

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Point Reyes National Seashore



# Ranch CMP

## Tule Elk Workshop

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# Current Tule Elk Status in Pastoral Zone

- D Ranch Herd – 95 estimated total animals. The main herd and bachelor groups spend time on A Ranch, B Ranch, C Ranch, E Ranch, the former D Ranch, and in surrounding areas with no cattle grazing.
- Limantour Herd – 110 estimated total animals. The females, juveniles, and some males remain in the wilderness area. Approximately 25-30 males spend time on ranch lands along Estero Road through the Home Ranch area. Most activity is south of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, with only 7-8 elk to the north at any one time. The males return to the wilderness area during the rut.
- Final 2014 census numbers will be complete this winter 2014/2015.

# Current Tule Elk Status in Pastoral Zone



[http://www.nps.gov/pore/parkmgmt/upload/planning\\_ranch\\_cmp\\_background\\_map\\_free-range\\_elk.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/pore/parkmgmt/upload/planning_ranch_cmp_background_map_free-range_elk.pdf)

# Current Tule Elk Status in Pastoral Zone

- Monitoring Efforts
  - Ongoing monitoring since Fall 2010 to document elk numbers and locations within pastoral zone.
  - 4 GPS collars were deployed in October 2012 on 2 bulls and 2 cows. One cow collar is still active.
  - The park has future plans to collar at least two more elk.



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# Point Reyes Tule Elk Management Planning Overview

- Consultations and Research
  - Rancher meetings and other interested stakeholders
  - NPS units that manage elk
  - Academic professors
  - California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
  - National Park Service Biological Resources Management Division
  - Elk Workshop June 30-July 1, 2014 with CDFW and NPS-BRMD
- Range of alternatives
  - No Action Alternative
  - Action Alternatives:
    - Managed elk within the pastoral zone (limited in population size, geographic extent, or both)
    - No elk in the pastoral zone

# Point Reyes Tule Elk Management Planning Overview

- Elk Management Tools
  - A set of management tools or techniques will be selected to meet the goals of each alternative.
  - Each action alternative will likely require several management tools.
  - Management tools may be long-term continuous, as needed, or implemented one-time initially.
  - Impact analysis for each alternative – ranching operations, T&E species, visitor experience, etc.
  - Elk management tool considerations:
    - Safety (human and animal)
    - Effectiveness
    - Sustainability
    - Law and Policy

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Direct Population Management
  - Contraception
  - Translocation
  - Lethal Removal
- Indirect Population Management
  - Fencing
  - Hazing
  - Habitat Enhancements
  - Other mitigations



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# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Contraception
  - Fertility control options are generally analyzed in NPS ungulate population planning efforts.
  - Contraception trials (porcine zona pellucida) at Tomales Point were included as a management action in the 1998 elk management plan.
  - No available examples of long-term management of elk via fertility control.
- Fertility Control Considerations
  - Will require capture, immobilization, and marking of elk.
  - 60-90% of cow elk with annual boosters for population level effect.
  - Helicopter captures likely required for this level of effort.
  - Behavioral changes associated with altered reproductive cycles.
  - No population level effect for 5-10 years without other actions.

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Translocation Outside of Park
  - All other tule elk herds within California are managed by CDFW regardless of landowner.
  - Cannot move elk out of Point Reyes without CDFW partnership.
  - CDFW will currently not accept Point Reyes elk because of Johne's disease risk.
  - Data from current testing will be used to further discussions with CDFW staff.
- Johne's Disease Testing
  - NPS implemented a Johne's testing program for the free-range elk in May 2014 with Johne's Testing Center (Univ of Wisconsin).
  - Monthly fecal samples of 20-30 elk, alternating between D Ranch and Limantour herds.
  - All results to date have been negative for Johne's.

