



For Immediate Release

New Data Disprove NPS Noise Claims about Oyster Farm

Point Reyes Station, CA, May 2, 2013 — Simple numbers with profound implications for the ongoing Drakes Bay Oyster Company (DBOC) federal court case were reported today in the Point Reyes Light, the Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper in West Marin, CA.

Dr. Corey Goodman, an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences and local resident, presented new data that he and Jake de Grazia, a journalism student at University of Southern California who is studying the controversy surrounding DBOC, collected on April 20.

The new experiments confirm the data reported in December 2011 by Environ, a scientific consulting firm hired by DBOC, and show that the data used by the National Park Service (NPS) in its Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in November 2012 were exaggerated and misrepresented the environmental reality at Drakes Estero.

“The new data have serious implications for the ongoing federal court case,” said Dr. Goodman. “Federal lawyers are using the faulty EIS to argue that eliminating the oyster farm is in the public interest because of the impact of noise on wildlife and visitors. The new data disprove that government claim.”

In the Final EIS, the Park Service asserted that the “soundscape” of the oyster farm has a “major adverse impact” on the environment. NPS argued that farm equipment – most notably the skiff used to take oyster bags into and out of the estero, and the oyster tumbler used to sort oysters at the onshore facility – are so noisy that they disturb harbor seals and visitor experience. The new data show otherwise. Recorded sound levels showed huge disparities between what NPS claimed and reality. Where NPS claims the oyster skiff can be heard at 1.7 miles (8,987 feet), the new data show it can only be heard for about 400 feet. Where NPS claims the oyster tumbler can be heard for 1.8 miles (9,786 feet), the new data show it can be heard for less than 150 feet.

“We are grateful that a scientist and a journalist collaborated to conduct these experiments,” said Kevin Lunny, owner of Drakes Bay Oyster Company. “It is obvious to all of us who work at the oyster farm that the skiff and tumbler can only be heard for a few hundred feet and not for several miles as NPS claims, so it came as no surprise that the new data confirm what we – and tens of thousands of visitors to the farm – all know from first-hand experience.”

- 17171 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard Inverness, CA 94937 ph. 415.669.1149

New Data Disprove NPS Noise Claims about Oyster Farm

May 2, 2013

The data presented in the NPS EIS in support of the “soundscape” finding were not gathered at the oyster farm, as mandated by federal policy. Instead, NPS used so-called “proxy” data. Noise data from a loud Jet Ski recorded in 1995 on the New Jersey shore was used to represent the oyster skiff, and noise data from a U.S. Army cement mixer was used to represent the oyster tumbler with its tiny electric engine. NPS published this data in its 2012 EIS despite the existence of actual data recorded by Environ in 2011.

The new data raise serious questions about declarations with the federal court by NPS supporters. Under penalty of perjury, Gordon Bennett (Save Our Seashore), Amy Trainer (Environmental Action Committee of West Marin), Neal Desai (National Parks Conservation Association), and Johanna Wald (Natural Resources Defense Council) testified to the federal court that when they hiked out the Estero Trail, they were disturbed by the sound of the oyster skiff. The new data raise doubts about the validity of these declarations.

Mr. Bennett claimed he was also disturbed on his hike by music from a boom box on the skiff. The oyster farm foreman and other employees say they have never taken a boom box out on the estero.

The new data support the importance of the recent request for documents by Doc Hastings, Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, to the Department of the Interior concerning the integrity of science at Drakes Estero. Congressman Jared Huffman, whose district includes West Marin and who is a member of the committee, has not yet endorsed a bipartisan investigation of the science.

“Congressman Jared Huffman’s district has been ground zero for NPS scientific misconduct,” said Dr. Goodman. “In light of these new data, I urge Congressman Huffman to reach across the aisle – as he has done so successfully in the past – to make sure that the integrity of science does not fall victim to a predetermined agenda at Drakes Estero.”

Contacts:

Barbara Garfien
415-717-0970
barbara.garfien@gmail.com

Dr. Corey Goodman
415-663-9495
corey.goodman@me.com

Sarah Rolph
978-287-4640
sarah@sarahrolph.com