History of the Proposal to Establish a
POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE RECREATION AREA

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Character and Extent of Area Involved

The Point Reyes Peninsula is a relatively undeveloped area of roughly
64,000 acres on the California coast of Marin County, about 30 miles north
of San Francisco. Roughly triangular in shape, it is bound by Drake's Bay,
the Pacific Ocean, and the San Andreas Fault line which follows Tomales
Bay down the peninsula. Within this area there is varied scenery, a wealth
of rare plant and animal life, and several sites of important historic and
archeological value.

The 45 miles of shoreline include a three-mile sand spit enclosing
Drake's Estero; the Estero itself, with a 28-mile shoreline, habitat of
resident and migratory water birds; a beach at Drake's Bay, backed by white
cliffs, where surf-fishing and swimming are popular; a 12-mile sweep of
wide, sandy ocean beach north of the Point; Abbott's Lagoon, inland behind
the dunes, ideal for foldboats and canoes; and many fine beaches on the
sheltered shores of Tomales Bay.

From the beach and dune country, one moves upward through grasslands
to brushy slopes, to the dense forest of the wooded uplands where there
are several lakes. On the west side of the Inverness ridge, the tempera-
ture is cool, and wind fairly regular, and fog is a frequent summer pheno-
menon. On the east of the ridge, warmer weather is found, with less
wind and heavier rainfall. Fog moderates the seasonal temperature changes
and the variety of topography and soils yield an extraordinary diversity
of plant and animal life. One hundred and thirty-six varieties of birds
and 43 varieties of mammals have been reported, six of the latter found
nowhere else.

The area furnishes an excellent opportunity to learn science at first
hand. Since 1906, teachers have taken students there to demonstrate ge-
ology in the San Andreas Fault zone which runs the length of the peninsula
on the east and is responsible for Tomales Bay. Along this zone the land
to the west is moving north, and there is a striking difference in the basic
formation on each side. Unspoiled by the rising tide of population near at hand, and almost separated from the mainland by the San Andreas Fault, the peninsula has been aptly called a geographical "Island in Time."

The Proposal

There is concern today about our vanishing shorelines, not only in the San Francisco Bay Area but throughout the nation. The 86th Congress saw 30 bills, sponsored by 40 members from 17 states, to establish national shoreline areas. Several of these, specifically concerning Point Reyes, were introduced by Senator Clair Engle and Representative Clem Miller.

The proposal approved by the Secretary of the Interior Fred Seaton, in his 1960 report to Congress, recommends the acquisition of 53,000 acres of the Point Reyes Peninsula to form a national seashore recreation area. Of these acres, 33,000 would be open for recreation, while on the remaining 20,000 ranching would be continued under lease agreements designed to preserve the present pastoral use. The proposal excludes the villages of Inverness and Bolinas and areas adjacent to these communities reserved for their future expansion.

The Department of the Interior estimates the cost of acquiring the land would be at least $20,000,000, with an eventual expenditure of $7,230,000 on its development.

Acquisition would be through negotiation with the owners, on terms based on fair market value as established by a non-Federal appraiser. It would be possible for the owner who sells his land to the government to make an agreement whereby he could remain on his property for the remainder of his life, or until his last surviving child reaches the age of 30. For the ranching lands not in the 32,000 acres open to public use, a renewable ten-year lease has been suggested. Such a lease-back arrangement would allow dairying to be continued on the Point, in spite of the urban growth which in other parts of Marin County has been crowding out the dairy ranches, and preserve the land as open space.

Development plans for the proposed national seashore area include a main entrance with a connecting system of roads, 25 miles of which would be newly constructed, in addition to 40 miles of existing roads which would be improved. The ranching area would be avoided as far as possible, with adequate fencing of the few miles of road which would traverse it. Boating,
camping, picnicking, and bathing facilities; comfort stations and parking areas; riding stables; scenic overlooks, and hiking trails are planned.

Present Use

Virtually all the land included in the present proposal is owned by 62 individuals or corporations; of these, six own 48 per cent and 25 own 99 per cent of the land. In addition, 20 individuals are known to have recently purchased subdivision lots. There are 15 dairy ranches, with 7,000 head of stock, about half in active milk production; and 10 cattle ranches which support about 3,500 head of beef cattle. Continued use of most of these ranches would be possible, with approximately half of the ranch acres taken into the public use area.

There is a dense forest of Douglas fir along the ridge and on the eastern slope of the Peninsula, but the lumber is not considered to be of good commercial quality, being old primeval forest. Of the estimated 12,000 acres of forest, 800 acres has been logged off, but at present cutting operations have been temporarily discontinued.

Other developments or installations are: three commercial fisheries; oyster beds under lease from the state, and an oyster packing plant; the U.S. Coast Guard Life Boat Station; a lighthouse on the Point; the Radio Corporation of America station; and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company station. These installations would remain as they are.

