

Management and Restoration of California's Coastal Prairie

Rangeland Management

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
Point Reyes National Seashore

Managing ranchlands in Point Reyes N.S.

Background

- PRNS ranching unique in NPS system
- compromise in park establishment
- ranching in the park today
- NPS as landlord: leases and special use permits

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Ranching present for 150 years before park

- Effects of past seeding, haying, farming, grazing & burning on range plant communities
- Historic buildings a cultural resource to be maintained

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PRNS est. 1962, GGNRA in 1972

Ranch acquisition through 1970's

Continuation of ranching indefinitely

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Point Reyes & GGNRA ranches today

- >50 historic ranches, some retired or combined before & after NPS
- current ranching area is 29,000 acres, or roughly one-third the area managed by PRNS
- now 23 family ranch operations, 5 in dairying, rest in beef
- 6,500 beef & dairy cattle

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Appraisals to set fair market value

- Appraisals every 5 years
- Grazing land value set by the AUM
- Ranchers do most of maintenance
- Allowance made for this & limitations imposed by NPS on some practices, e.g., herbicide, brush clearing, mowing

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Leases and Special Use Permits

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Monitoring & management

Basic tools:

- Residual Dry Matter (RDM) monitoring
- Stocking rates

Special situations:

- Riparian habitat & fisheries protection
- Wetland protection & water quality improvement

Long term monitoring

- Ranchland mapping and photo documentation


Managing for desired future landscapes

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Residual Dry Matter (RDM) monitoring

- Clipped plots repeatedly sampled since 1989
- Ocular assessment based on clipped RDMs and photo guides
- RDMs correlate strongly with annual rainfall
- Stocking adjusted where consistently low RDMs found



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Grazing modifications for riparian habitat protection: permanent removal of grazing

- 95 acres along 4500' of Olema Creek flood-plain permanently removed from grazing




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Grazing modifications for riparian habitat protection: seasonal creek crossing

- 2700' of permanent enclosure but creek crossing retained



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Grazing modifications for riparian habitat protection : riparian fencing setbacks


- electric fence permits flexibility in unstable floodplain



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Wetland & water quality protection (before)



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Wetland & water quality protection (after)
e.g., I Ranch

- 36 acres permanently excluded from use
- 70 acres to be converted to seasonal grazing





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Water quality improvement:
Construction of dairy barn for winter cattle housing






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Ranchland mapping & photo documentation

- Ranch structures & management features (fencing, stock water, etc.)




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
Ranchland mapping & condition assessment

- Cattle impact areas




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Ranchland mapping & condition assessment

- Problem areas: erosion, trailing, et cetera



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Rancher relations

- Annual meetings
- Rancher association
- Social events





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Working toward desired landscapes:

- Using change in ranch tenure to introduce new grazing regimes
- Reintroducing "low impact" grazing: seasonal, no winter feeding, mowing or brush removal



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Working toward desired landscapes:

- Variable season rotation grazing on good stands of native perennial grassland on another vacant ranch



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Working toward desired landscapes:

- Seeding project for *Bromus carinatus* in coastal grassland
- Coordinated effort with Fire Management people to use Rx burning

