

**Statement of
Carl Rountree, Assistant Director
National Landscape Conservation System and Community Partnerships
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
H.R. 4969, California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act
September 11, 2012**

Thank you for the invitation to testify on H.R. 4969, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act. The Department of the Interior supports H.R. 4969, which would add approximately 1,255 acres of public land along the coast of northern California to the existing California Coastal National Monument managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Background

The coast of northern California is rugged and spectacular. Along the Mendocino County portion of that coast, the BLM manages 1,255 acres, including over two miles of coastline and the estuary of the Garcia River, adjacent to the historic Point Arena Lighthouse. In 2004, over 1,100 of these acres, commonly known as the Stornetta Public Lands, were acquired by the Federal government, largely through donation, to be managed by the BLM. Earlier this year, the BLM acquired approximately 123 acres of additional lands from the Cypress Abbey Corporation through a combination of donation and acquisition using funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The President's budget for FY 2013 includes a request for LWCF funding of \$4.5 million to complete the Cypress Abbey acquisition of approximately 400 additional acres.

This relatively small area contains significant natural resources, including several riparian corridors, extensive wetlands, pine forests, meadows, coastal prairie and sand dunes. A broad range of wildlife, including a number of threatened or endangered species such as the Point Arena mountain beaver, Behren's silverspot butterfly, the western snowy plover and the California red-legged frog live in this diverse habitat. Dramatic blow holes and waterfalls cascading into the sea complement these natural resources.

Extensive cultural resources attest to a history of occupation of this site going back at least 9,000 years. Up until the early 19th century, it was home to the Bokeya Pomo people whose village sat at the mouth of the Garcia River. Today, the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians partners with the BLM to conserve and protect the resource values on these lands.

In addition, there are many recreational opportunities in the area which provide significant value for the local economy. The Garcia River is a destination fishing site, and the coastal areas offer marine wildlife viewing, including gray and blue whales, seals, sea lions, and river otters. The adjacent Point Arena Lighthouse, operated by the nonprofit Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers, welcomes over 30,000 visitors annually. These visitors frequent the tidepools and beaches on the adjacent public lands.

The BLM currently manages these lands to protect their important natural, cultural, and historic resources. The BLM works cooperatively with a number of key partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, both the California Departments of Parks and Recreation and Department of Fish and Game, the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians, Mendocino County, the City of Point Arena, the Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the California Coastal Conservancy, the Conservation Lands Foundation, the Trust for Public Lands, the Stornetta Brothers Coastal Ranch, Coastwalk California, the National Audubon Society, and the California Native Plant Society among others.

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H.R. 4969 would add approximately 1,255 acres of Federal land (the “Point Arena-Stornetta public lands”) managed by the BLM to the existing California Coastal National Monument, which was established by Presidential Proclamation on January 11, 2000. The California Coastal National Monument includes all unappropriated and unreserved Federal lands within 12 miles of the California shoreline. Over 20,000 small islands, rocks, exposed reefs, and pinnacles (totaling about 1,000 acres of land) constitute this offshore monument along California’s 1,100 miles of coastline, providing unique habitats for breeding seabirds and marine mammals.

The addition of the Point Arena-Stornetta public lands to the California Coastal National Monument will promote the continued conservation, protection, and restoration of these significant public lands. By establishing a mainland base for access and interpretation of the existing monument, this addition will enhance the public enjoyment and understanding of the entire California Coastal National Monument. The BLM will continue to work with its many local partners encouraging public access to and appreciation of those resources. Local and national support for this addition is considerable and significant, a testament to the importance of the area and the diligence of Representative Thompson, the bill’s sponsor. We would like the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Committee on some minor modifications to the legislation.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 4969. We look forward to the addition of the Point Arena-Stornetta public lands to the California Coastal National Monument.