



## Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

On January 12, 2017, Presidential Proclamation 9563 added the Cotoni-Coast Dairies unit to the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM). This proclamation called for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies (C-CD) unit to be available for public access upon the BLM's completion of a management plan. Accordingly, the range of alternatives in the Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) would provide opportunities for public access and recreation at C-CD, while ensuring care for the objects and values identified in Presidential Proclamation 9563. These objects include traditional use areas of the indigenous people, archaeological resources, as well as a wide array of habitats and the diversity of wildlife that they support, including forests, shrublands, grasslands, riparian/wetlands, and aquatic systems.

This FONSI and the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the C-CD RMPA considers three alternatives: Alternatives A, B, and C. At this time, the BLM has not selected an alternative that is considered the "proposed action" or preferred alternative.

### Context

The geographic scope of the RMPA comprises 5,843 acres of public land managed by the BLM's Central Coast Field Office in Santa Cruz County, California. The C-CD is located approximately ten miles north of the City of Santa Cruz along State Highway 1. It surrounds the small, rural, coastal community of Davenport. Prior to European contact, the Cotoni tribelet of the Costanoan People (also called the Ohlone) inhabited the area - making use of the landscape's diverse resources - for thousands of years. The landscape of C-CD is defined by a prominent series of stair-stepped marine terraces that rise from the coastline on the western edge and culminate in the steep terrain of the Santa Cruz Mountains at the eastern edge. The marine terraces are dissected by six perennial streams that flow from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the ocean. The wide, open terraces provide expansive, sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean. The steep gradient of topography and climate at C-CD produce a wide diversity of niches that support riparian zones and wetlands, grasslands, coastal scrub, oak woodlands, and conifer forest. These diverse habitats in turn, support numerous fish and wildlife species including coho salmon, steelhead trout, California red legged frogs, mule deer, and mountain lions. Additional information about the Planning Area is provided in Chapter 3, Affected Environment. The BLM designed the RMPA to minimize environmental effects by incorporating project design features and other restrictions on public uses of the C-CD unit of the CCNM.

### Intensity

The BLM considered the following criteria established by the Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ) to evaluate intensity:

- 1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effects will be beneficial.**

Preliminary effects determinations are discussed in the supporting analysis of the Draft RMPA/EA. Both beneficial and adverse effects are anticipated for biological, cultural, and other resources, as described in Chapter 4 of the RMPA/EA. At this time, the BLM considers the effects determination to be preliminary. The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate the effects of implementing the alternatives considered in the RMPA.

**2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.**

The range of alternatives relating to the protection of C-CD resources, increased public use, recreational opportunities, and environmental education and partnerships are not anticipated to cause adverse impacts to public health or safety. The proposed parking areas and visitor services to support public access at C-CD would improve public safety, specifically in relation to transportation and travel management. The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate public health and safety effects of implementing the alternatives considered.

**3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.**

The BLM's preliminary effects determinations suggest that the range of alternatives will not have a significant effect on historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The BLM will conduct coordination and complete consultation with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate effects of implementing the alternatives.

As new information is received (e.g. through additional Class III cultural surveys), the BLM will incorporate this information into its Proposed RMPA/Final EA and Final FONSI.

The recommendations for wild and scenic rivers designation would not have significant impacts because outstandingly remarkable values of river segments would be protected. The range of alternatives also identifies RMZ 2 as an ecologically critical area covering approximately 1,600 – 2,600 acres of the C-CD, resulting in beneficial effects to threatened and endangered species (see Draft RMPA/EA Chapter 4 Biological Resources sections).

**4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.**

The effects on the quality of the human environment from the proposed action are not likely to be highly controversial. The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate effects of implementing the alternatives.

**5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.**

The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate

effects of implementing the alternatives. Environmental justice is a public concern because underserved communities found in Santa Cruz County have limited access to public open spaces for recreational purposes. Access, multilingual outreach, and cultural understanding are very important to the community that could be affected by the management of the C-CD.

The RMPA may result in beneficial effects to these low-income and minority populations over time, through efforts to increase access to the C-CD via partnering to improve public transportation, provide information to diverse groups, and engage underserved populations.

**6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

The C-CD is one of six other on-shore units added to the CCNM by Presidential Proclamation. It is the first on-shore unit to develop a RMP amendment, however, this is not likely to establish a precedent for future RMP amendments to the CCNM RMP. The six on-shore units are geographically distinct and spread along hundreds of miles of the California coast. Each unit is unique as reflected in Presidential Proclamation 9563, and each has its own set of objects and values. The environmental and social context for each unit is unique. Subsequent RMP amendments for on-shore units will consider the objects, values, and context of each unit.

**7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.**

Recreation visitation to the planning area is affected by changes in recreation opportunities and demand outside of the C-CD. Other adjacent lands continue to emphasize the provision of recreation opportunities in their land and resource management plans. The cumulative effects of the range of alternatives would likely be similar, with potential increases in visitor use within the C-CD. This could negatively affect individuals who value solitude and trail-based recreation opportunities. On the other hand, the cumulative effect of growth and development trends, plus beneficial effects of the RMPA, could result in a small and net beneficial condition to some local communities, as a result of improved land protection and economic benefits from recreation. Overall, cumulative effects would continue to be dependent on regional economic conditions and population increases, rather than the implementation of the range of alternatives for the C-CD.

The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate effects of implementing the alternatives.

**8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant cultural or historical resources.**

The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate effects of implementing the alternatives. Following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA, the BLM will complete additional Class III inventories for ground-disturbing activities that would be authorized in the decision record for the RMPA. This information will be incorporated into the Proposed RMPA/Final EA and Final FONSI.

Project design features are also incorporated into the range of alternatives to avoid or reduce potential effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for

listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additional plan components address resources of concern unique to Native American communities. For example, the range of alternatives identifies RMZ 4 as a traditional cultural use area covering approximately 620 acres of the C-CD to ensure that Native American heritage resources potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are protected and preserved.

**9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.**

The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate effects of implementing the alternatives. Through such consultation and coordination, the BLM will ensure that the RMPA will be consistent with the Recovery Plan for the California Red-legged Frog (USFWS 2002), the Recovery Plan for the Evolutionarily Significant Unit of Central California Coast Coho Salmon (NOAA 2012), the South-Central California Coast Steelhead Recovery Plan (NOAA 2013), and the Coastal Multispecies Final Recovery Plan for California Coastal Chinook Salmon, Northern California steelhead and Central California Coast steelhead (NOAA 2016). As a whole, the actions in the RMPA are expected to be a net positive impact for federally listed species within the C-CD.

**10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

The BLM will coordinate and consult with the public, interested parties, and other Federal, State, and local agencies following the release of the Draft RMPA/EA to further evaluate effects of implementing the alternatives. Through coordination and consultation, the RMPA will be consistent with Federal, State, or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

## Preliminary Conclusion

On the basis of the preliminary information contained in the Draft RMPA/EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the RMPA will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the EIS for the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved in 2005; and the Final EIS for the RMP for the Southern Diablo Mountain Range and Central Coast of California, approved in 2006; and (3) the RMP Amendment does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR '1508.27), with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

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Karen Mouritsen  
BLM California State Director

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Date