EMERSON KNIGHT, INSPECTOR DISTRICT IV
STATE PARK BCW, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

SAN FRANCISCO
OCT. 17, 1934
Mr. Ben H. Thompson, Acting Director
Wildlife Division
National Park Service
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

FOREWORD

Conformable to the request of Mr. Lawrence C. Merriam, District Officer, I here submit my general survey of proposed National Beach Parks for the State of California and list a series of desirable areas, ranging from the Oregon to the Mexican line, together with some comment on and discussion of them based on past travel and observation. Because these coastal areas were never reviewed in the field with this precise purpose in mind, and on account of my dependence on memories dating back from a few to a score of years, it is not possible for this report to be entirely spontaneous or freshly inspirational.

Due to an earlier long residence in Southern California and services in behalf of the Save-the-Redwoods League, Frederick Law Olmsted, The California State Park Commission, and the National Park Service in 1933–1934, I have acquired a fairly good acquaintance with a number of the areas involved and in such cases my convictions are more sure with respect to their fitness for Federal Park ownership and administration. Where I have depended on memory I believe that it serves me accurately.

The reports of H. W. Shepherd, Landscape Architect,
as already sent you, and covering beach surveys made along county
frontages south of San Francisco contain information and valuable
comments in detailed form and all of these may serve to amplify and
clarify portions of this study. It should be borne in mind, however,
that all of the Shepherd reports were rendered from the State Park
acquisition and control point of view and that none of the areas were
conceived as of national calibre. It is also true that they gave
little thought to the wisdom of acquiring hinterlands to round them
out and no thought whatever to wild life.

Akin to my conception of National Beach Parks
appropriate for Oregon, I feel that in California particularly the
problem should be approached in the broadest and most generously in-
clusive manner. Great care should be exercised to in no wise hamper
the excellent vision and work of the California State Park Commission,
or even County of individual Community initiative in the acquisition
of parks meeting the natural growth need of each agency. Just as far
as has been possible the units herein recommended lie in very large
parcels or rather regions not interrupted or punctuated by any towns
or communities of importance. It is also assumed that after all have
been reviewed and later given more detailed study, perhaps only a few
of the very finest of these areas will fully meet National Park stand-
ards and be chosen for purchase and preservation by the Government in
National Wildlife Reservation form.

With such limited recent first hand knowledge as I
have of these areas, it is not expedient to prepare questionnaires
with respect to each nor to attempt to rate them on a priority basis.
It is also sincerely regretted that it is not possible to illuminate the whole with good photographs and large scale maps.

The sea front areas are discussed in sequence from Del Norte County southward to San Diego, omitting only San Francisco City and County which is a metropolitan area. The discussion closes with mention of our highly interesting channel islands lying off the coast of Southern California. The areas expressed in square miles are extremely general and approximate for while the ocean front distance is a known quantity the depth of territory desirable to acquire can only be determined after detailed examination of the often wild and mostly unknown hinterland. Ridges paralleling the sea or other logical limits such as forest boundaries may prove determining factors. For one properly qualified for such a task the study should be fascinating.

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DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED NATIONAL BEACH AREAS IN CALIFORNIA RANGING IN SEQUENCE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH AND DESIGNATED BY CAPITAL LETTERS.

AREA "A" - Unit extending from the mouth of the Klamath River in Del Norte County to the mouth of Mad River in Humboldt County, and inland to the Redwood Highway or possibly further. Area, 120 square miles approximately.

This is the first comprehensive stretch of noble coastland lying south of the Oregon line, not in state park control. (Just north of this is situated the Del Norte Coast State Park of exceptional worth in diversity of scenery, topography and plant life, which includes or will include salt water frontage for quite a number of miles and which
should continue along with other wisely planned major projects of
the Save-the-Redwoods League in state park control. Under such
conditions the Del Norte Coast Park can expand northward toward
Crescent City and southward to the mouth of the Klamath River, there-
by forming a direct link with the area here proposed.

