

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Point Reyes National Seashore  
California

July 2019

DRAFT Foundation Document

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## MISSION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The NPS core values are a framework in which the National Park Service accomplishes its mission. They express the manner in which, both individually and collectively, the National Park Service pursues its mission. The NPS core values are:

- **Shared stewardship:** We share a commitment to resource stewardship with the global preservation community.
- **Excellence:** We strive continually to learn and improve so that we may achieve the highest ideals of public service.
- **Integrity:** We deal honestly and fairly with the public and one another.
- **Tradition:** We are proud of it; we learn from it; we are not bound by it.
- **Respect:** We embrace each other's differences so that we may enrich the well-being of everyone.

The National Park Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior. While numerous national park system units were created prior to 1916, it was not until August 25, 1916, that President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act formally establishing the National Park Service.

The national park system continues to grow and comprises more than 400 park units covering more than 84 million acres in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These units include, but are not limited to, national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House. The variety and diversity of park units throughout the nation require a strong commitment to resource stewardship and management to ensure both the protection and enjoyment of these resources for future generations.

## INTRODUCTION

Every unit of the national park system will have a foundational document to provide basic guidance for planning and management decisions—a foundation for planning and management. A primary benefit of developing a foundation document is the opportunity to integrate and coordinate all kinds and levels of planning from a single, shared understanding of what is most important about the park. The process of developing a foundation document begins with gathering and integrating information about the park. Next, this information is refined and focused to determine what the most important attributes of the park are. The process of preparing a foundation document aids park managers, staff, and the public in identifying and clearly stating in one document the essential information that is necessary for park management to consider when determining future planning efforts, outlining key planning issues, and protecting resources and values that are integral to park purpose and identity.

## CORE COMPONENTS

The core components of a foundation document include a brief description of the park as well as the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, and interpretive themes. These components are core because they typically do not change over time. Core components are expected to be used in future planning and management efforts.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK

Legislation authorizing the establishment of Point Reyes National Seashore was enacted on September 13, 1962 (Public Law 87-657) for the purpose of preserving “a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped.” Today, this geologically unique peninsula encompasses more than 71,000 acres of beaches, coastal cliffs and headlands, marine terraces, coastal uplands, and forests and includes all tide and submerged lands to 0.25 miles offshore. The park administers an additional 15,000 acres of the North District of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, including all NPS lands north of Bolinas-Fairfax Road, under a regional directive for management. The lands currently under NPS management have been acquired tract by tract over time. Within the park boundary are two no-take state marine reserves, three special closure areas, and three state marine conservation areas. Marine boundaries are shared with the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary is situated further offshore.

The park manages a diversity of land uses ranging from the almost 33,000-acre Phillip Burton Wilderness (Public Laws 94-544 and 94-567), which includes one of only two marine wilderness areas in the national park system and is one of the most accessible areas in the national wilderness preservation system, to active beef cattle and dairy ranching operations. Approximately 18,000 acres of Point Reyes National Seashore is currently under agricultural production within the pastoral zone. In the North District of Golden Gate National Recreation Area an additional 10,000 acres is currently used for grazing.

Located near the San Francisco Bay metropolitan area's population of more than 8 million people, the park hosts approximately 2.5 million visitors annually. Abundant recreational opportunities include more than 80 miles of undeveloped coastline, 147 miles of hiking trails, backcountry campgrounds, and many beautiful beaches. Twenty-eight threatened and endangered species are present within the park's boundary. The park supports more than 900 plant species, about 17% of the California flora, and more

than 490 species of birds have been recorded in the park, representing 52% of the species of avian fauna of North America.

More than 120 archeological sites representing Coast Miwok history and culture have been identified within the park and have yielded some of the most significant information on American Indian history in the San Francisco Bay region. The park has about 400 historic structures including the historic Point Reyes Lighthouse built in 1870 and two national historic landmarks—the Point Reyes Lifeboat Station and the Drakes Bay Historic and Archaeological District. The park's museum collection contains more than 490,000 artifacts and documents.

The human history of the Point Reyes peninsula extends to more than 5,000 years ago and includes the long history of the Coast Miwok people who call this place home. The sheltered harbor of Drakes Bay served as the scene of one of the earliest instances of European contact and interaction with native peoples on the west coast of the United States that is recognized in the Drakes Bay Historic and Archaeological District National Historic Landmark. The unique geography of the Point Reyes peninsula, which extends more than 10 miles into the Pacific Ocean, also made it strategic for the placement of the Point Reyes Lighthouse and the primary wireless communication station in the Pacific. In 1906, Point Reyes again became the focus of wonder as the land shifted almost 20 feet along the San Andreas Fault. Although the earthquake devastated communities in the Bay Area, it also spawned new areas of geologic and scientific inquiry that have provided dramatic evidence for the theory of plate tectonics and the study of seismology. The trace of this event can be viewed today within Point Reyes National Seashore.