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Translocation Within Park
  - Elk moved back to Limantour area will have a strong urge to return to capture location.
  - Bull elk captured at L Ranch in 2001 and moved back to wilderness returned to pastoral zone within a week.
  - Similar occurrences noted by CDFW.
  - Transplanted elk will try to go around any newly constructed elk fences.
  - Experimental re-locations planned with CDFW for this winter. Results may be more successful with younger animals that are less imprinted on their home range.
  - Current testing will help determine risk of moving Johne's disease between free-range herds with re-location.

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Lethal Removal
  - Lethal removal approaches to ungulate management in the NPS have included:
    - park staff
    - contractors
    - trained volunteers
    - authorized hunts
  - Elk meat can be recovered and put to good use – homeless shelters, CA condor recovery.
  - Hunting pressure can also be used as a hazing technique to discourage elk from unwanted areas.
  - Initial removal numbers would be higher, but long-term management would result in limited annual removal requirements.

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Fencing
  - The elk fence on Tomales Point fences the elk into a 2,600-acre preserve.
  - CDFW has moved away from managing fenced herds where possible (ie. Concord Naval Weapons Station tule elk herd).



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# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Fencing
  - Rocky Mountain National Park recently fenced elk out of willow and aspen groves to protect these sensitive habitats.
  - CDFW encourages landowners to fence elk out of private lands when other solutions are not viable.
  - A fence-out technique at Point Reyes could include erecting fences around ranches or high value pastures.



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# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Fencing
  - A proposal has been made to construct an elk fence along the wilderness/pastoral zone boundary, from the Estero de Limantour to the top of Mount Vision, in order to keep elk within the wilderness area.



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# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Fencing Considerations
  - Fencing proposed at the wilderness/pastoral zone edge would be located outside of wilderness.
  - Access corridor needed for construction and maintenance.
  - Extensive vegetation removal required where fence does not run through or at the edge of open areas.
  - Must consider wildlife passage of other wildlife species.
  - Elk will get around the fence – it is a matter of how soon, how many elk, and what new problems arise when this happens.
  - A response plan will need to be included for when elk get around fence.

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Hazing
  - Wildlife managers have tested and implemented a variety of hazing techniques to deter wildlife away from resources in need of protection. Birds from vineyards, bears from campgrounds, etc.
  - Hazing of elk at Point Reyes since 2012 to move elk from high value pasture to adjacent area not leased for grazing.
  - Elk approached on foot by park staff.



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# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Habitat Enhancements
  - Goal would be to provide elk with high quality habitat in areas adjacent to ranchlands in order to shift elk use away from ranches.
    - Water development
    - Weed control
    - Brush control
  - D Ranch water project implement in August 2013.
    - Two 5,000 gallon tanks and 3,000 feet of pipe to maintain water in existing ponds frequented by elk.
    - Water from Drakes Beach water system used to keep ponds full until rains arrive.
  - Weed control also planned for same area to provide additional forage.

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Habitat Enhancements

Female Elk Cow 031739



July 2013

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Habitat Enhancements

Female Elk Cow 031739



July 2014

# Potential Management Tools for Point Reyes Tule Elk

- Other Mitigations
  - NPS can fix fences and/or provide fence material to ranchers.
  - Well-placed lowered crossings constructed by the NPS can also reduce fence damage.
  - Alternative fence designs and crossings following recommendations from other agencies.
  - Provide additional pasture to ranchers affected by elk.



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# Tule Elk Workshop Discussion

- No Elk in the Pastoral Zone
  - What combination of tools would work if the goal was to keep tule elk out of the pastoral zone?
  - Identify actions that are long-term continuous, immediate need, or as needed.
- Managed Elk in the Pastoral Zone
  - What combination of tools do you think would work to allow a managed tule elk herd (limited population size, limited range, or both) in the pastoral zone?
  - Identify actions that are long- term continuous, immediate need, or as needed.

# Tule Elk Workshop Discussion

- Ground Rules
  - Be respectful in tone of voice and word choice.
  - Listen for new information and understanding.
  - Speak to your own thoughts and beliefs rather than commenting on other people's ideas.
  - Share speaking time.
  - Be respectful of the facilitator and time-keepers guidance.
  - Let the recorder know if s/he has not captured your idea accurately.