Unit A includes excellent beaches, a generally bold front
with rocky bluffs, and the trilogy of Humboldt Lagoons which are unique
and extraordinarily fine features of California's coast. Stone,
Freshwater and Big Lagoon form a chain, each with its own sandspit
separating the turbulent ocean from expansive interior reaches of water
with lakelike tranquillity. Their environment is varied and pleasantly
affected by seasonal moods. In May impressive masses of pink Azaleas
combined with the blues of wild Lilac and Iris, contrasted with the
young ruddy foliage of Huckleberry run riot over the great slopes and
form a sight never to be forgotten. Redwoods have their luxuriant
undergrowth of ferns and rhododemons, while alders, maples and willows
grace the shoreline.

Within this unit rests the problem of whether to in-
corporate the present Dry-Stone Lagoon and Patrick's Point State Parks or
to extend the National Beach park far enough east of the Redwood High-
way to develop a great continuous unit, thereby providing a more diver-
sified territory for wildlife.

The proximity of Prairie Creek State Redwood Park to
the ocean front raises a question with respect to this proposed Area A.
When the writer prepared for the Save-the-Redwoods League reports on
the Prairie Creek project, the maximum area recommended included the
entire ocean frontage west of Prairie Creek. Should such logical
amplification of the existing state park be achieved, the National Beach Area A as above outlined would necessarily be divided into two sections lying to the north of Prairie Creek. By keeping in mind the zeal and objectives of the State Park Commission, adjustments in boundaries can be so effected that Federal and State ownerships can complement each other.

This whole region is strikingly beautiful besides being well known to and cherished by thousands of motorists who travel the Redwood Highway and explore the adjacent countryside. Especially because no town of importance breaks its continuity and splendid unity it becomes of first importance as a potential National Beach Park zone.

AREA "B" - Unit extending from the mouth of Eel River in Humboldt County to the south boundary of said county, and inland to a logical ridge limit, roughly 6 to 12 miles eastward. Area approximately 300 square miles.

While at the present time this is a but little frequented and scarcely known region it will naturally assume paramount importance after the projected coast highway of both state and national significance is developed. Bold bluffs and smooth beaches are included in this region now of wilderness character for the most part, because the Redwood Highway in following the Main Eel River and its South Fork is positioned some miles distant over ridges to the eastward. There are portions of this area which the writer has not had the opportunity to examine and study in detail but there is no question but that the worth of the whole can be enjoyed along recreational and inspirational lines, besides affording protection to wild life along the shore and
among the forested hills of the hinterland. Redwoods, madrones, live and tan oaks predominate among the flats and hills. Along streams alders, dogwoods, willows and maples are chiefly abundant.

AREA "C" - Ocean frontage from the north boundary of Mendocino County south to Laguna Point, (just above Fort Bragg) and inland to first logical ridge boundary in coast range, with average width of 6 to 10 miles. Area approximately 225 square miles.

This superb stretch is broken by but few and small communities. Occasional groups of trees grow close to the coastal front which is rugged with bold bluffs but also includes some fine beaches. The scattered pines and cypresses are windblown and picturesque. Old farm houses with broad-sweeping barn roofs of distinctively California type cluster closely in semi-protected canyons and because well located and weathered by sea winds seem married to their environment. The skies are often a vivid blue and there is much to allure the recreationist through fishing, picnicking, zest of salty ozone and wildflowers in season. Such regions are sought by thoughtful artists, painters, etchers and writers who seek nature's lonelier and sequestered moods apart from settlements. They are among our strong individualists whose gifts to us awaken fond recollection and high aesthetic pleasure. Unfortunately some of the interior lands have been severely cut over but large sections afford ample cover for wildlife.

AREA "D" - Ocean frontage from the mouth of the Navarro River in Mendocino County southward to Fort Ross and inland roughly 6 to 10 miles to logical ridge limit. Area approximately 300 square miles.

