



# H.R. 6687

Rep. Jared Huffman (CA-02)

H.R. 6687 reaffirms Congressional intent to continue authorizing working dairies and ranches on agricultural property within a portion of the Point Reyes National Seashore, consistent with the seashore's historic, cultural, scenic, and natural values. It directs the Park Service to complete a General Management Plan Update in full compliance with NEPA and other environmental laws before issuing long-term leases or permits to ranching families. This keeps faith with Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's promise in 2012, as part of his decision to designate Drakes Estero a marine wilderness, that ranching families would receive the long-term leases/permits which are essential to their continued viability.



## **Bill summary**

- **Subsection (1)** clarifies the term “agricultural property” used in amendments to the Point Reyes National Seashore enabling act includes ranches in the northern portions of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which reflects current NPS policy and long-term management by Seashore personnel.
- **Subsection (2)** directs the Secretary to manage agricultural properties consistent with Congress’ longstanding intent to continue authorizing the Seashore’s historic working dairies and ranches.
- **Subsection (3)** provides direction for effective management of Tule Elk to minimize conflicts with ranches and dairies and authorizes consideration of partnerships with Native American Tribes interested in relocation or cultural ceremonial activities. This does not call for the elimination of elk in the Seashore; the Secretary has broad discretion to decide how to manage for separation in areas of conflict.
- **Subsection (4)** directs the Secretary to complete the park’s general management plan update, including National Environmental Policy Act review. Authorizes issuance of leases or special use permits of 20 years, consistent with the Act’s purposes as amended and as [directed](#) by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in November 2012. This does not impact the General Management Plan update that is currently underway, which will include a robust NEPA analysis with full participation and input by the public and will inform critical policy and operational decisions by the Park Service, including specific elk management actions and the terms and conditions that apply to leases/permits on agricultural properties.

If you have any questions about H.R. 6687, please contact Jenny Callaway with Rep. Jared Huffman at [jenny.callaway@mail.house.gov](mailto:jenny.callaway@mail.house.gov).

## **FAQ's ABOUT H.R. 6687**

### **Does this bill elevate ranching above other uses and values in the Seashore?**

No. Currently, historic ranches and dairies operate on only about 25% of land in the Point Reyes National Seashore (designated Wilderness acreage is almost twice that amount), and those operations must be consistent with policies and legal requirements that govern the Park Service's stewardship of the Seashore, including protection of historic, cultural, scenic and natural values. H.R. 6687 supports continued authorization of these ranches and dairies, subject to terms and conditions the Park Service will establish through the General Management Plan Update and the NEPA environmental review process. Nothing in the bill expands ranching in the Seashore, elevates it above other uses, or exempts it from environmental laws or standards.

### **Does the bill eliminate elk from the Seashore?**

No. There is no reason thriving elk herds and sustainable working ranches and dairies cannot coexist within the Seashore. By providing direction to manage the elk herds for separation in areas of conflict with working ranches, H.R. 6687 clearly envisions continuation of that coexistence; but it also reflects the reality that in some places, growing elk herds can conflict with working ranches and more effective separation is needed. The bill adds new tools for the Park Service to consider, including the opportunity to explore relocation and cultural ceremonial activities with interested Native American Tribes. But the Park Service retains broad discretion in determining how to manage the elk, and nothing in the bill suggests or requires that they be eliminated from the Seashore.

### **Does the bill limit public participation in the General Management Plan Amendment (GMP Amendment) or National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) processes?**

No. H.R.6687 explicitly directs the National Park Service to carry out the General Management Plan Amendment process that is underway, including a full NEPA analysis, both of which involve opportunity for significant public input. Nothing in the act will affect public participation. Please keep an eye on [https://www.nps.gov/pore/getinvolved/planning\\_gmp\\_amendment.htm](https://www.nps.gov/pore/getinvolved/planning_gmp_amendment.htm) for opportunities to make your views known.

### **Will the GMP Amendment and NEPA processes still matter, if Congress has required the issuance of long-term ranching leases/permits?**

Very much so. A full and robust NEPA analysis as part of the GMP Amendment process will enable the National Park Service to understand and evaluate the possible mitigation and management measures that could improve the environmental sustainability of the ranches and dairies, and to inform a broad range of land management policies and decisions including lease/special use permit succession planning, conservation practices, other terms and conditions of the leases/special use permits, and elk management, among other things.

### **Are any environmental standards weakened or undermined by this bill?**

No. H.R.6687 does not waive the application of any environmental standards, law, or policy. The National Park Service still retains all of its discretionary authority to set appropriate lease terms and conditions, meaning that there must be compliance with NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and any other environmental laws that may apply.

### **Congressman Huffman introduced this bill with Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT), a very conservative Republican, as his cosponsor. Isn't this unusual?**

It is! Chairman Bishop has never cosponsored a bill of Rep. Huffman's before. Furthermore, the bill was approved by the full Natural Resources Committee by "unanimous consent," demonstrating its unique degree of bipartisan support.

### **How would the Point Reyes National Seashore change if this bill is passed?**

The current National Park Service management practices, priorities and ongoing planning processes will not change as a result of H.R.6687, except in two specific ways:

1. While the National Park Service is already attempting to separate the growing Tule Elk from working ranches and dairies in areas of conflict (using fencing, hazing, and other strategies), it will need to do so more effectively under in this bill.
2. The National Park Service has repeatedly indicated its intention to grant long-term leases or special use permits after the completion of the public and environmental review processes, consistent with the [directive](#) by then-Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in November 2012. This bill codifies that commitment, while leaving the terms and conditions of those long-term leases or special use permits subject to determination through the GMP Amendment and NEPA process.

### **Who is supporting this bill?**

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, State Senator Mike McGuire, State Assemblymember Marc Levine, Marin County Board of Supervisors, Marin Conservation League, Marin County Farm Bureau, and the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria.