



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

MAY 18 2012

The Honorable Diane Feinstein
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Thank you for your letter of March 20, 2012, concerning tule elk at Point Reyes National Seashore. Point Reyes is the only national park with tule elk and reestablishment of a free-ranging elk herd in 1998 was an important ecological restoration effort for California.

The National Park Service (NPS) actively supports historic dairy and beef operations at Point Reyes and has made significant investments in ranching infrastructure. Point Reyes ranching permits are substantially discounted to reflect the complexities of managing agricultural operations within a national park.

Beef and dairy ranches operate in a challenging economic environment and we take the concerns raised by park ranchers seriously. The 1998 Tule Elk Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for Point Reyes did not contemplate, analyze, or assess the establishment of a tule elk herd in the pastoral ranching zone of the Park. Since the fall of 2010, the NPS has conducted extensive monitoring to better understand the behavior of the tule elk herd in the pastoral zone, experimented with wildlife-friendly fences, and repaired damaged fences. Ranchers have been asked to contact park staff any time that elk-related damage is suspected so that it can be documented. Collaboration with park ranchers and with the interested public is critical to successful ranch and wildlife management.

As dairies in the region succumb to larger market pressures, the NPS is proud to support the continued vitality of historic park ranches and to facilitate the reestablishment of both the historic B and L Ranch dairies in the last 2 years. The NPS will work directly with the park ranchers to address their concerns, preserve the unique ecological and cultural landscape of the Point Reyes peninsula, and continue to demonstrate that working ranches can be successful within the context of a national park.

Sincerely,

Ken Salazar