

PROPOSAL

Restoration Catalyst Fund 2016

1. Title: S.S Jacob Luckenbach and Associated Mystery Oil spills, California, Farallon House Mouse Eradication Project. Completion of Restoration Planning for House Mouse Eradication on the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge.

2. Interior Trust Resources Supported by this Project: Eradicating invasive house mice from the South Farallon Islands within the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), California (about 27 miles west of San Francisco), will benefit native seabirds, plants, amphibians, and invertebrates and will help restore natural ecosystem processes on the islands. Mouse eradication will benefit the ground nesting ashy storm-petrel and Leach's storm-petrel and other rare native species such as the endemic Farallon arboreal salamander, the endemic Farallon camel cricket, and the maritime goldfield. The benefit of this conservation action is significant from a regional perspective because the Refuge hosts a unique ecosystem that includes the largest seabird breeding colony in the contiguous United States and supports nearly half of all breeding ashy storm-petrels in the world. The number of nesting storm-petrels is expected to decline by 27% in the next decade without this conservation measure. This action will restore the natural ecosystem and benefit many other native species which call the islands home.

3. Responsible Party Information: The S.S. Jacob Luckenbach sank 17 miles outside the Golden Gate in 1953 after colliding with another ship. The Trustees prepared a damage assessment and restoration plan and submitted it to the National Pollution Funds Center (NPFC) to compensate for the injuries as a responsible party to pay the damages no longer exists. In total, the NPFC awarded \$26.2 million to the Trustees, including \$972,233 for the Farallon mouse eradication project.

4. Case Manager: Case Manager: Janet Whitlock, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bay Delta Fish and Wildlife Office; AO: Ren Lohofener, Director, Pacific Southwest Region, USFWS. Gerry McChesney, Farallon National Wildlife Refuge Manager, is the project manager for the house mouse eradication project.

5. DOI Support: The Solicitor for the San Francisco Field Office advises USFWS on this project. NRDA and refuge staff are working closely with the Solicitor on matters relating to compliance with NEPA, the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), FIFRA, the Wilderness Act, National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (under the Clean Water Act), and several other regulatory requirements. The Field Solicitor will assist with responses to comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and will review the Final EIS. The Field Solicitor also will review the CZMA consistency determination and other regulatory compliance documents, and attend meetings with permitting agencies to discuss compliance obligations. John Isanhart, from DOI's Restoration Support Unit, is assisting with planning for the salamander toxicity study, reviewing technical information in the Draft EIS, addressing comments on the Draft EIS, and drafting text for the Final EIS.

6. Background and Justification: Since submittal of our proposal for Restoration Catalyst funds in 2014, we have acquired \$205,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to assist with analyzing public comments and incorporation of comments received on the Draft EIS, analyzing potential impacts resulting from alternatives, coordinating with other agencies and the

public, conducting a salamander toxicity test and incorporating results into the Final EIS, incorporating additional baseline ecological information, selecting a preferred alternative, completing a Final Environmental Impact Statement, acquiring required permits, and completing a Record of Decision (NFWF funded proposals available upon request). The NPFC has denied a contingency request for additional funds to be released to complete environmental compliance. The NPFC stated in their determination (dated April 2, 2015) to DOI that, “it is not appropriate to use NPFC funds provided for this project to plan or evaluate alternative restoration projects.” Therefore, the Luckenbach Trustees are relying on NFWF funds and any other acquired funds to complete the tasks mentioned above.

One of the most crucial analyses of potential impacts to the Farallon Islands concerns the effectiveness of the western gull hazing program. The USFWS received several comments on the Draft EIS about the uncertainty surrounding the potential adverse impacts of western gulls being exposed secondarily to anticoagulant rodenticide bait. To address this uncertainty, Point Blue Conservation Science, Island Conservation, and USFWS completed a hazing trial in November and December 2012 to evaluate the effectiveness of a combination of non-lethal wildlife hazing techniques including biosonics, pyrotechnics, lasers, a helicopter, reflective objects and effigies, for temporarily reducing western gull numbers at the South Farallon Islands, and therefore reducing gull exposure to rodenticide. They examined the relative effectiveness of these tools for dissuading gulls, as well as the impact of these treatments on pinnipeds and other non-target bird species present on the islands. The hazing trial successfully demonstrated the feasibility of keeping gulls off the islands for an extended period of time (in this case a 12-day interval) while having relatively minor impacts on other species, namely other seabird species and pinnipeds. Hazing efforts were 98% effective at keeping gulls off the island and away from areas that would be baited during an eradication effort.

As part of the Avian Risk Assessment for South Farallon Islands that was completed as a component of the Draft EIS, the western gull risk model determined that a hazing success of 90% or higher was necessary to avoid rodenticide having a population level impact as defined by a previously completed gull population viability analysis (see Appendix F – Western Gull Risk Assessment (December 10, 2012) from the Draft EIS for additional information). Point Blue is currently in the process of completing a manuscript for publication in Journal of Wildlife Management; however, funding support is needed to complete the final manuscript and submit it for publication. The importance of this manuscript cannot be over-emphasized. There are three other key eradication-related products (described below) that are essential to the restoration planning process and require additional funds so that they can be completed.

