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### **Conservation Groups Sue Over Missing Point Reyes Management Plan**

***National Seashore needs plan for how ranching fits into the park, not how the park fits into ranching*** Lawsuit cites persistent drought and conflicts between cattle and native wildlife, particularly Tule elk, among significant threats to park resources.

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SAN FRANCISCO— The Resource Renewal Institute, Center for Biological Diversity and Western Watersheds Project filed a lawsuit in federal court today seeking to require the National Park Service to update its General Management Plan and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement prior to adopting a proposed plan to extend cattle grazing leases in the Point Reyes National Seashore in Marin County, California.

“The Point Reyes National Seashore is a national treasure,” said Huey D. Johnson, president of Resource Renewal Institute and former California Secretary of Resources. “The Park Service has delayed comprehensive planning and environmental analysis for decades, depriving the public of the right to weigh in on appropriate uses and activities in the park. This lawsuit is a last resort to get the Park Service to do its job.”

Under federal laws the National Park Service is obligated to ensure that wildlife and other natural resources receive “maximum protection” and are left “unimpaired” for the enjoyment of future generations. The lawsuit asserts that the Park Service is violating these requirements by relying on a badly outdated management plan adopted in 1980, which fails to address current conditions such as climate change, increasing park visitation and recreational use, and threats to wildlife.

The lawsuit cites persistent drought and conflicts between cattle and native wildlife, particularly Tule elk, among significant threats to park resources. Tule elk, once believed to be extinct, were successfully reestablished at the Seashore and exist in no other national park.

Over the last two decades, the Park Service repeatedly announced its intentions to update the Seashore's 35-year-old management plan but abandoned the planning process without explanation. It is now moving forward on a Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan that could extend grazing permits in the park for up to 20 years.

"The Park Service needs to take a step back and look at the impacts of commercial ranching on the park overall," said Johnson, who in 1977 as president of the Trust for Public Land acquired more than 2,000 acres for the Seashore and adjacent Golden Gate National Recreation Area. According to Johnson, that land was acquired for wildlife habitat and public recreation but has been leased to private ranchers.

After Congress enacted the legislation establishing the Point Reyes National Seashore in 1962, the federal government purchased the ranches in the park at a cost of more than \$70 million in today's dollars. Ranching was not mandated by the legislation, but rather allowed under two narrow circumstances: time-limited reservations of rights for former landowners or general leases with conditions to protect the park. Nearly all reservations and leases have since expired.

The Park Service has never prepared an Environmental Impact Statement on ranching at the Seashore. Nevertheless, it continues to allow cattle grazing on 18,000 acres of the 71,000-acre park. Fifteen ranch families currently operate on 24 lease units within the National Seashore.

"The Park Service continues to authorize commercial grazing permits at the Point Reyes National Seashore without ever having done an Environmental Impact Statement on how ranching impacts the park. That is what's needed to ensure protection of the park's ecosystems," said Jeff Miller, a conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity who lives in West Marin.

"We're filing this lawsuit because we all love the park and believe it's up to everyone to make sure the Seashore is managed sustainably so that future generations can enjoy it as we have," he said.

"The law requires the Park Service to determine the environmental impacts at the Seashore and restrict any uses if they impair the protection of wildlife and natural resources or the public's use and enjoyment," said Karen Klitz, a board member at Western Watersheds Project. "Behind-the-scenes negotiations between a handful of ranchers and well-meaning conservationists is no substitute for an open and transparent planning process that includes public input."

The groups are represented in the lawsuit by San Francisco attorney Jeff Chanin of Kecker & Van Nest, and lawyers with Advocates for the West, a public interest environmental law firm.

*Resource Renewal Institute is a nonprofit organization based in Mill Valley, California that was founded by Huey D. Johnson in 1985. Johnson was featured in the documentary film "Rebels With a Cause," about the battles to protect the Point Reyes*

*National Seashore and other public lands. He served as California's Secretary of Resources from 1978 until 1982 and is the founder of The Trust for Public Land, the Grand Canyon Trust and the Environmental Liaison Center.*

*The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 990,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.*

*Western Watersheds Project is a nonprofit conservation group founded in 1993 with 1,500 members whose mission is to protect and restore western watersheds and wildlife through education, public policy initiatives and litigation.*

LINKS:

Lawsuit Background and Resources:

<http://www.rri.org/Lawsuit>

Legal Complaint:

<http://www.rri.org/Complaint.pdf>

Photos Available for Media Use:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=OByd9xyFINjjZaXhrVGstWnRKeEk>

<https://picasaweb.google.com/110852119927861269464/PointReyesNationalSeashoreCalifornia?authuser=0&feat=directlink>

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