

## **Farallones mouse eradication**

### *Meeting minutes*

10/20/08, by conference call

**Present:** Jacob Sheppard, Gregg Howald, Gerry McChesney, Zach Coffman, Winnie Chan, Russ Bradley

### **Meeting outcomes:**

- We made decisions made on a number of issues and questions in the latest mouse EA draft
- We identified immediate next steps including action items for all parties

### **EA status**

#### *Major changes made so far (JS)*

- Adding Leach's storm-petrel as one of the explicitly-mentioned spp.
- Re-organized Ch. 1 (esp. to accommodate for a "past actions" section detailing gull mgmt attempts, burrowing owl translocation etc.)
- Significant reorganization of Alternatives chapter to make each action alternative clearer and easier to compare (identical headings, clearer chronology etc.)
- Clarification of the "rationale" for choosing each alternative (i.e. what issues drove the development of each alternative, preconditions for the alternative to be valid)
- Moved "actions outside the scope of mouse eradication" – split btwn Ch. 1 (Purpose), the No Action alternative, and Ch. 3 (Affected Env.)
- Moved "alternative methods of ASSP restoration" – split btwn Ch. 1, No Action alternative, Ch. 3
- Edited "climate" section

#### *Major EA tasks remaining (JS)*

- Incorporate comments/revisions into Ch. 4!
- Add details on housing treatment
- Pinniped impact mitigation ("pre-flushing")
- Landbird impact mitigation (live-capture?)
- Some misc. operational questions for Gregg...
- Add intertidal data
- Refine impact analysis for gulls
- Gull impact mitigation – decide after impact analysis has been refined
- Incorporate open questions to be answered w/ future field trials (biomarker etc.), as appropriate

- Check against needs for MMPA, ESA, Sanctuary, MBTA(?) permitting (make sure EA is sufficient for these processes)
- Add graphics, appendices, executive summary/various other bits n bobs

## EA issues addressed

In one comment (p. 13), Gerry wasn't sure if Sydeman et al. 1998 addressed owls. It does, here's an excerpt: "Other predators which may influence the viability of the SEFI Ashy Storm-petrel population include Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*), which also prey upon storm-petrel adults (PRBO, unpubl. data), and house mice, which prey upon eggs and chicks (Ainley et al. 1990). Burrowing Owls winter on SEFI and occur less frequently during the breeding season (PRBO, unpubl. data). Indications are that few Ashy Storm-petrels are taken by owls during the summer, but we have little information concerning take during the winter and early spring when both owls and storm-petrels are present. The magnitude of owl predation, however, is likely small compared to the effect of gull predation."

*No significant discussion*

Gerry made a comment about the NMFS definition of a rookery (p.56) – I couldn't find a source, so I deleted the sentence

*No significant discussion*

Spelling place name "Farallones" (vs. "Farallons"): Final confirmation w/ Gerry as Refuge Mgr.

*Spell "Farallones" – by far the most common spelling in scientific & historical literature*

Bird name capitalization: FWS convention? (only proper names capitalized) or AOU convention?

*Only proper names to be capitalized for bird common names (not the AOU convention)*

"Passerine" – what term should I use to replace "passerine"? (based on comments that I'm applying it too broadly) "Landbird"?

*Replace "passerine" with "landbird", but DEFINE "landbird" at the outset (terrestrial, other than birds of prey)*

Clarification, based on comments: In order to be feasible, Alternative C would require unprecedented access to seabird breeding habitat as well as designated Wilderness. Alternative C would require more than 50% of the island to be treated with bait stations. The rationale for Alternative C would be to minimize the amount of bait put into the environment, reduce the risk of primary bait consumption by non-targets, and reduce the amount of helicopter operations – aerial broadcast would only be implemented for inaccessible terrain, areas where human

presence would likely cause major harm, and wilderness areas in which a bait station grid would require permanent habitat modification e.g. cutting rocks

*All continue to express the need to fully disclose the level of disturbance that would be necessary in order to implement the bait station alternative*

Based on Gerry's comments: Does the Refuge want to commit to live-capturing landbirds before aerial bait application? Details?

*Include a section describing the basic "mitigation toolkit" for landbirds:*

- *Carcass removal*
- *Live-trap & hold*
- *Bait stations in a limited application*
- *Other?*
- *Don't commit to anything*

Re: Potential elephant seal disturbance. Gerry requests moving the end of the baiting window up to mid-Dec to avoid disturbing bull ELSEs. However, from the operational perspective, we need all the leeway into December that we can get (according to mouse population cycle data). Let's discuss the ELSE disturbance question...

*End of the aerial application window to be set at "first elephant seal pup," pending NMFS input*

For "pre-flushing" pinnipeds: Which method to employ? (helo flushing or gradual flushing?)

*Using recent Rat I. experience as a guide, write out a pinniped "pre-flush" protocol (helo gradually descending on hauled out pinnipeds)*

- *Subject to further NMFS input*
- *Let Jan Roletto know (her suggestion was to flush pinnipeds from land)*

Russ has expressed concern that we (FWS, IC, PRBO) need to put more planning into future prevention efforts. Is this something that he thinks needs to be included in the EA? Or just flagging it for later? (e.g. for inclusion in the detailed project implementation plan that would follow on to the EA's parameters)

*No need to expand on the "prevention" section at this time – will keep as a high priority for implementation planning*

For Leach's storm-petrels: Can you point me to the two best sources of evidence that these guys are declining on the Farallones? (for inclusion in Need for Action section, Affected Env. section)

*Used to be numerous in 70s (Ainley & Lewis), then much rarer by mid 80s (McChesney, PRBO unpubl data); body size, behavior, timing similar to ASSP so likely subject to BUOW predation. Add as likely to benefit from mouse eradication*

Can FWS send me the 2005 Farallon NWR narrative report? (“visitor viewing days” data in the EA comes from this report)

*Gerry will send me the 2005 FNWR narrative report (for “visitor viewing days” data)*

Does FWS have any full lists of state species status on the Refuge?

*Gerry & Zach will put together a list of the Listed status of Farallon birds (Federal & State)*

I need a good-quality map that illustrates the Designated Wilderness

*Gerry will send me a map of Designated Wilderness*

I need Farallon-specific climate data:

- Narrative precipitation pattern?
- Narrative temperature pattern?
- Narrative description of each season?
- Narrative description of weather from mid-Nov to mid-Dec?

*Russ will fill in the climate data w/in the next few weeks*

Who does the Refuge work with directly for Migratory Birds permitting issues?

*New Migratory Birds person in Sacramento (Marie Strassburger: phone: 916-414-6727; marie\_strassburger@fws.gov)*

#### **Next steps:**

- Likely a new draft by mid-November; will likely need to have another phone call before this
- Tentative plan for face-to-face meeting in Nov., but Nov. 17-21 doesn’t work for Russ or Jim... December, maybe?
- Administrative review – Jacob to contact NMFS, Sanctuary, etc. w/ updates on progress
- Timeline for admin. review: Year-end
- Public comment in Jan./Feb.; final decision doc in Mar.?
- JS to contact Jan Roletto in advance of her Nov. intertidal survey to coordinate (if possible)
- Funding: Luckenbach “first wave” projects were approved, no further word from NPFC on second-wave projects
- Jacob to work with Winnie on “Minimum Requirements Decision Guide”