Saved from development by their inclusion in the national park system, the lands managed by Point Reyes National Seashore are unique not only in their assemblages of natural and cultural features, but also in the protection of wilderness in close proximity to a major urban population. This juxtaposition makes the park's resources and recreational opportunities readily accessible to a large number of people and enhances the importance of the special qualities for which it was set aside.

## PARK PURPOSE

The purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a particular park. The purpose statement for Point Reyes National Seashore was drafted through a careful analysis of its enabling legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. Legislation authorizing the establishment of Point Reyes National Seashore was enacted on September 13, 1962 (see appendix A for enabling legislation and legislative acts). The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about the park.

*Established for public benefit and inspiration, the Point Reyes National Seashore protects a rugged and wild coastal peninsula and surrounding waters, connecting native ecosystems, enduring human history, and recreational, scientific, and educational opportunities.*

The park administers an additional 15,000 acres of the North District of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, including all NPS lands north of Bolinas–Fairfax Road, under a regional directive for management. The purpose statement for Golden Gate National Recreation Area was also developed through an analysis of its enabling legislation and legislative history (see the 2017 *Foundation Document, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California*).

*The purpose of Golden Gate National Recreation Area is to offer national park experiences to all, including a large and diverse urban population, while preserving and interpreting the outstanding natural, historic, scenic, and recreational values of the park lands.*

## PARK SIGNIFICANCE

Significance statements express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. These statements are linked to the purpose of Point Reyes National Seashore, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Statements of significance describe the distinctive nature of the park and why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. They focus on the most important resources and values that will assist in park planning and management.

The following significance statements have been identified for Point Reyes National Seashore. (Please note that the sequence of the statements does not reflect the level of significance.) Additional significance statements relating to lands of Golden Gate National Recreation Area managed by Point Reyes National Seashore can be found in the *Foundation Document, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California (2017)*.

- The Phillip Burton Wilderness at Point Reyes National Seashore, although immediately accessible to a large urban community, offers an extraordinary opportunity for solitude and unconfined recreation in untrammelled terrestrial and marine environments.
- Point Reyes National Seashore supports internationally recognized biodiversity due to its dynamic geology, mosaic of terrestrial and marine environments, and location at one of the four major coastal upwelling zones in the world. The park protects thousands of plant and animal species, many of which are threatened or endangered.
- The productive coastal grassland ecosystem supported by the fog-driven climate of the Point Reyes Peninsula was the basis for development of the area's historic dairy and beef ranch tradition.
- Representing more than 5,000 years of human history, Point Reyes National Seashore contains one of the most intact and well preserved landscapes of American Indian history and a material record of one of the earliest instances of cultural contact between American Indians and European explorers on the west coast of the United States. The Coast Miwok, federally recognized as the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, maintain cultural ties to the Point Reyes Peninsula.
- The geography of the Point Reyes Peninsula, which extends almost 10 miles into the Pacific Ocean, both necessitated and facilitated the development of innovative maritime and radio communications technologies that influenced the history of the region and the nation.
- The geology of the Point Reyes Peninsula inspires both visitors and scientists. The coastal bluffs expose an intersection of sedimentary deposits rich in paleontological history, whereas vistas of Tomales Bay and the Olema Valley, shaped by the San Andreas Fault, provide an

exceptional opportunity to visualize and study plate tectonics. Studies here have helped geologists refine our understanding of Earth's history.

- With its proximity to the San Francisco Bay metropolitan area, the undeveloped scenic coastal landscapes and rich biodiversity of Point Reyes National Seashore offer opportunities to visitors from around the world for inspiration, recreation, education, and research.

## FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCES AND VALUES

Fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values are closely related to a park's legislative purpose and are more specific than significance statements.

Fundamental resources and values help focus planning and management efforts on what is truly significant about the park. One of the most important responsibilities of NPS managers is to ensure the conservation and public enjoyment of those qualities that are essential (fundamental) to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. If fundamental resources and values are allowed to deteriorate, the park purpose and/or significance could be jeopardized.

The following fundamental resources and values have been identified for Point Reyes National Seashore. Additional FRV statements relating to lands of Golden Gate National Recreation Area managed by Point Reyes National Seashore can be found in the 2017 *Foundation Document, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California*.