A rugged seafront with fine beaches, bluffs and steep
hills characterize this fine area which is second in accessibility north from the San Francisco Bay Region. Fishing, bathing and walking are potential pleasures. The hills are much given over to grazing, especially sheep. The interior woodlands include Redwoods, Douglas Firs, Madrones, Live and Tan Oaks and other native species in happy combination. Brush is dense on the upper slopes and ridges. The lower reaches of the Gualala River should offer a variety of recreation including boating, bathing and picnicking in a fine vacation area. Some camping with due restrictions might be permitted. The warm brown color of bluffs and outcropping rocks in contrast with skies of deepest blue intensify the grandeur of nature in a region big in scale with consequent sweeping vistas. Wildlife should be plentiful and fascinating to observe.

AREA "E" - Ocean frontage from the south end of Bodega Bay to Bolinas town, Marin County, including Tomales and Drake's Bays and inland to logical ridge boundaries with an average width ranging from 6 to 12 miles. Area, approximately 200 square miles.

Because of its exceeding beauty and unusual topographical and plant interest and its proximity to the San Francisco Bay metropolitan area the importance of this region as a potential National Beach Park cannot be over emphasized. Rugged cliffs, superb broad sandy beaches, protected bays and luxuriant woodlands rich in undergrowth with stands of Bishop Pines and windswept Laurels are but a few of its strong features. The great peninsula lying between Tomales Bay north and Drakes Bay southward is ideally isolated to form the kind of park that will insure the nature seeker a feeling of remote-
ness and wilderness joy. Private ownerships and interests have thus far denied some of the best of these areas to the use and enjoyment of the people. Although it was recommended as a state park in the Frederick Law Olmsted survey of 1928 it is also sure that on account of the extensive, noble unit involved, with its diversity of features and interest it is of National Park Calibre. The cost of the land would prove high.

AREA "w" - Ocean frontage from San Pedro Point, San Mateo County, south to Point Ano Nuevo in the same County and inland to the Skyline Boulevard or other logical boundary, (Excepting such towns as Moss Beach, Half Moon Bay, San Gregorio, Pescadero etc. Area approximately 150 square miles.

This area is not so gifted in varied beauty and strongly unique features as is Area E in Marin County but is nevertheless important recreationally due to its nearness to the San Francisco metropolitan zone and also the chain of towns extending southward as far as Palo Alto. Access to the ocean front is also had from the interior towns by means of the San Mateo and Dumbarton Bridges; also through the future traffic of the San Francisco-Oakland Transbay Bridge. In this sector as reported upon by H. W. Shepherd, Landscape Architect, are many fine beaches where fishing, bathing and wading can be enjoyable. Not only is the shoreline diversified but the interior forests of redwood with their admixture of Madrones, Tan Oaks and other native trees are very fine. A moderate development of trails and roads will reveal their physical beauty and some of their wildlife.

AREA "g" - Ocean frontage from north boundary of Santa Cruz County to near the limits of Santa Cruz town and inland to logical ridge limit or to unite with the boundaries of
California State Redwood Park, Area, approximately 50 square miles.

The coastal front of this unit is of varied interest with some excellent beaches and precipitous bluffs. A number of stream courses are valuable for potential recreation and because they include good stands of redwoods, largely of second growth. In Gazos Creek, which forms a fire escape route from California Redwood Park, heavy logging operations in the past have left their toll of debris and a resulting severe fire hazard. The seafront offers fishing, bathing and picnicking and the canyons invite climbing over future soundly planned trails, always exhilarating, through the redwoods in a region intimately beautiful. It is important to plan uniting the eastern limits of this park with the western and southern ones of California State Redwood Park for mutual protection, and for the convenience and safety of motorists travelling seaward by a series of different outlet roads in the event of a bad fire in the Big Basin.

It is felt that the Santa Cruz County seafront south of Santa Cruz town will be adequately preserved in State Parks already acquired or projected.

