

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0502

April 15, 2013

The Hon. Jon Jarvis  
Director, National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Jarvis:

Thank you for confirming the authority of the Regional Director of the Pacific West Region to issue 20-year agricultural leases / special use permits for the ranches located in the Point Reyes National Seashore. As you point out in your January 31, 2013, memorandum to the Pacific West Regional Director, these longer-term lease/permits “will provide greater certainty for the ranches,” which is extremely important.

I am also gratified to see you re-affirm the Secretary’s commitment that “ranching operations have a long and important history on the Point Reyes peninsula and will be continued at Point Reyes National Seashore” (Secretary’s 29 November 2012 memorandum to you re Drakes Bay Oyster Company). That commitment is in accord with Congressional intent that agriculture is a compatible activity in, and should continue as a permanent part of, the Point Reyes National Seashore.

While longer-term lease/permits provide the ranchers with greater legal certainty, I believe we can and should do even more to ensure the continuing economic viability of ranches in the Seashore. In recent years, ranchers have requested—and to its credit, the Seashore administration has generally granted—permissions to diversify their agricultural pursuits.

I applaud the Seashore administration's openness to flexibility in recent years, and I believe the National Park Service (NPS) could do more to enable flexibility in choices for ranches in the pastoral zone, consistent with legal mandates on natural and cultural resource management.

As you know, the Seashore’s 1962 enabling legislation referred only to “ranching and dairying purposes,” and the 1978 amendments broadened the terminology to “agricultural, ranching, or dairying purposes.” I am concerned, however, that your January memorandum on 20-year lease/permit terms refers only to “grazing cattle and operating beef and dairy ranches,” which appears to narrow the range of acceptable agricultural activities. I know that the ranchers, the County of Marin, and the interested public are eager to be assured that the narrower language of your memorandum does not indicate any lessened willingness to allow appropriate flexibility in agricultural activities on the ranches.

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It is also important that the NPS and the Seashore administration establish clear and rational criteria for what activities, with reasonable conditions and in accordance with applicable law, will be allowed under these leases. Examples of such diversified activities include small-scale row crop farming, production of different livestock species, farm stays, and small-scale agricultural sales and activities. Moreover, once ranchers have received permission to pursue this flexibility, those permissions should run concurrently with their lease if they comply with applicable conditions. Addressing these points would afford ranchers in the Seashore opportunities similar to those enjoyed by other farmers and ranchers in the region, and improve our ability to maintain a viable agricultural community in West Marin in perpetuity.

The National Park Service has an excellent opportunity to make a clear, strong, and public statement of this vision of long-term sustainable agriculture in the Seashore as a part of its much-anticipated revision of the General Management Plan. As I meet with ranchers who work in the Point Reyes National Seashore and visit with NPS leadership in the region, I see this as a critical moment for reaffirming and strengthening the relationship between the Park Service and its ranching partners, particularly on the heels of Secretary Salazar's decision not to extend the lease for Drakes Bay Oyster Company.

Finally, I want to extend an invitation to you and to the leadership at the Department of the Interior to visit the Point Reyes National Seashore – with which I know you are familiar – and meet with key stakeholders to discuss the relationship between NPS and ranchers in the seashore, and the future of agriculture in this unique and spectacular place. I want you to know I stand ready to offer my assistance in this endeavor.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward working with you on this and many other matters.

Sincerely,



**JARED HUFFMAN**  
Member of Congress