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The Honorable Fran Mainella, Director
National Park Service / U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Suite 3112 Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Mainella:

I had the opportunity of meeting you when you visited Point Reyes National Seashore last year, but today I am writing you on behalf of 7000 Marin County Sierra Club members to encourage you to urge that the Department of the Interior abandon the current rewrite of the National Park Service (NPS) Management Policies.

The current policies incorporate the values that the American public loves in its national parks; they have no identified shortcomings and have been repeatedly upheld and reinforced by the courts. If and when the current policies need to be refined, an inclusive, deliberative process should be initiated. Consequently, we are very concerned about the lack of those attributes in this current rewrite process.

We are particularly concerned about significant changes proposed in NPS's basic meaning, purpose, and mission. The most damaging revision is the combination of the deletion of language that describes how courts "have consistently interpreted" resource protection as the primary goal of the Organic Act and the addition of language describing how NPS "must balance" the potentially competing obligations of conservation and recreation. These changes are in conflict with the Organic Act, whose overarching mandate is to protect park resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Those resources cannot be enjoyed by future generations if they are harmed by current generations, thus resource protection must take precedence over resource-damaging recreational uses.

However, that precedence in no way means that parklands cannot be used or enjoyed by the public. Indeed, non-damaging public use and recreation should be encouraged so as to build a constituency that both understands and benefits from the values inherent in these parks. I believe you experienced excellent examples of how the current policies work well at Point Reyes National Seashore, where recreational and agricultural uses both take place within the context of strong resource protection for future generations. Therefore, we urge you to join with the vast majority of the American public who take pride in being stewards of these parks for future generations, and encourage you to urge that the Interior Department acknowledge this stewardship and abandon its attempt to rewrite the NPS Management Policies.

Sincerely,

Gordon Bennett, Marin Group Chair