AREA "H" - Ocean frontage from the north end of Long Beach, (about 12 miles north of Point Sur) southward to the south boundary of Monterey County and inland to meet the boundaries of the Santa Barbara National Forest. Area, approximately 110 square miles.

This remarkable area, supplemented by Area I, which adjoins it on the south is without question one of the most comprehensive, unified and glorious stretches of coast on the entire California front. It is quite free of towns or habitations. Combining dramatic, dynamic and pristine grandeur with the more intimate charm of sheltered canyons
shaded by redwoods and oaks, it offers the sharpest of contrasts.

Besides its many recreational possibilities it offers sheer inspiration. Because remote recesses of its amazingly steep hills are little travelled and less known it is sure to harbor abundant wildlife.

Forceful painters and such poets as Robinson Jeffers have paid tribute to this region as if indeed it were the mysterious realm of primal gods. It is of highest National Park calibre.

AREA "I" - Ocean frontage from north boundary of San Luis Obispo County, southeasterly to Pismo Beach and inland to logical ridge boundaries with an average width of from 3 to 6 miles. Area, approximately 200 square miles.

This splendid unit which unites with Area H has already been emphasized for its high intrinsic worth. It begins to take on the atmosphere of balmier and warmer regions of the southland and hence its beaches will be more prized and much more used for bathing than many stretches northward. In considering the probable use of beaches in generations to come there will be three classes of devotees. First will be those who reside in or near communities lying on or close to the ocean front. Second will be the large group that travel along the seashore originating from other coastal cities or even outside the state. Third will be the important group that resides in the hot interior valleys for they, more ardently than any other class, will seek escape from extreme heat akin to the desert and thus by contrast with their usual life will enjoy the beaches to the west of them in the heartiest and most genuine manner. Wildlife haunts should be well protected in the interior.

AREA "J" - Ocean frontage from the mouth of the Santa Maria River
or north boundary of Santa Barbara County, south to Point Conception and east to Naples, extending inland to Southern Pacific right-of-way or further and north to the Santa Barbara National Forest, between Port Oxford and Naples. Approximate area, 75 to 100 square miles.

Much of this frontage will be more valuable at that time in the future when California is much more densely settled. The beaches will be cherished for fishing, bathing and picnicking and the greatest of care should be exercised in their development, as in other coastal areas proposed for National Beach Parks, so that the best inherent qualities of the landscape shall be maintained. Possibly some planting of native species will be needed for the control of sand dunes and as windbreaks. It will also be fortunate, especially in the preservation of wildlife for these boundaries to unite with those of the National Forest as thoroughly as possible.

AREA "K" - Unit, frontage from Laguna Point in Ventura County, southeasterly to Ventura County line and inland roughly 6 to 7 miles. Area approximately 50 square miles.

This area gains prominence due to the coastal highway or major artery following the sea front, its close relation to high, bold hills and the genial warmth of Southern California. Not being richly endowed with tree growth, the interior may support a rather limited amount of wildlife. The exact worth of the section is not known personally to the writer but both scenically and recreationally it is quite sure to be good. In any event it will prove extremely valuable due to its moderate distance from thickly populated Los Angeles County.

AREA "L" - Unit, frontage from west boundary of Los Angeles County to Malibu Point and inland approximately 6 miles. Area, approximately 70 square miles.
The degree of development here may possibly render prohibitive the cost of purchasing lands and creating a National Beach Park. There are fine beaches and bluffs and many potential recreational possibilities. Its closeness to the great Los Angeles metropolitan center makes it extremely valuable from a park point of view if not one for wildlife. It may be, however, that certain areas set aside by the State, the County or communities can take reasonable care of recreational needs, if properly acquired, planned and used.

AREA "M" - Ocean frontage in Orange County from Newport Beach to Capistrano Beach and extending inland roughly for five miles. Area approximately 75 square miles.

