

Huffman Briefing – 5/4/2022

Attendees:

Alanna Greene

Jenny Callaway

Burr Henneman

Matt Brown

Gerry McChesney

Lauren Meredith

Vibe:

- Conversational, transparent, forthcoming

Notes:

- Congressman interested in Gene therapy or hormonal contraceptive; Jenny feels possible to rule out gene therapy because its not ready yet; contraception – Dr. Meyers has elusive but confident answers that this should work on the islands, so jenny wants to add to memo where we're at with gene therapy in liquid and contraception. Would be delivered with drones
- Have talked to Point Blue, Island Conservation, etc.
- Gerry:
 - o Bait stations not feasible – would take thousands of them and isn't sure
 - o Having said we haven't looked at this in 10 years is absolutely not correct; we've had meetings with Loretta and the Fixx foundation
- Jenny: When did you last meet with them?
 - o G: We can provide that, but we did give overview of the presentation/meeting we had with them. We did not feel comfortable with the regulatory mechanisms met yet, appeared to be something we'd have to apply over and over; would be something that would be
 - o If gulls take the bait, we don't know the impact it would have if they consumed but would take from the mice. We don't know what would happen to the gulls, even if not poisonous.
 - o Disturbance to wildlife would be an issue – disturbance is a huge issue. We are doing helicopter when populations are at their minimum
 - o Some proponents of contraception have brought up concerns about distribution of bait to marine mammals – they don't discuss the damage that would be caused by the multiple distribution
- Jenny: Drone usage thoughts?
 - o Gerry: we don't know and haven't trialed,
 - o Matt: We've developed robust spill response plan
- Jenny: Urgency and timeline

- G: Populations continue to be impacted; every year more of these species are impacted, climate change is accelerating
 - M: We can hardly understand and quantify the good that occurs on islands once these invasive animals are removed; we see so much of these animals return, animals we never expected to return or see.
- Jenny: Current timeline
 - G: we do not currently have a record of decision but we have initiated first steps; we've been informally consulting with Marine Sanctuary (NOAA) all throughout this process, but now we are able to formally start consultation; hopefully that leads us to the ROD in the next few months. Still have lots more time to go – USDA still needs to give permit, permits for other animals, etc.; best case scenario is fall 2023/2024 due to supply chain issues
- Jenny: Go back to CCC before you go?
 - G: No, but they do have opportunity to review final plans prior to finalizing for implementation. We will also develop a storm water abatement process as part of project that will still need to be done, and CCC will have chance to provide review and input as well. These docs will go to the Executive Director.
 - M: We do not have to go back for formal consistency determination/presentation, but we are formally working with CCC
- Gerry: Wants to be clear that he applauds the efforts to find new ways to remove species. Contraceptives offer what could be a helpful biosecurity tool. We just haven't been shown anything to convince us that they have strong potential as eradication tool.
- Jenny: mentioned that the poison is being banned in CA
 - L: Shared text and link
 - M/G: They
- Matt: Our goal is to use the best available science, safest science and tools. If we get a miraculous breakthrough in the next year, we are happy to do a supplemental EIS.
- Jenny: Seems half-baked and shoot from the hip.
- Gerry: SF Chronicle article re: contraceptives and it seemed very anecdotal (some found it worked, some didn't)
 - Bottom line – it's part of the tool in the toolbox, and it's not effective on its own
- Jenny: When you say you continue to follow the science and keep track of other tools, is that an ad hoc process? Do you monitor/check in prior to implementing program? What's the process?
 - We would know when anything is registered with EPA/USDA, and we also are frequently checking in with our MOU partners and discussing the latest tools.
- Jenny: I hear this doesn't need EPA/USDA registration?
 - G: We aren't the regulators but that is not our understanding.
 - M: We lean on these multiple review points and registrations to make sure things
- Jenny – may have a letter or additional meeting with the congressman himself
- Burr: Do you know what kinds of drones are used or if it's been successful?
- Alanna: Recent legislation introduced supporting pesticide preemption that would make EPA's use of pesticides the national standard

- Gerry: We have meeting minutes from the Fixx Foundation presentation that our FWS MOU group had; also our letter to CCC discussing that; recommends talking to Cassidy Tuefull; we are happy to send anything else that may be helpful
- Congressman is interested in a visit to the island. August or October. Jenny will reach out with scheduler looped in.

Summary for report out:

Today's briefing with Representative Huffman's District Director and other staff went very well and was characterized by open, transparent conversation about the science and approach to restoring the Farallon Islands. The staff were interested in discussing potential rodenticide alternatives, specifically gene-therapy and hormonal birth control. We were able to provide clarity on all questions and reiterated our goal to use only proven and tested science and to cause the least amount of interference to the island ecosystem. The Congressman's staff were very receptive and indicated they would speak with Rep. Huffman early next week to make a final stance on the project. They indicated a letter, an additional briefing with the Congressman himself may be his next steps, and/or a visit to the islands may be the Congressman's next steps. Leading to today's meeting, the Congressman's staff had met with organizations touting potential alternatives to rodenticide as numerous NGO partners, including Point Blue and Island Conservation, who specialize in conservation science and rodent eradication on islands.