

# SEASHORE: GMPA



**Protecting West Marin's unique lands, waters, and biodiversity since 1971**

The Point Reyes National Seashore (Seashore) was established in 1962 when President John F. Kennedy signed the Enabling Act. The Seashore supports a rich diversity of habitats including marine waters, sandy beaches, wetlands, coastal scrub and riparian corridors, grasslands, and fir and pine forest ecosystems. These habitats support more than 1,500 species of plants and animals, 50 of which are listed as state or federally endangered, threatened, or special status. The Seashore is located along the Pacific Flyway where more than 54% of all North American birds have been recorded, making it exceptional habitat for migrating and nesting birds.

The Seashore is almost 72,000 acres of public lands. 33,000 acres are designated as Wilderness; 18,000 acres are currently leased to beef and dairy ranching operations; and 10,000 acres of Golden Gate National Recreational Area is managed by the Seashore.

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## GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT

In 2012, after 7 years of advocacy, the Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, allowed the designation of Drakes Estero as a marine wilderness. Drakes Estero, long considered the ecological heart of spectacular Point Reyes, is the only marine wilderness area on the West Coast. *That decision also included a directive to the Seashore to pursue a public process to consider issuing long-term ranching and dairy leases.*

In 2017, the Seashore initiated the public process to update to their General Management Plan (GMPA). This followed litigation that compelled the Seashore to consider, *for the first time*, if ranching operations should continue, not just where they should be located and managed. Other topics included: consideration of allowing diversification (new commercial uses); management of the tule elk; best management practices to protect habitat, public access, cultural resources, and water quality; species of special concern; visitor use and experience; vegetation impacts; natural resource protection; wildlife; and cultural resources.

In 2018 the Seashore solicited public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and in 2019 the Final Environmental Impact Statement was released to the public. The Seashore selected their preferred Alternative B, that creates a new ranchland zoning framework; allows for continued ranching with new 20 year leases; new diversified commercial uses; culling of the tule elk herds; and ranch management practices to protect habitat, wildlife, cultural resources, and water quality.

The GMPA public process is nearing an end with the final Record of Decision expected in July 2021.

In June 2021, a new lawsuit was filed against the National Park Service that contends that the Seashore must address the harm it is causing to the mismanagement of the tule elk herd on Tomales Point due to the elk fence that prevents the herd from leaving Tomales Point to access water and forage. The herd has been impacted severely by drought conditions and poor forage.

# GMPA ADVOCACY

We have remained steadfast in careful consideration of our actions, always keeping our eye on our ultimate goal of protecting the Seashore, a national treasure in Marin County's backyard.

When the Seashore began the public process to update the GMPA, we dug in, and applied the best available science, conducted regulatory and policy reviews, and engaged in political advocacy to protect the park in the complicated planning landscape.

- To ensure the long-term protection of the Seashore's irreplaceable natural resources, we worked within the public process and engaged with different stakeholder groups who shared the same goal: a GMPA that protects, restores, and preserves park resources.
- **We do not support the Seashore's preferred alternative, as we have serious concerns in several areas**, some include: implementation ability; accountability; impacts to natural resources (including habitats, species, and water quality); the allowance of diversified operations; and the culling of the tule elk.



# WATER QUALITY

In 2020 and 2021, we raised our concerns about water quality to the California Coastal Commission and requested new requirements. We focused with partners at National Parks Conservation Association and Save our Seashore to create additional agency oversight to protect water quality and increase public transparency.

- We were pleased to see the Commission Staff Report included all of the requests we had, including: a public review of a water quality management plan, an annual report to the Commission that includes details, timelines, and responsibility of planned actions.
- At the Commission meeting, the Commissioners included additional measures we advocated for, including: returning to the Commission in five-years with a status update on water quality; and returning in one year with a water quality proposal for public review.
- In addition, the Commissioners asked for a climate change management proposal for review.

