STATUS

- The California State Historic Preservation Officer has reviewed and concurred with the NPS determination of eligibility. After the properties have been reviewed by the NPS’s Federal Preservation Officer, the nominations will be forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places for formal listing.
- Federal properties eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places are managed and maintained in consideration of their historic, archaeological, architectural, and cultural values.



The Planning Process

FIRST PHASE:

BEGIN GMP AMENDMENT PLANNING

- *30-day public comment period and public meetings*
- NPS refines conceptual range of alternatives and initial proposal
- NPS gathers necessary information to meaningfully evaluate the impacts of conceptual alternatives

SECOND PHASE:

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) FOR THE GMP AMENDMENT

- Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS, *30-day public comment period with public meetings*
- NPS develops a Draft EIS for the GMP Amendment
- Draft EIS released to the public for a minimum *45-day review and public comment and public meetings*
- NPS develops Final EIS for the GMP Amendment
- Final EIS released to public with a 30-day waiting period
- GMP Amendment Record of Decision (ROD) signed by July 14, 2021

The conceptual range of alternatives and management tools under consideration may change based on public input throughout the development of the GMP Amendment and EIS. After the NPS refines the initial proposal and conceptual range of alternatives with public input and when the NPS can effectively and efficiently analyze the potential impacts, the second phase of planning will begin with a NOI to prepare an EIS.

