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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

March 18, 2016

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

I write to urge the National Park Service to continue to honor existing ranching and dairy leases at Point Reyes National Seashore in your development of the upcoming Ranch Management Plan. While I am disappointed by the recent lawsuit, I firmly believe that multi-generational ranching and dairying is not only important both ecologically and economically for the area, but also entirely consistent with Congress's intent when it established Point Reyes National Seashore in 1962 and subsequently amended the Act in 1978.

Allowing for continued ranching was a part of the deal Congress struck when it first established Point Reyes National Seashore as a national park. As part of a deal to persuade landowners to sell their property to create the National Seashore in 1962, the federal government assured residents they could continue ranching. And Congress subsequently reaffirmed the importance of agriculture in 1978 when it established the permitting system that now governs the leases.¹ We must keep that promise.

Congress's intent that agriculture continue at Point Reyes has been reflected by various members of the administration throughout the years. Then-Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar observed in 2012, for instance, that "working ranches are a vibrant and compatible part of Point Reyes National Seashore, and both now and in the future represent an important contribution to Point Reyes' superlative natural

¹ The portions of the enabling legislation discussed in this paragraph are at 16 U.S.C. § 459(c-5).

and cultural resources.” The Secretary then directed the National Park Service to fully consider the values of ranching and farming in future planning efforts.²

Point Reyes now has a total of 35 leasing or permitting instruments that allow ranching, of which 29 are for beef cattle and 6 are for dairy cattle. These operations are not only an important cultural and economic underpinning in the area, they also sustain a healthy and well-balanced ecosystem. Sound, sustainable farming practices help with—not hinder—the management of vast grasslands under threat from non-native plants.

Sustainable ranching in the Seashore also provides an excellent opportunity to educate the millions of visitors who come visit each year. In these unique working landscapes, visitors can witness for themselves how locally-produced food reduces greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the distance traveled from farm to table.

I firmly believe that not only must the National Park Service provide for continued ranching, but the National Park Service should do so in a manner that places these ranchers on sound footing. We must provide farmers and ranchers assurance that the land they are investing in today will be there tomorrow for their children, let alone around long enough for them to recoup their investments.

That is why I asked for, and former National Park Service Director Mary Bomar agreed to issue, ten-year leases. That the National Park Service subsequently decided to issue twenty-year leases is another step in the right direction. These types of leases will allow ranchers to amortize the costs of vital capital improvements, like installing fencing and developing water sources for livestock.

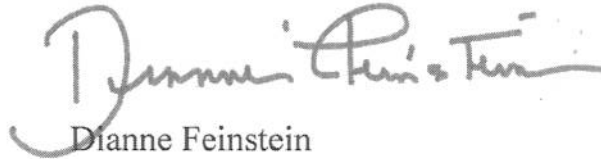
I am also acutely aware that this drought has taken its toll on farming in the area. As a result, diversification of crops and income is now more important than ever. The upcoming Ranch Management Plan should allow for some level of agricultural diversification within the special use permit, including small-scale row crop farming, production of different livestock species, and allowance of agricultural processing and sales. Not only would these types of allowances afford ranch families stability, but they would also provide the local community with diversity of local foods.

² Dept. of the Interior, Memorandum, *Point Reyes National—Drakes Bay Oyster Company*, Nov. 29, 2012.

At a time when climate change highlights the importance of local food sources, we should be applauding, not vilifying, farmers at Point Reyes. I ask that you please keep me and my staff updated as you continue to develop the Ranch Management Plan.

I would like to close with a quote from the National Park Service's General Management Plan of 1980: "There is no better place for man to contemplate his origins, the factors that sustain him, and the threats that may destroy him, than at the edge of the sea." I am now more convinced than ever that this national treasure and its lessons should be preserved for our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dianne Feinstein". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

DF:kr