History of the Peninsula

Early dwellers, explorers, and settlers have enriched the history of the Peninsula. Coast Miwok Indians were the first known inhabitants. One hundred thirteen village sites have been discovered, probably not all of which were in use at the same time. Sir Francis Drake may have repaired "The Golden Hind" here in 1579. If the remains of his fort are discovered near the Estero (a possible site) it would mark the first known English settlement within the boundaries of the present United States. Drake's Bay was the scene of the first recorded shipwreck in California waters, when the San Agustín carrying the Spanish explorer Cermeno was blown ashore in 1595. Sebastian Vizcaíno, sailing north from Mexico, anchored
near Point Reyes in 1602. In the early 19th century the Bay was used by traders, whalers, and fur hunters. Later, coastal schooners carried to San Francisco the products of the Mexican cattle ranches and the dairy ranches that replaced them.

The cattle ranches were grants from the Mexican Governor of California made in the 1830's and 1840's. In 1857 most of the Peninsula was in the possession of James McM. Shafter and Oscar L. Shafter and remained in the family for over 60 years. After 1915 some of the ranches were sold, but it was not until the late 1920's and 1930's that the family disposed of the bulk of this property.

Highway Access

Present access to the Peninsula is by U.S. Highway 101, State Highway 1, and several feeder highways. Improvement of these existing spur roads is scheduled. At present they are slow to travel but highly scenic. There has been conflict over proposed changes in the coastal route, Highway 1: whether to bring it up to freeway standards or to keep it as a scenic route with some improvements. Opposition comes from groups similar to those which successfully opposed similar changes in the highway on the coast below Carmel. A proposal for a west coast scenic parkway from Canada to Mexico is under consideration. The plan to make this section into a freeway would conflict with such a proposal and at this writing further planning for that section of Highway 1, from the Golden Gate Bridge to Olema, has been deferred.

Economic Factors

Several studies recently undertaken predict striking population gains for the Bay Area, and population trends are outpaced by increasing leisure and rising incomes. Without doubt, tourism is a growing factor in the income of our state. Day-use recreation is and will continue to be at a premium in the San Francisco Bay Area and many visitors will come from afar to visit Point Reyes on weekends and during vacations.
An economic study of the Point Reyes proposal, as well as experience with other similar parks, indicates that taxes paid by private commercial activities serving visitors to the recreation area would more than compensate for the loss of taxes due to removal of land from the tax rolls. Thus the implementation of the proposal apparently would not work a financial hardship on the country, even if the federal government made no compensatory arrangements for in-lieu payments.

On the other hand, in case the national seashore recreation area were not established and the Peninsula were devoted primarily to subdivision developments, it is not clear that such development would lighten the tax burden. While some subdivisions pay their own way in taxes, the type of development normal in Marin County often creates a tax deficit, according to the Marin County assessor. A subdivider is now actively engaged in dividing and selling parcels of land on the Peninsula, within the proposed national seashore area. Three additional proposed subdivisions are currently under consideration by the Marin County Planning Commission.

Background of the Proposal

The roots of the present proposal to preserve the Point Reyes Peninsula go deep. Long noted for its unique qualities, the area received probably its earliest official recognition in 1929 when Frederick Law Olmsted made a survey for the newly created California State Park Commission and listed it as being scenically fine, having high recreation potential, and being worthy of inclusion in a state park system.

In 1935, as part of its nation-wide recreation inventory, the National Park Service surveyed the Peninsula and reported favorably on its many superb qualities, recommending that 53,000 acres be set aside for public use.

This same year saw the beginning of important actions by several civic associations and Marin County agencies.

At the instigation of a public-spirited group, known then as the Marin Survey Committee, funds from the State Emergency Relief Act were made available for a staff to undertake a planning survey. This group raised additional funds to hire Mr. Hugh Pomeroy, a planning consultant, to head the survey team. The result was "A County Planning Program" presented to
the Marin County Planning Commission in 1935. A portion of this survey contained
an inventory of existing and potential recreation areas, designating the entire west shore of Tomales Bay, from a point about a mile
north of Inverness to the mouth of the Bay, as a public reserve and eminently worthy of state park status.

The Marin Survey Committee became the Marin Planning and Survey Com-
mittee, and still later the Marin Conservation League. This group attempted
to implement the recommendations of the survey as part of its concern with
conservation, recreation and beautification of Marin County. Much that
has been accomplished in setting aside the three existing public areas on
the Point Reyes Peninsula (Drake's Bay, McClure's beach, and Tomales Bay
State Park) is owing to the initiative and help of these few active men
and women.

