

**Statement of
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Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
H.R. 3565, California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 3565, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act. The bill would add 5 new areas totaling approximately 5,880 acres to the California Coastal National Monument. The Department of the Interior supports H.R. 3565 and would also like to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to address certain technical issues in the bill.

Background

The California coast is rugged and spectacular, representing one of the nation's most iconic and treasured landscapes. Millions of visitors travel up and down the California coast each year, stopping at coastal towns and vista points to experience breathtaking views and spectacular scenery and to observe an abundance of wildlife along the coast. In 2000, Presidential Proclamation 7264 established the California Coastal National Monument, administered by the Bureau of Land Management and comprising over 20,000 islands, rocks, and pinnacles along the 1,100 mile California coast. In 2014, Presidential Proclamation 9089 added the Point Arena-Stornetta unit, which included 1,665 acres of public land along the coastline. This area provides a mainland base for access and interpretation and plays a critical role in enhancing the public's enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding of the California Coastal National Monument.

Since the expansion of the boundary, many California coastal communities have built grassroots networks, including businesses, environmental groups, members of the public, and other non-governmental organizations that support the protection of additional lands along the coast as a unit of the California Coastal National Monument. Trinidad Head, Lighthouse Ranch, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies Public Lands, Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, and the Orange County Rocks and Islands are valued by nearby Coastal communities for their scenic, conservation, and recreation values, and each of these areas contains nationally significant historical, cultural, natural, and scientific resources.

Trinidad Head is a 60-acre rocky promontory surrounded by sea stacks in the Trinidad Harbor. The large and dominant coastal head is bordered by sheer cliffs that are often battered by strong winter storms, and the area is culturally and spiritually significant to the Native American communities of the Yurok, Tsurai, and Trinidad Rancheria. Thirteen acres on Trinidad Head, including the historic Trinidad Head Lighthouse, are managed by the BLM and used for recreational activities. The BLM is working with community partners to develop a management plan for the area that will address public access, conservation, and recreation goals.

Lighthouse Ranch is 12 miles south of Eureka and overlooks the Eel River Delta, the Mike Thompson Wildlife Area, the South Spit of Humboldt Bay, and the Pacific Ocean, offering stunning views of the coastline. The eight-acre parcel administered by the BLM is managed for

conservation and recreation, including picnicking, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The BLM also manages the 600-acre Mike Thompson Wildlife Area under a conservation easement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Cotoni-Coast Dairies, located near Davenport in Santa Cruz County, represents one of the last areas in the coastal foothills that is available to the public. This area offers spectacular views of the ocean and several of the most iconic monument rocks and islands on the North Coast of Santa Cruz County. The Cotoni-Coast Dairies includes a diverse array of plants and wildlife. The landscape is a mosaic of majestic upland oak groves, mixed evergreen and redwood forests, native coastal prairie and exotic grasslands, upland scrubs, wetland communities, and riparian scrubs and forests. Native wildlife such as resident and migratory songbirds and raptors, mountain lions, badgers, and other species thrive within the region's vast network of conservation areas and open space preserves. The BLM manages 5,840 acres of public land in the area, which is home to rare fish and wildlife species such as the California red-legged frog, Coho salmon, and Central California Coast steelhead. The Cotoni-Coast Dairies area is also culturally and historically significant to many groups of Native American people. Today, these lands are managed for conservation of native coastal wildlife and habitats, grazing, and recreational public uses.

The Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, located six miles from the historic Hearst Castle in San Luis Obispo County on State Scenic Highway One, includes 20 acres of public lands that are part of the BLM's National Conservation Lands. The Piedras Blancas Light Station, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, began operation in 1875 and is still used today to aid marine navigation. The Light Station is named for the distinctive white rocks that loom just offshore. These rocks, and the rugged shoreline, are home to seabirds, sea lions, and elephant seals. Over 70 native plant species can be found on the habitat surrounding the Light Station. In addition, the Light Station is also an important area for scientific studies of whales, seals, sea otters, seabirds, tide pools, and seismicity. The area provides excellent opportunities for visitors to enjoy wildlife observation, hiking, picnicking, nature study, tide-pool walks, and guided tours of the Light Station.

The Orange County Rocks and Islands consist of more than 40 offshore rocks, pinnacles, exposed reefs, and small islands, totaling less than two acres at the mean high tide level. These features are located within one mile of the Pacific coast of Orange County. In 1931, Congress reserved the Orange County Rocks and Islands for park, scenic, or other public purposes and in 1935, amended the reservation for lighthouse construction and navigation. Because of these legislative withdrawals, the rocks were not incorporated into the California Coastal National Monument. Nonetheless, the rocks contain unique geologic formations and provide some of the last remaining undisturbed offshore habitat in southern California for a wide variety of migratory and resident birds and marine mammals and a rich diversity of upper intertidal species. Because the U.S. Coast Guard no longer requires the use of these rocks and small islands for navigation purposes, local stakeholders propose to have the withdrawal removed and the rocks and islands incorporated into the California Coastal National Monument.

H.R. 3565, California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act

H.R. 3565 would expand the boundary of the California Coastal National Monument by an additional 5,880 acres of public lands located along the California coast, including Trinidad Head, Lighthouse Ranch, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies, and Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural

Area. The bill would also incorporate the Orange County Rocks and Islands into the Monument and remove the unused lighthouse reservation. The bill would authorize each of these areas to be managed in accordance with the two Presidential Proclamations that established and expanded the Monument.

Each National Monument and National Conservation Area designated by Congress and managed by the BLM is unique. However, all of these designations have certain critical elements in common, including withdrawal from the public land, mining, and mineral leasing laws; limiting off-highway vehicles to roads and trails designated for their use; and language that charges the Secretary of the Interior with allowing only those uses that further the purposes for which the area is established. The designations in H.R. 3565 are consistent with these principles, and we support their designation. The addition of new areas to the California Coastal National Monument will help strengthen and expand partnerships with California coastal communities and provide opportunities for stewardship of coastal resources, interpretation, environmental education, and other volunteer activities. In addition, visitors will experience and learn about the Monument and its natural and cultural resources. The proposed expansion of the Monument is consistent with the BLM's resource management goals and the purposes of the Proclamations.

Under the bill, the Secretary, through the BLM, will be required to develop or amend the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for areas to be added to the Monument. Specifically, the bill requires that the BLM develop an RMP "for the long-term protection and management of the Federal land added to the Monument" as well as to address visitation and recreation by the public, along with other permitted and public uses. The bill further provides for continuation or development of cooperative agreements with state and local governments, tribes, environmental groups, and stewardship organizations. The BLM values and appreciates working closely with partners and looks forward to continuing to work with local government agencies and organizations on the management of these important areas.

The bill will provide protection of Native American sacred sites, as well as manage access for traditional customary uses. The Monument additions will also provide for the establishment of an advisory council or the use of existing advisory bodies for each unit to provide input for development of RMP amendments. The BLM recognizes the importance of fostering positive working relationships with adjacent private landowners and other stakeholders, and we welcome the opportunity to work together with all stakeholders to effectively manage the additions to the California Coastal National Monument.

The BLM would like to work with the sponsor to address a few technical issues related to grazing in the Monument, the management plan, ensuring that the existing cooperative agreement for the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area is maintained, and regarding the coordination with advisory councils.

Conclusion

The Department of the Interior appreciates Representative Capps' work with local communities to develop H.R. 3565. We support the bill and look forward to working with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to address certain technical issues and to accomplish our shared goals for conserving, protecting, and restoring the unique resources of the California coastline. I would be happy to answer any questions.