



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Point Reyes National Seashore
Point Reyes, California 94956

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7617

September 23, 2011

Dear Interested Party:

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Park Service (NPS) has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Drakes Bay Oyster Company (DBOC) Special Use Permit (SUP). The draft EIS is now available for public review and comment. The public comment period runs through November 29, 2011.

The draft EIS explores a range of alternatives, including a no-action alternative under which DBOC's existing authorizations would expire on November 30, 2012 and subsequent conversion of Drakes Estero to full wilderness. Under the three action alternatives, the Secretary of Interior would exercise his discretion to issue a new 10-year SUP to DBOC to for commercial oyster operations in Drakes Estero through November 30, 2022. The action alternatives consider differing levels of onshore facilities and infrastructure and offshore operations. At this time, there is not a preferred alternative. Full and objective input from the public is encouraged on all of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS. All public comments received on the Draft EIS will be evaluated and considered in the development of the preferred alternative which will be identified in the Final EIS.

The goal of the public comment period is to gather comments from individuals, groups, and agencies regarding the adequacy of the draft EIS in addressing the purpose, need and objectives, environmental issues of concern, and the sufficiency of the overall analysis.

How to Participate

Getting a Copy of the Draft EIS

- You can visit the National Park Service "Planning, Environment, and Public Comment" (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/pore> to download a copy of the Draft EIS. Once there, click the "**Drakes Bay Oyster Company Special Use Permit EIS**" link.
- A limited number of printed paper copies and CDs of the Draft EIS are available at Park Headquarters.
- You may also request a hard copy or CD by contacting Melanie Gunn, Outreach Coordinator at (415) 464-5162.
- Alternatively, reference copies of the Draft EIS are available at all Marin County Branch Libraries, as well as the Petaluma Main, San Francisco Main, Oakland Main and Berkeley Central Libraries.

Submitting Comments

You may provide comments using any one of the following methods:

- Comment online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/pore>. Click on "*Open For Comment*," then click on "*Draft EIS DBOC SUP*" and finally, click on "*Comment on Document*."

- You may also mail or hand deliver comments to: Draft EIS DBOC SUP c/o Superintendent, Point Reyes National Seashore, 1 Bear Valley Road, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956.
- Written comments will also be accepted at the public meetings (see dates below).

Please note that comments will not be accepted by FAX, e-mail, or in any other way than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Public Meetings

During the comment period the National Park Service will hold three open house public meetings to gather your comments on the Draft EIS. The meetings are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday October 18, 2011, 6-8 pm

Dance Palace Community Center
503 B St
Point Reyes Station, CA 94965

Wednesday October 19, 2011, 6-8 pm

Ft. Mason Center, Building D
Marina Boulevard at Buchanan
San Francisco, CA 94123

Thursday October 20, 2011, 6-8 pm

Tamalpais High School Student Center
700 Miller Ave
Mill Valley, CA 94941

Background

Project Purpose and Need

Action is needed at this time because pursuant to section 124 of Public Law 111-88, the Secretary has the discretionary authority to issue a SUP for a period of 10 years to DBOC for its shellfish operation, which consists of commercial production, harvesting, processing, and sale of shellfish at Point Reyes National Seashore. The existing RUO and SUP held by DBOC will expire on November 30, 2012. DBOC has submitted a request for the issuance of a new permit upon expiration of the existing authorizations.

The purpose of the document is to use the NEPA process to engage the public and evaluate the effects of issuing a SUP for the commercial shellfish operation. The results of the NEPA process will be used to inform the decision of whether a new SUP should be issued to DBOC for a period of 10 years.

Project Objectives

- Manage natural and cultural resources to support their protection, restoration, and preservation.
- Manage wilderness and potential wilderness areas to preserve the character and qualities for which they were designated.
- Provide opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment of park resources.

This Draft EIS evaluates four alternatives:

Alternative A. No New Special Use Permit - Conversion to Wilderness (No Action)

This alternative considers the expiration of existing RUO and SUP, and subsequent conversion of the area to Wilderness consistent with PL 94-567. The existing SUP and RUO expire on November 30, 2012. The Secretary would not exercise the discretion granted to him under Section 124 of PL 111-88 to issue a new 10-year SUP. Upon removal of the non-conforming structures and uses from Drakes Estero, the NPS would convert the area from potential wilderness to wilderness.

Alternative B. Issue New Special Use Permit - Existing Onshore Facilities and Infrastructure and Offshore Operations Would be Allowed for a Period of 10 Years

This alternative considers a level of use consistent with conditions that were present in fall 2010 when the NPS initiated evaluation under the environmental impact statement. The existing SUP and RUO expire on November 30, 2012. The Secretary would exercise the discretion granted to him under Section 124 to issue a new 10-year special use permit to DBOC, expiring November 30, 2022.

Alternative C. Issue New Special Use Permit - Onshore Facilities and Infrastructure and Offshore Operations Present in 2008 Would be Allowed for a Period of 10 Years

This alternative considers a level of use that is consistent with the conditions and operations that existed at the time the current SUP was signed in April 2008. The existing SUP and RUO expire on November 30, 2012. The Secretary would exercise the discretion granted to him under Section 124 to issue a new 10-year special use permit to DBOC, expiring November 30, 2022.

Alternative D. Issue New Special Use Permit - Expanded Onshore Development and Offshore Operations Would be Allowed for a Period of 10 Years

This alternative considers expansion of operations and development of new infrastructure consistent with the permittee's requests submitted for consideration as part of this EIS process. The existing SUP and RUO would expire on November 30, 2012. The Secretary would exercise the discretion granted to him under Section 124 to issue a new 10-year special use permit to DBOC, expiring November 30, 2022.

Project timeline

- Draft EIS released to the public: September 23, 2011
- Public review and comment on Draft EIS: September 23-November 29, 2011
- Final EIS completed and released: June 2012
- Record of Decision signed: July 2012

Additional background information is also available on the park's website at http://www.nps.gov/pore/parkmgmt/planning_dboc_sup.htm. If you have questions regarding this process, please contact Outreach Coordinator Melanie Gunn at Point Reyes National Seashore at (415) 464-5162. We appreciate your participation in this process.

Sincerely,

Cicely A. Muldoon
Superintendent