The master recreation plan of Marin County adopted by the Planning
Commission and the Board of Supervisors in 1943, designates as recreation
areas on the Point Reyes Peninsula: McClure's Beach, Abbott's Lagoon, addi-
tional land at Drake's Beach, land along Tomales Bay from approximately
1 mile north of Inverness to the mouth of the Bay, and lands in the Inver-
ness Ridge.

In 1954, the Marin Conservation League urged that the planning com-
mission enlarge this to include more of the seashore and uplands. Several
public hearings were held, at which dairy and real estate interests op-
posed the recommendation, and no action was taken.

Recent Developments

Four years later, in 1957, at the urging of Marin conservation leaders,
Congressman Hubert B. Scudder requested the National Park Service to speed
that part of its new survey of the Pacific Coast which dealt with the Point
Reyes Peninsula. As a result, a preliminary report was prepared and re-
leased, pointing out the area's outstanding qualifications for a national
seashore and indicating 28,000 acres as being choice recreation land. The
report was featured on page i, of the San Francisco Chronicle on June 29,
1958, and has continued to receive good press coverage ever since that time
Television programs, too, were later presented covering the National Park
Service's recommendations.
Several events occurred during the month of July, 1958. Congressman Clair Engle introduced a resolution asking that the National Park Service speed its studies and submit its findings to Congress by January 6, 1959. Newton B. Drury, chief of the State Division of Beaches and Parks, and Mary Summers, Marin County Planning Director, appeared before the State Park Commission to urge state cooperation with the federal government in financing the acquisition of the area. In response, the commission directed its staff to make a thorough study of the proposal, without, however, setting a deadline for its submission. George Collins, chief of recreation planning for Region Four of the National Park Service, was asked to speak on the national seashore proposal at a meeting of the Marin Coast Chamber of Commerce in Nicasio.

Late in July the West Marin Property Owners Association was formed in opposition to the park. Among its 35 members were ranchers and real estate interests on the Point, and interested neighbors in West Marin.

In August at the meeting of the Marin Coast Chamber of Commerce, which has an overlapping membership with the West Marin Property Owners Association, a resolution opposing the federal recreation area was passed. (Early in 1960 the Marin County Soil Conservation District, also with overlapping memberships, went on record as being against the proposal.) The main concern of these groups is loss of their land and livelihood. Dangers of the seacoast for swimming, prevalence of fog, loss of county tax money and resulting burden on neighboring areas, were also cited as reasons for opposing the plan.

On September 16, 1958, a group representing these interests appeared before the Marin County Board of Supervisors, which thereupon voted four-to-one to oppose the creation of the seashore area. No formal hearing was held by the board, nor did it hear a presentation from those supporting the move.

On October 16, 1958, the County Planning Commission held an informal public meeting at the College of Marin, at which George Collins; Dr. Paul Wilson, vice-chairman, Marin Conservation League; and James Hammond of the California State Chamber of Commerce spoke for the proposal. Bryan McCarthy, lawyer from San Rafael representing the West Marin Property Owners Association, spoke against it.
Because the economic aspects of the proposal were of concern to all those interested, $5,000 was sought; and a private foundation offered to finance a survey. The plan of the survey was rejected by the West Marin Property Owners Association, however, and the donors withdrew their offer because of the controversial nature of the proposal.

In March, 1959, the National Park Service published the results of their three-year study of the 1,700-mile Pacific Coast, in which five areas were determined to be of possible national significance. One of these was the Point Reyes Peninsula.

In June, 1959, through the efforts of Congressman Clem Miller, a federal appropriation for the economic survey proposed earlier, was approved, despite opposition from the Marin Coast Chamber of Commerce. The Marin County Board of Supervisors expressed its conditional approval of the survey by reserving the right to choose the research agency which would make the survey. The study, which would take a year to complete, was to include a land use survey as well as an economic feasibility study of the seashore project, and $15,000 was appropriated to the National Park Service for use by its staff and by independent qualified technicians whom they would hire to assist them. By November, this study was well under way. ¹

The original proposal of 28,000 acres mentioned as prime recreation land in the study of 1957 had been based on roughly drawn boundaries. To allow room for negotiation and to follow more realistic property lines, the recommended acreage was expanded to 35,000 in two Congressional bills, S2428 (Engle) and HR 8358 (Clem Miller) introduced in July, 1957. Then, with closer study, it became apparent that this plan would encourage fringe subdivisions, thereby defeating the purpose of preserving the natural scenic beauty of the area. In mid-November, Congressman Miller, speaking to a meeting of the directors of the West Marin Property Owners Association, announced that 55,000 acres was being considered with lease-back arrangements in the ranching area. This size was later confirmed by the National Park Service.

