

June 16, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20242



Re: Point Reyes National Seashore Oyster Company Permit Extension

Dear Secretary Salazar:

On behalf of Marin Conservation League (MCL) I am writing to urge you to deny the permit extension for the Drakes Bay Oyster Company (DBOC), which currently operates in an area within Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) that is slated for full wilderness protection in 2012. We believe that the laws and policies that established the designation of Drakes Estero as “potential wilderness” provide ample grounds for denying the permit, allowing the area to regain its intended full wilderness character.

Founded in 1934, MCL was instrumental in purchasing the first property that would become a piece of the PRNS. MCL encouraged early proposals for the national park that would be authorized in 1962. MCL played a significant role in “Saving Our Seashore” to obtain funding for purchase of key properties in 1969. And MCL subsequently worked with other non-profits and the National Park Service to recommend the areas of the 92,000-acre Park that should be designated as wilderness. In 1976, Congress enacted the Philip Burton Wilderness at Point Reyes National Seashore. A requirement of that legislation was that the pre-existing oyster farm in the Estero would be permitted to operate for the remaining 36 years of its 40-year right of use and then be closed in 2012.

Our request is founded on a critical point: To extend the DBOC permit and prioritize private commercial interests would effect a fundamental change in interpretation of the Wilderness Act and the law and policies governing National Parks. This would seriously erode the policy protections that prevent wilderness areas from commercialization, setting a poor policy example nationwide. As an aside, the DOI also should be concerned about continuing business with a company that was recently fined (December 2009) by the California Coastal Commission for violations of the Coastal Act and operating within a harbor seal protection area.

Denying the oyster company permit extension is consistent with existing laws and policies, including the FY2010 Appropriations Bill, the Seashore’s enabling legislation and the National Park Service Management Policies. The decision should be evaluated as a law and

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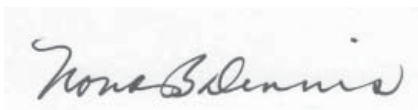
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policy issue. The ultimate benefit, however, is the opportunity to restore Drakes Estero as a marine wilderness area, thereby fulfilling the public vision that Marin Conservation League and millions of others have shared, and the legislative intent of 35 years ago.

Thank you for considering our views in this important matter.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nona Dennis", is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Nona Dennis
President

Cc:

Dan Wenk, Deputy Director, National Park Service
Cicely Muldoon, Point Reyes Superintendent
National Parks Conservation Association
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
Sierra Club, Marin Group
Marin Audubon Society