The intensive development of so much of the Southern beach frontage in California and the high cost of the properties makes somewhat questionable the wisdom of creating a National Beach Park in Orange County. As in the case of Los Angeles County it might prove the best course to gradually let such agencies as the State Park Commission, County and City authorities absorb whatever desirable areas they can secure and administer them as best befits areas lying close to large population centers. The importance of the region cannot be overlooked on account of the many fine beaches, the excellent warm climate and even the value of the back country. Because it is but very moderately tree clad and much of that is artificial, it cannot be expected to harbor a great deal of wildlife.

AREA "N" - Ocean frontage from the north boundary of San Diego County southward to Oceanside and inland roughly 5 miles. Area approximately 75 square miles.
The beaches along these warm southern reaches are among the finest anywhere on California's coast. Because of their beauty combined with that of noble breakers, blue skies and sunburned hills they develop an atmosphere inducing relaxation that spells genuine unbending, rest and the invitation to the soul for unhurried contemplation and enjoyment. They will be sought eagerly by residents of inland San Diego County, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties and even Arizona. Also in this zone, long since visited by Fra. Junipero Serra, one feels strongly the glamour of early California history. This feeling moreover might be felt in many spots along California's coast. Because of the arid nature of the immediate interior, it will not prove as rich in wildlife as a number of the northern, partially forested regions bordering the seafront.

AREA "O" - Units comprising our California-offshore Islands, including; San Miguel Island, Santa Rosa Island, Santa Cruz Island, Anacapa Island, San Nicholas Island, Santa Barbara Island and San Clemente Island. Area ? Square Miles.

The Island of Santa Catalina is not here proposed because it is known to be in private ownership and used in a manner at variance with usual park standards. Good water is lacking on some of these areas, including San Nicholas and San Clemente Islands, but such larger bodies as Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands are quite suitable for a variety of recreational uses such as fishing, bathing, and climbing, as well as picnicking and camping. They offer ideal refuge for sea birds and many varieties frequent them, nesting and breeding there. In a voyage taken with members of the Cooper Ornithological Society years ago, the writer noted millions of gulls breeding on
tiny Santa Barbara Island while rookeries of cormorants and other sea birds were observed along the protected southerly shores of San Nicolas Island. Gulls were of many species. Abalone pearls were gathered in abundance by a lone inhabitant then on the latter island.

These areas should all prove of great importance in future years if carefully set aside and administered by the Federal Government as Wildlife and Recreational Parks. They are not difficult to reach from the mainland and possess much physical beauty in addition to all their other advantages. It might be best, of course, to select one of two of the finest of these islands in the event that it might prove not feasible to acquire all.

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IN CONCLUSION

The advantages in early acquiring and preserving a few or a larger series of the best of these mainland ocean front areas in National Park or Reservation form would be five fold.

First - Some of the finest of California's beaches now in private ownership would be assured protection for all time in large, comprehensive units for their wildlife, recreational, scenic and spiritual values. The fact that they would be thus freed from commercial phases or any marring of the landscape is of highest significance.
Second - Large tracts of valuable interior lands, not interfering with grazing or agricultural needs, would include hills, valleys, forests, streams, meadows, marshes and lagoons and could be preserved for the effectual security of wild life.

Third - The topographical, scenic and inspirational values of existing and future major coastal highways and minor pleasure roads would be laid inviolate over stretches miles in length, freed both from unsightly advertising signs and utility or other structures badly designed.

Fourth - The setting aside of these areas by the Government will insure their being adequately protected against fire and other abuses. Simultaneously any desirable circulation roads and foot or horse trails developed through these lands, even with a primary objective recreational, will also serve to complete means of access for fire control.

Fifth - These great tracts should have logical limits that will link them happily with existing National Forests and State Parks, thus tending to round out a well knit fabric of recreational areas in public control, and making for a sound future in out-of-door life for all of the people.

Respectfully submitted

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