7. Movement of Settlement Funds: Catalyst funds would help jumpstart and complete the stalled Farallon mouse eradication restoration project. Until the ROD is signed for the EIS, the Trustees cannot allocate remaining funds for implementation of the project from the DOI NRDA fund nor will the NPFC consider the contingency request for additional implementation funds. Catalyst funding will allow the Refuge to contract with the project partners and others to fully re-engage and assist the Service in completing the necessary environmental compliance measures. Once a ROD is reached, the Trustees may allocate the remaining \$174,000 for project implementation, and the NPFC will consider the Trustees’ contingency request of \$1,477,085 which includes \$236,334 for NEPA compliance and pre-implementation planning. If the NPFC grants the contingency request, including costs for implementation, monitoring, and

communications plan development, the Trustees will seek reimbursement from the NPFC to DOI for Restoration Catalyst Fund expenditures.

8. Involvement of Other Trustees and Partners

Partners in need of financial support

- USFWS – Farallon NWR and San Francisco Bay Delta Fish & Wildlife Office
- Point Blue Conservation Science
- USDA-APHIS National Wildlife Research Center – Ft. Collins, CO

Partners not in need of financial support

- State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Office of Spill Prevention and Response
- NOAA (co-Trustee)
- National Park Service (co-Trustee)

9. Use of Funds: Our priority budget items (see attached budget) include activities to:

1. Complete environmental compliance. This includes finalizing the EIS as soon as feasible.
2. Complete baseline studies, including completing a manuscript reporting on the promising findings from the western gull hazing trials on Southeast Farallon Island. Additional reports that need to be completed include 1) a burrowing owl diet¹ study, 2) ash storm-petrel population modeling, and 3) western gull population viability analysis based on potential impacts from rodenticide exposure. All of these reports strengthen the Final EIS.
3. Conduct a salamander rodenticide toxicity study using a closely related surrogate for the Farallon arboreal salamander². Information gained from this study is not only essential for completion of the Final EIS, but it will also be useful information for other project teams assessing potential impacts of anticoagulant rodenticides to other Plethodontidae (lungless salamanders) occurring in other parts of the world.

The total funding requested would support in-house personnel and contracts for the following:

- Revising and finalizing decision support reports and publications based on scientific peer review comments;
- Finalizing the EIS, including incorporating public comments, meeting and discussing with regulatory agencies and potentially affected parties, additional analysis of potential impacts, and completion of the ROD;
- Completion of permits, including Section 7 Consultation and CZMA determination; and
- Communication, messaging and public outreach.

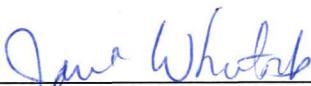
¹ House mice provide a food resource for a migratory population of burrowing owls that also prey upon rare ash storm-petrels when the mouse population crashes in late fall and winter. Predation by wintering owls accounts for substantial annual mortality of adult ash storm-petrels. Without removal of house mice, predation by burrowing owls will continue at elevated levels.

² The Trustees received comments on the Draft EIS identifying the toxicity of rodenticide bait to salamanders as a significant data gap. Currently there are no studies in the open literature that have reported on the toxicity of any rodenticide to amphibians.

10. Restoration/Management Actions Likely to Follow: Catalyst Funding of proposed activities will allow the project implementer to complete restoration planning for the Farallon mouse eradication project. Once these activities are completed, the Trustees will be able to allocate the remaining project funds in the NRDAR account for implementation, and the NPFC can proceed with the Trustees' contingency request for this restoration project. With NEPA completed, the refuge manager may also submit a NWRs Invasive Species Large Project proposal for \$1 million in funds for implementation.

11. Funding Request: The total funding request to the Office of Restoration and Damage Assessment for Completion of Restoration Planning for House Mouse Eradication on the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge is \$123,503.

Signatures



Janet Whitlock
USFWS Trustee Council Representative

3/7/2016

Date

Ren Lohofener, Regional Director
DOI Authorized Official

Date

Category	Project Costs
Personnel: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
San Francisco Bay NWRC	
<i>Salaries and Benefits</i>	
Project Manager – Env. Compliance Coordination	\$5,000.00
Bay Delta Fish and Wildlife Office	
<i>Salaries and Benefits</i>	
Env. Contaminants Biologist - Env. Compliance	\$5,000.00
Total Request to ORDA	\$10,000.00
Matching NFWF Contributions (Dedicated to Env. Compliance Consultant)	\$135,000.00
Total Project Costs	\$145,000.00
COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT AND CONTRACTS	
Point Blue Conservation Science	
<i>Salaries and Benefits</i>	
Staff salaries - Project manager and support staff	\$18,500.00
Staff benefits (46.5%)	\$8,603.00
<i>Travel</i>	
Travel to local partner meetings	\$550.00
<i>Publication Fees</i>	
Fees for publishing four manuscripts to support EIS	\$2,000.00
Total Direct Costs	\$29,653.00
Indirect Costs (@35%)	\$10,378.00
Total Request to ORDA	\$40,031.00
Matching NFWF Contributions	\$20,000.00
Total Project Costs	\$60,031.00
USDA - National Wildlife Research Center	
Laboratory toxicity trial	\$10,000.00
Analytical chemistry - rodenticide residue analysis (120 samples @ \$270/sample)	\$32,400.00
Staff Salaries and Benefits	\$12,000.00
Misc./Animal Supplies	\$3,000.00
Total Direct Costs	\$57,400.00
Indirects Costs (@28%)	\$16,072.00
Total Request to ORDA	\$73,472.00
Matching NFWF Contributions	\$50,000.00
Total Project Costs	\$123,472.00
GRAND TOTAL REQUEST TO ORDA	\$123,503.00
TOTAL MATCH	\$205,000.00