



## Farallon National Wildlife Refuge

### Media Advisory

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#### **Public Involvement in Ecosystem Restoration Planning on the South Farallon Islands**

Farallon National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) staff are inviting media and members of the public to an information session on a proposed habitat restoration project on the South Farallon Islands. The meeting will be held Wednesday May 17, 2006 at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco (the Marina Room, Building A), from 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Refuge managers will conduct a short presentation on the project, and Refuge personnel as well as experts in the biology of the Farallons and island restoration specialists will be available to discuss the project and record public comments.

Refuge managers are proposing to eradicate human-introduced house mice (*Mus musculus*) from the South Farallons to protect a declining population of ash storm-petrels and improve habitat for other native species that are affected by the mice, such as other seabirds, salamanders, insects, and plants.

The ash storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma homochroa*) is a small, secretive and rare seabird that breeds on islands off the Pacific coast of southern Oregon, California, and northern Baja California. The Farallons are the site of the largest ash storm-petrel colony, but the number of breeding birds at this colony has declined over 40% since the early 1970s. Biologists now believe that a major cause of this decline has been predation by non-resident burrowing owls that are attracted to the island in the fall by the seasonally abundant population of non-native house mice. Seabird experts predict that ash storm-petrels face a very high risk of extinction if their current circumstances do not change.

If house mice are removed from the South Farallons, burrowing owls arriving on the islands will continue their migration, dispersing from the island after a few days like the many other errant migrating landbirds that pass through each fall. With the owls gone, the ash storm-petrel population will have a much better chance at recovery. Refuge biologists also expect the eradication of house mice to substantially benefit the island's native salamanders, invertebrates, and plants.

For more information on the project, to submit your comments, or to request reasonable accommodations to participate in the public information session, contact project biologists Jesse Irwin or Joelle Buffa.

Please note: Comments received after the scoping period closes on May 29, 2006 may not be considered.