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State of California Ends Illegal Private Grazing on State Park Land

Tolowa Dunes State Park, Smith River Estuary and Endangered Species to Benefit

CRESCENT CITY, *Calif.* — The Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) is celebrating a victory at Tolowa Dunes State Park, in Del Norte County on the banks of the pristine Smith River. Beginning this month, the California Department of Parks and Recreation will no longer allow private cattle grazing on state park land.

In May 2011, EPIC notified the Parks Department that their permits authorizing a private dairy farm to graze cattle on 230 acres of public land along the Yontocket and Tolowa Sloughs were illegal, and that the grazing was adversely impacting those acres and surrounding habitat. For many years, the private grazing permits violated laws governing the management of California's state parks, and the California Coastal Act. EPIC's persistence in this endeavor in coordination with local citizens made a difference, and the Parks Department will now comply with its legal duties and respect the intended purpose of Tolowa Dunes State Park.

"We are pleased that the Parks Department made the right choice here, siding with native wildlife over private cattle grazing at this unique state park," said Andrew Orahoske, conservation director for the Environmental Protection Information Center. "We're looking forward to assisting with the development of a restoration plan for the property, including restoring the wetlands and sloughs of the Smith River Estuary. This area will once again provide critical rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and offer refuge for other imperiled species," concluded Orahoske.

This victory for Tolowa Dunes State Park underscores EPIC's commitment to defending threatened state parks throughout northwestern California. Other threats to state parks in Del Norte County include the proposed closure of the Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park, and the Caltrans proposal to widen U.S. Highway 199 through Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, potentially destroying ancient redwoods forever. As another example of EPIC's success, in July 2011, EPIC secured a preliminary injunction in federal court halting Caltrans' widening of U.S. Highway 101 through Richardson Grove State Park based on irreparable harm to ancient redwoods.

Students and faculty at Stanford Law School's Environmental Law Clinic assisted EPIC in convincing the Parks Department to remove cows from Tolowa Dunes State Park.

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