

Dear [interested party],

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has identified your organization as a potentially interested party to a proposed project on the Farallon Islands off the coast of San Francisco. The project addresses the damage that introduced house mice are causing to the ecosystem of the South Farallon Islands. House mice on the Farallons are preying on native insects, plants, and nesting seabirds, especially the rare ashy storm-petrel. Furthermore, an annual fall population boom of house mice compels migratory burrowing owls to stay on the island rather than continuing their southward dispersal, where they subsequently switch to eating ashy storm-petrels once the mouse population crashes as part of its annual boom-bust cycle. Researchers on the Farallons have identified predation by burrowing owls as a substantial contributing factor in the ongoing decline of ashy storm-petrels, whose numbers may have decreased by more than 40% on the Farallons over the past three decades.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the islands as Farallon National Wildlife Refuge, intends to conduct an environmental assessment for a project to restore the ecosystem of the South Farallon Islands by eradicating introduced house mice using a rodenticide. Beginning April 14, 2006, the Service is announcing a 45-day formal period for public comment on the scope of environmental issues to be considered in the assessment. As part of this formal scoping period, the Service will hold a public information session on May 17, 2006, at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. Service personnel and biologists cooperating with the Service for the environmental assessment will be available to answer questions and record comments from the public. The session will start at 6:30 pm in the Marina Room in Building A. There is no street address; the location is at the intersection of Marina Boulevard and Buchanan Street. Directions for the public meeting are also available at <http://www.fortmason.org/directions/index.html>. Persons needing reasonable accommodations in order to attend and participate in the public meeting should contact Jesse Irwin sufficiently in advance of the meeting to allow time to process the request.

For more information, please visit on the web at

<http://www.fws.gov/sfbayrefuges/Farallon/Comment.htm>,

or contact project biologists Jesse Irwin or Joelle Buffa at (510) 792-0222. Written comments and requests to be added to the mailing list should be addressed to Jesse Irwin, Farallon National Wildlife Refuge, US Fish and Wildlife Service, PO Box 524 Newark, CA 94560; facsimile: (510) 792-5828, email: sfbaynwrc@fws.gov. Please note that comments received after the formal 45-day scoping period ends may not be considered in the environmental assessment.

Sincerely,

Joelle Buffa
Refuge Manager, Farallon National Wildlife Refuge