

STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR , NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING H.R. 6687, A BILL TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO MANAGE THE POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA CONSISTENTLY WITH CONGRESS' LONG-STANDING INTENT TO CONTINUE TO AUTHORIZE WORKING DAIRIES AND RANCHES ON AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY AS PART OF THE SEASHORE'S UNIQUE HISTORIC, CULTURAL, SCENIC AND NATURAL VALUES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

December 12, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 6687, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to manage the Point Reyes National Seashore in the State of California consistently with Congress' long-standing intent to continue to authorize working dairies and ranches on agricultural property as part of the seashore's unique historic, cultural, scenic and natural values, and for other purposes.

The Department supports enactment of H.R. 6687 with amendments.

H.R. 6687 directs the National Park Service (NPS) to complete the General Management Plan Amendment and EIS without delay, and upon completion of the Record of Decision, issue leases and special use permits of 20 years for working dairies and ranches on agricultural property. It redefines the agricultural property in Point Reyes National Seashore, and directs the NPS to minimize conflict between tule elk populations and the park dairies and ranches. The bill also authorizes the NPS to work with Indian Tribes interested in relocation or subsistence hunting purposes.

In 1962, when Congress created Point Reyes National Seashore, it recognized the importance of the historic beef and dairy ranching. For more than 50 years, ranchers and the NPS have worked together in stewarding these lands, which support a wide array of both cultural and natural resources.

The active ranch lands planning process is currently underway through the General Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), initiated by a settlement agreement reached by the NPS, park ranchers, plaintiffs, and the County of Marin in 2017. Under this legislation, the NPS, upon completion of the EIS and Record of Decision, would issue leases and special use permits of 20 years for working dairies and ranches on agricultural property. We recommend clarifying the language to allow the Secretary to issue leases and permits of less than 20 years, if requested.

H.R. 6687 redefines agricultural property within Point Reyes National Seashore and the northern district of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area as "lands under agricultural lease or permit

as of September 1, 2018, or lands that were in regular use for, or were being converted to agricultural, ranching, or dairying purposes as of May 1, 1978...” Revising the existing legal definition of agricultural properties could add confusion and threaten established recreational access. Today, 2.5 million annual visitors to Point Reyes, access previously ranched lands that include popular hiking and equestrian trails managed for public recreation, access, and resource protection. We recommend the Committee leave the current definition in place.

The bill provides the Secretary the authority to work with Indian Tribes; the Secretary already has this authority and relations with Tribal Nations currently exist within the Seashore. Therefore, this provision is unnecessary.

We would be happy to work with the Committee on language for our recommended amendments.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.