Because public access to the private lands of the peninsula is so difficult, proponents of the seashore plan urged that a film be made and

¹ This study has just appeared, under date of February, 1961.
widely distributed. The nature photographer Lauren Reynolds had already taken many pictures of the area and she was asked, with the help of another fine photographer, Mindy Willis, to expand these into a film which would show some of the outstanding features of the country. Through the efforts of the Sierra Club, money was raised, and a club member coordinated the project. The film was started in June, 1959, and had its premier showing at the annual meeting of the Marin Conservation League in March, 1960. Booking of the several copies of the film was and still is handled by the Sierra Club and thousands have seen and enjoyed "An Island in Time."

Proponents of the park had no formal organization until July 9, 1959, when the Point Reyes National Seashore Foundation was formed. The membership is largely made up of Marin County residents, but there is representation from throughout the Bay Area, and some members reside as far away as Connecticut and Texas. The main purpose of this association is to preserve the Point Reyes Peninsula.

In July, 1959, Senator Clair Engle and Congressman Clem Miller introduced bills (S 2428 and HR 8358) proposing the Point Reyes Seashore as an area qualifying under a general bill which had earlier been introduced in both houses of Congress. These bills would authorize the establishment of an area of up to 35,000 acres on the Peninsula. The introduction of this legislation was opposed by the Board of Supervisors and the Marin Coast Chamber of Commerce, and endorsed by the newly formed Point Reyes National Seashore Foundation.

Over the period from June to December 1959, the Citizens Advisory Committee on the Development of Marin County (a committee appointed by the Marin County Supervisors in October 1957 to study and recommend on any proposal which might affect the orderly development of the county) held four hearings on the proposed seashore area. Their report to the Board of Supervisors on March 15, 1960, recommended an area not greater than 28,000 acres, firm control of the development surrounding the seashore, and payments from the federal government in lieu of taxes.

In February, 1960, it was announced that a hearing on Senator Engle's bill had been scheduled by the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs for April 14, 1960, and that it would be held in Marin County. In anticipation, approximately 4,000 signatures were obtained to a
petition urging the Board of Supervisors to rescind their prior action opposing the park. The supervisors heard the proponents and received their petition on March 29, 1960, and on April 5 announced a change of position from one of opposition to one of neutrality.

Senator Frank E. Moss presided at the April 14th hearing held at the College of Marin, and Senator Engle and Congressman Miller participated. Maps and the text of the land use survey were displayed, and copies of preliminary economic data distributed. The hearing was judged an excellent one, with concise arguments presented by both sides. Ninety minutes each was allotted to presentations by opponents and proponents, after representatives of the government had outlined the proposal. At the conclusion, it appeared that there was a reasonably high degree of consensus on the following points: the Peninsula is eminently worthy of preservation on account of its high recreational potential; federal grants in-lieu of taxes should be allowed; ten-year leases with option to renew, or longer than ten-year leases, should be offered to ranchers, in order to permit amortization of the investments necessary on a dairy ranch; and fair compensation should be paid to the ranchers.

Five months later, on August 11, 1960, Fred A. Seaton, Secretary of the Interior, announced that his department recommended to Congress the passage of legislation setting aside 53,000 acres, part in public use, and part in ranching under lease-back agreements.

Prospects

The 1960 Congress took no action on the Point Reyes legislation, but early in the 1961 session Senator Engle and Congressman Miller reintroduced bills to preserve Point Reyes (S 476, on January 17th and HR 2775, on January 16th). On January 25th, Congressman Jeffery Cohelan introduced a similar bill, HR 3244.

In a special message to Congress on February 23rd, President Kennedy urged the speedy acquisition of the Point Reyes National Seashore lands, and Governor Brown, in endorsing the proposal on March 14th, called the project "vital to the future of our state in the fields of recreation and vacation areas."
On March 20th the Marin County Board of Supervisors voted to ask Congress to limit the park to 20,000 acres. They also voted against holding a public hearing on the matter. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors, on the same day, unanimously approved a resolution calling for creation of the park and this action was endorsed by Mayor Christopher.

A joint legislative resolution supporting the seashore was blocked in the Rules Committee of the California Senate on March 23rd by Marin County Senator John F. McCarthy, after it had been approved by the Assembly.

On March 24th, two Congressional committees held hearings on the bills. The newly appointed Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall, announced his support on March 28th, and on March 30th, Director Conrad Wirth of the National Park Service rejected a proposal that the total acreage for the seashore be reduced.

This is where the matter stands in April, 1961. No action has yet been taken by either Congressional Committee. With favorable committee reports, bills establishing the Point Reyes National Seashore could reach the floor of both Houses this session, and be enacted.

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1. Committee chairman are:
   Senator Alan Bible
   Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands
   Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs
   U. S. Senate
   Washington 25, D. C.

   Congressman J. T. Rutherford
   Chairman, House Subcommittee on National Parks
   Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs
   U. S. House of Representatives
   Washington 25, D. C.