

Habitat Restoration. Historic and more recent human activities have degraded natural resources in many areas of the parks. These disturbances range from dams on creeks, which obstruct the passage of fish, to rapidly spreading introduced plants, which have substantial negative effects on native species. Examples of restoration projects that have occurred recently in the parks include the Giacomini wetlands restoration project and the Coastal Watershed restoration described below. Additional efforts to remove impediments to fish passage, improve riparian habitat along creek segments or remove nonnative vegetation would occur under all alternatives, although the degree of restoration may vary.

The Giacomini wetlands restoration and Coastal Watershed restoration projects were both initiated in 2007. The Giacomini project will restore 550 acres of wetlands at the head of Tomales Bay within Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The area is administered by Point Reyes National Seashore. The project would restore processes and functions to an area that represents as much as 12 percent of the wetlands present along the outer central California coast. More than 60 percent of the Tomales Bay vegetated intertidal wetlands were lost in the 1940s with diking of a 550-acre historic coastal marsh for a dairy operation. Wetlands play an important role in watershed health through functions such as nutrient and sediment retention. These functions are particularly important in Tomales Bay, which has been declared impaired by the Regional Water Quality Control Board for sediment, nutrients, pathogens, and mercury. See appendix D for more detailed information.

The Coastal Watershed restoration project will restore natural conditions and increase estuarine habitat at Point Reyes. At several sites within PRNS, construction across stream or estuarine habitat impedes natural process and is not consistent with long-term park and NPS management objectives. These sites impede or block access to watersheds that support threatened Central California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESU) steelhead, or have the potential to support federally endangered central California coast ESU coho salmon. Muddy Hollow Dam and Limantour Beach dam restrict tidal action from more than five acres of coastal marsh habitat. The Glenbrook crossing is a non-conforming structure within the Phillip Burton Wilderness and is a barrier to fish passage. See appendix D for more detailed information.

Threatened, Endangered and Rare Species. Monitoring of these species continues under all alternatives as does the continued protection as required by law. Habitat restoration, including the removal of non-native plant species, may provide additional benefits for some threatened, endangered or rare species. Although restoration is common to all alternatives, the degree to which it occurs differs.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Under all alternatives, MPAs will be created at the park in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). MPAs are marine or estuarine areas set aside to protect or conserve marine life and habitat and are described in more detail below. In addition to establishing MPAs in partnership with CDFG, the park intends to establish the northern extent of Drakes Estero (water portion) as both Wilderness and an MPA. The location and geographical extent of MPAs are consistent across alternatives in this Draft GMP/EIS and are shown on figure 3.

The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) was signed into law in 1999 and mandated the redesign of a statewide system of marine protected areas (MPAs) that function to the extent possible as a network. In August 2004, the California Resources Agency, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and Resource Legacy Fund Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding that both launched the MLPA Initiative and began its implementation along the central California coast. Among other actions, the MLPA Initiative established the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force,

the Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT), a statewide stakeholder interest group, and a MLPA Initiative staff.

A separate memorandum of understanding, effective January 1, 2007, continued the public-private partnership for planning marine protected areas (MPAs) in the north central coast study region that includes Point Reyes National Seashore. The MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCCRSR or “Stakeholder Group”) was convened in 2007 to begin evaluating existing MPAs and planning potential new MPAs for the area extending from Alder Creek, five miles north of Point Arena in Mendocino County, to Pigeon Point in San Mateo County. The center of this area is the 80 miles of coastline within the National Seashore.

The goals of the MLPA are:

- Goal 1: To protect the natural diversity and abundance of marine life, and the structure, function, and integrity of marine ecosystems.
- Goal 2: To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, including those of economic value, and rebuild those that are depleted.
- Goal 3: To improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal human disturbance, and to manage these uses in a manner consistent with protecting biodiversity.
- Goal 4: To protect the marine natural heritage, including protection of representative and unique marine life habitats in California waters for their intrinsic value.
- Goal 5: To ensure that California's MPAs have clearly defined objectives, effective management measures, and adequate enforcement, and are based on sound scientific guidelines.
- Goal 6: To ensure that the MPAs are designed and managed, to the extent possible, as a component of a statewide network.

The Stakeholder Group has developed proposals for two large MPAs that include land and offshore waters managed by the park. The first covers the area from Point Reyes Headlands to Drakes and Limantour Esteros and the second extends from Double Point to Bolinas Point and includes Duxbury Reef (see figure 3). The total acreage of these proposed MPAs is 4,815 acres. The MPAs would extend beyond the ¼ mile offshore boundary of the park; because PRNS only has legislative authority to this boundary, the GMP/EIS does not cover the full extent of the proposed MPAs.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Natural resources management would be somewhat expanded or enhanced under this alternative when compared to Alternative A, although less so than under Alternative B. Species inventory and monitoring efforts would be increased to gather more baseline data on ecosystem condition, and on population and species trends.

Scientific research would continue at the Science and Learning Center, and would be expanded to provide additional interpretive and educational information on key management issues. The marine science center at Sacramento Landing and associated administrative housing would be upgraded to expand and enhance research and education in the marine ecosystem with partners such as NOAA and the Bodega Bay Marine Lab.

The parks would continue to actively participate in regional conservation strategies that include other agencies and community organizations.

As in all alternatives, a ¼-mile wide corridor that parallels the western coastline of PRNS is

currently managed as Wilderness and cattle grazing is precluded in order to protect dunes and sensitive coastal areas. Fencing along this boundary would prevent cattle from accessing the area.

In addition, minor zoning changes in a few small areas of the Ranching Zone to protect sensitive natural resources would take place. Measures designed to protect sensitive resource areas in areas now used for ranching could include fencing, merging of ranch operations, decreased amount or elimination of grazing, rezoning small areas to the Natural Zone, and restoration efforts.

Similar to Alternatives A and B, current work on restoring structure and process to habitat types such as creeks, wetlands, coastal dunes, and headlands would continue, and, unlike Alternative A, would be expanded into other degraded habitat types as funding became available. Additional creek and riparian systems would be rehabilitated to improve conditions for native aquatic species. Impediments to fish passage or migration would be removed. Degraded wetland habitat would be protected from further damage, and restored to the greatest extent possible, as described above for Alternative B. For example, the size of the Drakes Beach parking lot would be reduced to facilitate a connection between the ocean and estuary, as it would in Alternative B.

Additionally, a wide range of habitat types would be enhanced or restored through removal of invasive nonnative plant and animal species. Dune restoration programs similar to those described under Alternative B would be expanded to include Limantour, North Beach and South Beach. When compared to the No Action alternative, overall habitat restoration activities would increase but not to the level proposed under Alternative B. Inventory and monitoring of threatened and endangered species would be expanded and enhanced under this alternative.