

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Within the spirit and intent of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 40 CFR 1500-1508), and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record and determined that the following proposed action is categorically excluded from NEPA documentation requirements.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Describe the proposed action and any alternatives explored. Discuss briefly why the proposed action was selected and/or why the other alternatives were not selected.

Trials will be conducted to test the efficacy of hazing Western Gulls (*Larus occidentalis*) and other migrant gull species off of the South Farallon Islands (Farallon National Wildlife Refuge) over the course of a 2-3 week period between November 27 to December 18, 2011. Trials will include a variety of hazing methods such as gull effigies, lasers, biosonics, pyrotechnics, kites, spotlights, and possibly aircraft and dogs. These trials are being conducted to help develop plans for a proposed house mouse eradication project on the South Farallon Islands. Certain potential methods being evaluated for mouse eradication include the broadcasting of rodenticide bait, which pose a risk to gulls that may ingest bait. Successful hazing of gulls would dramatically reduce their risk of exposure to bait. In addition, trials examining natural degradation of placebo rodenticide bait will be conducted.

Many other alternatives are being evaluated for mouse eradication. However, broadcast of rodenticide has been the most successful methods used on other islands and thus are being developed as alternatives for the Farallones. These trials will help advise on our ability to minimize risk to gulls.

Categorical Exclusion(s)

Quote the specific Categorical Exclusion(s) you are using and state that the action does not present any Extraordinary Circumstances. If necessary, explain why the action fits as this categorical exclusion. If extraordinary circumstances do (or appear to) exist relative to the action, discuss why the action is still categorically excluded.

516 DM 8.5 B(1) - Research, inventory, and information collection activities directly related to the conservation of fish and wildlife resources which involve negligible animal mortality or habitat destruction, no introduction of contaminants, or no introduction of organisms not indigenous to the affected ecosystem.

This action does not present any Extraordinary Circumstances.

Permits/Approvals

Discuss any additional permits/approvals needed before the proposed action can be implemented.

- Because of the potential to disturb marine mammals hauled out on the island, an application for an Incidental Harassment Authorization has been submitted to NOAA-NMFS. *IHA and Section 7 for Steller Sea Lions received.*
- The NOAA-Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) has restrictions on low flying aircraft below 1,000 ft AGL within 1 nm of the Farallon Islands. Because we plan to utilize low flying helicopters and possibly Unmanned Aerial Systems to help monitor gulls in remote areas, deliver gear to remote areas of the islands, and possibly to haze gulls (helicopters only), an overflight permit application has been submitted to the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.
- The use of UASs requires a permit from the FAA. Once the permit from GFNMS is obtained, permit applications will be submitted to FAA by the UAS users (USGS and NASA-Ames).
- A permit to store pyrotechnics on the island has been applied for by our project partner, Island Conservation.
- *Wilderness MRDG for working in wilderness areas.*

Public Involvement/Interagency Coordination

Discuss the public, other agencies, and/or Tribes that have been involved with the proposed action and the extent of their participation.

The public commented on the Notice of Intent to develop an EIS on the Farallon mouse eradication project. Non-target risk was a public concern that this project seeks to address.

Several partner agencies and NGOs are involved in the project. The project is being coordinated by our cooperator, Island Conservation. Another cooperator, PRBO Conservation Science, is also assisting. Staff from USDA-Wildlife Services and the Oiled Wildlife Care Network are providing equipment and personnel with hazing expertise. USGS and NASA-Ames have offered the use of UASs, including permitted pilots.

NOAA-NMFS and GFNMS have been briefed and are providing critical permits.

Supporting Documents

Support documents for this determination include relevant office file material and the following key references: (list documents here).

- DRAFT Fall Field Trial Plan, November 27-December 18, 2012, on the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge

Anne E. Markine

(Project Leader)

11/19/2012

(Date)