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Cattle Waste Puts California's Pt. Reyes on 'Crappiest Places in America' List

POINT REYES, Calif. — The livestock-polluted waters of Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) rank in the top 10% of U.S. locations most contaminated by feces indicated by *E. coli* bacteria, says a new report published on the investigative journalism website, The Revelator.

The report also discloses that Point Reyes National Seashore has been one of the 10 most feces-contaminated locations monitored in California since 2012 and that California's highest reported *E. coli* level was on a Point Reyes cattle ranch.

"A national park like Point Reyes shouldn't be home to some of the crappiest waterways in America," said Jeff Miller, with the Center for Biological Diversity. "The Park Service is supposed to manage these public lands for protection of natural resources, but commercial dairies and cattle ranches continue to cause significant bacterial pollution of the park's waterways."

The high fecal coliform readings came from wetlands and creeks draining ranches in the Kehoe Beach area of Point Reyes National Seashore. Eight locations in the Olema Valley that receive runoff from cattle ranches in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area also had high fecal bacteria levels. The National Park Service also manages these public lands ranch leases.

At Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) approximately 15 private ranching enterprises graze beef and dairy cattle on 24 lease units comprising over 18,000 acres of the park's 71,000 acres.

The National Park Service is currently updating the PRNS management plan to address cattle ranching impacts and grazing conflicts with native wildlife such as tule elk. The Park Service is proposing extending cattle grazing leases and possibly expanding ranch activity in the park.

The Park Service's 2013 Coastal Watershed Assessment for Point Reyes National Seashore documented numerous examples of cattle ranches polluting water resources in the park and identified bacterial and nutrient pollution from dairies and ranches as a principal threat to water quality. The Park Service allows dairy ranches to spread liquid cattle manure on grasslands throughout the park.

The Park Service's assessment determined that dairies pollute the Drakes Estero, Limantour, Kehoe and Abbotts Lagoon areas with high concentrations of fecal coliform. Other studies show that cattle ranches are one of the major contributors of fecal coliform and *E. coli* to Tomales Bay.

The water pollution analysis reported by The Revelator's used water-quality monitoring data from the Water Quality Portal, collected from more than 400 state, federal, tribal and local agencies from October 2012 to October 2017. The data was then compiled by the U.S. Geological Survey, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Water Quality Monitoring Council. The mapped data is the highest *E. coli* test result for every available testing location in the last five years.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with over 1.5 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places. BiologicalDiversity.org

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