



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Point Reyes National Seashore
Point Reyes, California 94956

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7617

December 6, 2012

Initial Scoping: Restoring Critical Dune Habitat Programmatic Environmental Assessment- Point Reyes National Seashore

Point Reyes National Seashore (Seashore) is planning to improve and restore coastal dune habitat in the Seashore and would like your input. Since 2001, the Seashore has been working on a series of coastal dune restoration projects near Abbott's Lagoon to remove non-native, invasive plant species such as European beachgrass and iceplant. Native dune habitat in the Seashore provides critical habitat for four federally listed, and several additional rare and unique, species of plants and animals, as well as some of the largest expanses of two rare native dune plant communities remaining in California.

However more than 1,000 acres of the 1,400 acres of coastal dunes in the Seashore are invaded by European beachgrass and iceplant, which establish vast monocultures that crowd out native plant species. As a result of this habitat conversion, reproductive success of both the federally endangered Tidestrom's lupine and the federally threatened western snowy plover has plummeted. Some of these impacts can be reduced through restoration: in 2012, more than 15,000 federally endangered Tidestrom's lupine plants germinated across approximately 16 acres of the Abbott's Lagoon project area, and plovers moved into the restoration area to nest. Based on the demonstrable success of these initial efforts in increasing rare plant and western snowy plover nesting habitat, the Seashore is initiating this planning process to expand its restoration efforts to other park dune systems in future years.

In 2009, the National Park Service completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Abbott's Lagoon Coastal Dune Restoration Project. Through this process the Seashore intends to build upon the EA that was prepared for the Abbott's Lagoon Coastal Dune Restoration Project and expand the scope of its analysis to cover potential restoration efforts in other dune areas throughout the park. This new programmatic Environmental Assessment will also incorporate the public scoping and analysis information gathered and included in the earlier 2009 document. The information will be updated to reflect advances in knowledge or restoration methods, as well as additional concerns or issues raised by the public.

Public scoping is designed to obtain public input on issues and areas of concern related to the project, including a suitable range of alternatives, the impact topics that should be incorporated, the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts and benefits, and appropriate

mitigation strategies. This scoping effort is intended to build upon earlier scoping efforts conducted as part of the Abbott's Lagoon Coastal Dune Restoration Project. Impact topics that we anticipate evaluating as part of this programmatic EA include: vegetation, species of special concern, wildlife, soils and sand movement, water resources, soundscape, cultural and historic resources, visitor experience, neighboring land use, health and safety, wilderness, and park operations and management.

This EA would evaluate a broad range of removal strategies for non-native, invasive plant species such as European beachgrass and iceplant. The latest information from dune restoration efforts in the Seashore and in other West Coast dune systems would be used to ensure that methodologies selected for evaluation in this EA are current and up-to-date in terms of any technical advances in technical approach. It is anticipated that manual, chemical, and mechanical removal strategies would be assessed and that some of the alternatives may incorporate a combination of methodologies, as the 2009 EA did. Any restoration work would be accomplished within the constraints imposed by laws, policies and sound best management practices.

As part of this planning process, we welcome your comments regarding the range of suitable alternatives, applicable impact topics, and potential impacts and benefits. The preferred method for submitting comments is via the internet through the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment site at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/pore>. From the main page, click on the Point Reyes Programmatic Dune EA link, and then on the "Scoping Letter" link to comment. You may also mail or hand-deliver comments to "Programmatic Dune EA" c/o Superintendent, Point Reyes National Seashore, 1 Bear Valley Road, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956."

Comments will not be accepted by FAX, e-mail, or in any other way than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The comment period will close January 15, 2013. Although a definitive schedule has not been developed yet, the EA would be released in 2013.

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact Lorraine Parsons, Wetlands Ecologist, at (415) 464-5193. We appreciate your participation in the process.

Sincerely,



Cicely A. Muldoon
Superintendent