

January 26, 2006

Dr. Jane Goodall
The Jane Goodall Institute
8700 Georgia Avenue, Suite 500
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Goodall:

A major goal for our organizations, representing environmental concerns at the state, local and national level, is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations. As you know, there are too few areas left in the world where native ecosystems can be protected from habitat loss and the bane of invasive species. Point Reyes National Seashore here in California is one such place.

We have read in the media the text of an April 5, 2005, letter you sent to the National Park Service as part of the public comment period for the Point Reyes National Seashore Non-Native Deer Management Plan/ Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Because we have a different point of view on this topic, we write with the sincere hope that you will reconsider your stated position.

Point Reyes manages more than 2,000 exotic fallow and axis deer, which were introduced in the 1940s, long before the establishment of the park. The deer, purchased by a local landowner from the San Francisco zoo for hunting purposes, have significantly expanded their range and population in recent years, and now threaten land and native wildlife outside park boundaries. The Park Service has documented the harmful affects of these invasive animals on the park's soils, vegetation, and other wildlife species.

Worse yet, a recent study by the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that for every one exotic deer in the park, one native black-tailed deer is lost. As you know, many species need specific habitat in order to be sustained. Unfortunately, the black-tailed deer species at Point Reyes is quickly succumbing to the aggressive non-native exotic deer. Another study reveals that rutting fallow bucks cause rutting and cratering reminiscent of feral pig damage. These two invasive, non-native species are not endangered. In fact, fallow deer are the most widely introduced species worldwide.

The scientific evidence is clear that exotic deer, unadapted to the California coastal ecosystem, are degrading the health of Point Reyes' precious natural resources. In addition, the deer are causing significant economic hardship to area ranchers and organic farmers.

The Park Service's draft deer management plan-to utilize contraception along with lethal removals to extricate non-native deer from the park-is supported by a broad spectrum of community and statewide environmental organizations. We would suggest that it also complements the goals of the Jane Goodall Institute, which include "creating healthy ecosystems, promoting sustainable livelihoods." We would no doubt agree that we do not want to promote preservation of a non-native species at the expense of native species and the health of a fragile ecosystem.

A national park, unlike a zoo or game preserve, must first and foremost preserve the native biodiversity within its boundaries.

We urge you to take a second look at Point Reyes' draft management plan. Point Reyes National Seashore, and the species protected within it, is an invaluable resource for all Americans. The topic of exotic deer management deserves a fully informed dialogue; the careful consideration that you generously grant to so many important environmental issues is critically needed here.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Caufield
Executive Director, Environmental Action Committee

Gordon Bennett
Sierra Club Marin Group Chair

Neal Desai
Program Coordinator, Pacific Region, National Parks Conservation Association