



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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April 14, 2006

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing a project on the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), located off the coast of San Francisco, to address the damage that non-native house mice (*Mus muscula*) are causing to the ecosystem of the South Farallon Islands. We believe you and/or your organization may be interested in the project and we are therefore inviting you to participate in the public scoping process.

House mice on the Refuge prey on native insects, plants, and nesting seabirds, especially the rare ash storm-petrel. The annual fall population increase of house mice, which is common among many rodent species, compels migratory burrowing owls to stay on the island rather than continuing their southward dispersal. Once the mouse population crashes, thus making them less available as prey, the burrowing owls switch to eating ash storm-petrels. Research has identified predation by burrowing owls as a substantial contributing factor in the ongoing decline of ash storm-petrels, whose numbers have decreased by more than 40% on South Farallon Islands over the past three decades.

The Service intends to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for a project to restore the ecosystem of the South Farallon Islands by eradicating introduced house mice using a rodenticide. A 45-day public scoping period will take place April 14 to May 28, 2006 to gather input on the scope of environmental issues to be considered in the EA. A public information session will be held on May 17, 2006, at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. Service personnel and our cooperators in preparing the EA 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.

More information is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/sfbayrefuges/Farallon/Comment.htm>, or by contacting project biologist Jesse Irwin 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, U.S. 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

Manager, Farallon National Wildlife Refuge