- **Wilderness.** The Phillip Burton Wilderness comprises almost 33,000 acres of land and water, roughly one-third of the lands administered by the Point Reyes National Seashore. It is the only federally designated wilderness in the San Francisco Bay Area and includes one of only two marine wilderness areas in the national park system. The Phillip Burton Wilderness provides access to outstanding opportunities for solitude and inspired recreation adjacent to a large urban area.
- **Scenic Coastal Landscapes.** Shaped by ongoing geologic processes, the Point Reyes Peninsula juts 10 miles into the Pacific Ocean and encompasses more than 80 miles of wild beaches, dramatic cliffs, and detached coastal formations. Point Reyes National Seashore offers opportunities to observe and understand the interaction of land and sea from many perspectives, including geology, ecological disturbance, and climate change.
- **Marine, Estuarine, and Freshwater Environments.** Natural interactions and connections between freshwater, estuarine, and marine systems are indicators of ecosystem health and examples of resilience. Protection of these environments and the interactions between them is important for the ecological health of intertidal invertebrates and fishes, pinnipeds, seabirds, shorebirds, and dune plants, among other species, which are threatened by rising sea levels, changes in nutrient and temperature regimes, oil spills, and other pressures.

- **Diversity of Habitats and Native Species.** In Point Reyes National Seashore the convergence of ecological regions at the continental margin creates a complexity of terrestrial and marine habitats that sustain exceptional and internationally recognized native biodiversity, including a wide range of rare and endemic species.
- **Maritime Cultural Landscapes.** Point Reyes National Seashore preserves nationally significant maritime sites including the Lifeboat Station and iconic Point Reyes Lighthouse and Marconi/Radio Corporation of America (RCA) radio stations. Together with dozens of shipwrecks offshore, these sites illustrate important stories of heroism and innovation in lifesaving, navigation, and communication technologies, including the first wireless communication across the Pacific Ocean in 1914.
- **Continuum of Human Use.** Point Reyes National Seashore preserves a landscape representing more than 5,000 years of American Indian history that is of outstanding archeological and cultural significance to the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria and records early culture contacts between Coast Miwok and European explorers. The park preserves two districts (Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic District and Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches Historic District) that recognize more than 150 years of ranching on the Point Reyes Peninsula.
- **Opportunities for Inspiration and Recreation.** A system of trails, beaches, and waterways in Point Reyes National Seashore provides a wide variety of year-round activities and coastal access just an hour's drive from the San Francisco Bay Area. Activities include whale watching, hiking, kayaking, beach recreation, bird watching, horseback riding, backpacking, and wilderness experiences.
- **Science and Learning.** Science and restoration efforts throughout Point Reyes National Seashore lay the groundwork for educating visitors, informing management, and fostering stewardship. The park's proximity to San Francisco Bay Area institutes, colleges, and universities enables numerous learning laboratory and research opportunities.

## INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all park significance statements and fundamental resources and values.

Interpretive themes are an organizational tool that reveal and clarify meaning, concepts, contexts, and values represented by park resources. Sound themes are accurate and reflect current scholarship and science. They encourage exploration of the context in which events or natural processes occurred and the effects of those events and processes. Interpretive themes go beyond a mere description of the event or process to foster multiple opportunities to experience and consider the park and its resources. These themes help explain why a park story is relevant to people who may otherwise be unaware of connections they have to an event, time, or place associated with the park.



The following interpretive themes have been identified for Point Reyes National Seashore:

- Point Reyes National Seashore and surrounding national marine sanctuaries and national wildlife refuges support an abundance and diversity of species and their essential habitats in a relatively wild, natural state. These resources provide a benchmark for monitoring environmental change.
- Point Reyes has attracted and supported people for thousands of years, creating a tapestry of stories, interactions, and experiences.
- Point Reyes National Seashore provides an outdoor classroom and laboratory for the study of geological and ecological processes that will foster greater understanding, restoration, and caring for native ecosystems.
- Dynamic geologic processes and broad changes occurring in part as a result of climate change are continually defining and shaping the landscape of Point Reyes National Seashore, creating new challenges in its preservation, and offering new research and interpretive opportunities.
- The land and waters of the Phillip Burton Wilderness, an hour's drive from downtown San Francisco, are a sanctuary for nature and the human spirit that supports recreation, exploration, inspiration, and solitude and serves as a reminder of the human connections with this area.

Additional interpretive subthemes would be developed through future interpretive planning.