



Foundation Document Overview

Point Reyes National Seashore

California



Contact Information

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Purpose



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.



Significance

Significance statements express why Point Reyes National Seashore resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- 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.



Significance

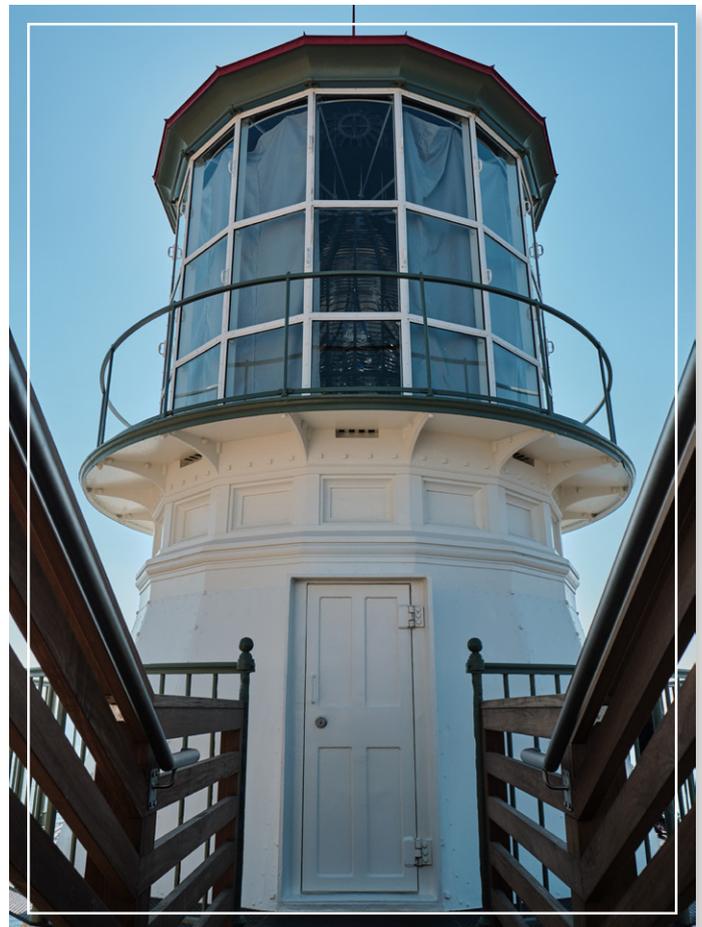
- Representing more than 5,000 years of human history, Point Reyes National Seashore contains one of the most intact and well preserved landscapes of American Indian history and a material record of one of the earliest instances of cultural contact between American Indians and European explorers on the 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 are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Wilderness**
- **Scenic Coastal Landscapes**
- **Marine, Estuarine, and Freshwater Environments**
- **Diversity of Habitats and Native Species**
- **Maritime Cultural Landscapes**
- **Continuum of Human Use**
- **Opportunities for Inspiration and Recreation**
- **Science and Learning**



Description

Point Reyes National Seashore is a geologically unique peninsula that 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. Located near the San Francisco Bay metropolitan area's population, the park offers abundant recreational opportunities including 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, and more than 490 species of birds have been recorded in the park, representing 52% of the species of avian fauna of North America.

The park manages a diversity of land uses ranging from the almost 33,000-acre Phillip Burton Wilderness, 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. 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 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 park contains many important historic structures, districts and landmarks, 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 also includes two ranching historic districts, listed in the National Register – the Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic District and the Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranches Historic District. The ranches in these historic districts helped catapult Marin County to the forefront of butter and cheese production by the 1870s.

The unique geography of the Point Reyes peninsula 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.

