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01-31-2025

The Point Reyes Seashore Ranchers Association (PRSRA) would like to share its perspective on the recent settlement of the lawsuit filed against the Park Service's General Management Plan Amendment to continue regulated ranching under twenty-year leases on the ranchlands of the National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Plaintiffs filed the lawsuit to end ranching and expand the tule elk herd to all areas of the Point Reyes peninsula ranchland. Although we did not agree entirely with the Park Service's General Management Plan Amendment, our Association intervened in the lawsuit to defend the Park Service's Management Plan Amendment and Record of Decision in the hope of providing long-term certainty and stability to the ranches covered by the Decision. In contrast, for more than a decade, our families were only granted short term lease extensions that made it unwise to invest in long term improvements to the buildings and businesses, not knowing how the Park Service would respond to plaintiffs' lawsuit.

Our Association consists of beef and dairy ranching families who have cared for the ranchlands over generations and are proud of the work we have done to maintain the scenic coastal grasslands and natural resources in the Point Reyes National Seashore and the Golden Gate National Recreation area, and to produce certified organic milk, grass feed beef, and contribute to the social and economic fabric of West Marin. Each of our ranching families has intimate and irreplaceable knowledge of the lands they have been tending for over a century and have used this knowledge to inform their stewardship of the land. However, the uncertainty created by the prospect of ongoing and likely future litigation led to serious and heart wrenching family discussions about the future. With only dim prospects of working ranches remaining at Point Reyes, we believe it was ultimately best for our families to move on.

Our Association greatly appreciates the hard work of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to provide an opportunity to end the litigation which appeared to many as an irreconcilable conflict between continuation or elimination of the ranches and dairies. Seeing no future under the cloud of litigation targeted at shutting down the current ranches and dairies, every member of the Association in the Point Reyes National Seashore ultimately accepted a settlement offer from TNC for which we are extremely grateful.



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The lives of ranch tenants and workers will also be upended by the settlement. Our Association is committed to supporting the settlement effort of all parties. We, alongside the other parties to the mediation, including TNC, stand ready to assist in efforts being made for the transitional services for the tenants and workers as they seek alternative employment and housing.

TNC focused its efforts and funding on the Point Reyes National Seashore and there was no plan to expand the tule elk population to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Consequently, the Association ranchers in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area agreed to 20-year leases with the Park Service. Now that the litigation is resolved, the Golden Gate ranchers hope to maintain and improve the historic buildings there and continue ranching in a cooperative spirit with the Park Service.

PRSRA supports the settlement agreement. We believe it is a way for the ranchers to move forward to avoid an even more disruptive, uncertain, protracted, and less favorable outcome in the future.

In conclusion, PRSRA would like to take this opportunity to thank the excellent lawyers and staff at Western Resources Legal Center who capably represented us. We also deeply appreciate the many community members and organizations who never stopped supporting the continuation of ranching on Point Reyes. Our strength to endure the challenges came from the support of this community.

Sincerely,

The Point Reyes Seashore Ranchers Association