

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

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.



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.