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# News Release



For Immediate Release  
 Date: March 15, 2019

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## **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Releases Final Environmental Impact Statement on Preferred Alternative for Eradicating Invasive House Mice that Harm Wildlife, Ecosystem of Farallon Islands**

FREMONT, CA – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service) published a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) today on its preferred alternative for restoring the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge and eradicating non-native, invasive house mice that threaten the wildlife and disrupt the ecosystem of one of the world’s most important seabird habitats.

“Invasive house mice are having a serious, negative impact on the wildlife of the Farallon Islands,” said Anne Morkill, manager of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which includes the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. “The ecosystem on the islands is out of balance.”

The final EIS released today identifies the Service’s preferred alternative for eradicating the mice: a proposed limited aerial broadcast (two applications over a two-to-three week period) of the rodenticide Brodifacoum. If selected in a subsequent Record of Decision by the Service, the agency would seek funding to implement the preferred alternative. Implementation is not likely to be carried out before the fall of 2020 at the earliest.

The Service’s selection of Brodifacoum as the preferred method for eradicating the mice was made after an exhaustive and transparent review process dating back to 2006, including two public meetings, extended public comment periods, comprehensive review and input from regulatory agencies, and extensive field research. A full range of eradication options was thoroughly evaluated. Intensive research and field tests were also conducted to develop comprehensive measures to ensure minimal risk to any non-target species during implementation, based on best management practices and lessons learned from rodent eradication projects worldwide.

The Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge, 27 miles off the coast of San Francisco, hosts the largest seabird nesting colony in the contiguous United States, including the majority of the world’s population of the rare ash storm-petrel. It is also home to a variety of seals and sea lions, a unique plant community, and species of salamanders and crickets found nowhere else in the world.

The presence of invasive house mice, brought by sailing vessels in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has radically disrupted the islands’ ecosystem. The mice attract migrant burrowing owls that stay through winter, feeding on the mouse population until its annual precipitous decline, at which point the owls feed on native ash storm-petrels and native invertebrates like the endemic Farallon camel cricket. If mice were absent, the owls would continue on

their fall migration to the mainland. The mice also feed on native invertebrates like the endemic camel cricket, reducing their populations, and compete for food with endemic Farallon arboreal salamanders. In addition, the mice are thought to reduce native plant populations by feeding on their seeds, a phenomenon documented in other locations.

To restore the islands' ecosystem, the invasive house mice must be completely eradicated, lest their numbers bounce back quickly. Rodenticide is the only currently proven method for 100% rodent eradication, as demonstrated in successful restorations of other rodent-infested island habitats, where ecosystems have recovered dramatically and wildlife is now thriving. Brodifacoum is the only rodenticide shown to be effective in completely eradicating invasive mice. There are no native mice or other mammals naturally occurring on the islands.

The eradication of invasive rodents has been successfully completed on over 500 islands worldwide, including California's Anacapa Island in the Channel Islands National Park, three National Wildlife Refuges in the Pacific, two islands off the coast of Mexico, many islands off of New Zealand, and multiple islands in the Galápagos Archipelago. Land managers have successfully eradicated house mice, specifically, from 43 islands worldwide.

The Service developed the final EIS for the restoration of Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge with the help of its not-for-profit partner, Point Blue Conservation Science, whose biologists have monitored wildlife on the Farallon Islands for more than 50 years. Input was also received over a number of years from other non-governmental organizations, members of the public, and local, state and federal government agencies. The document includes an assessment of 49 potential action alternatives that was conducted in the selection of a preferred alternative.

The Service will make a decision on the alternatives presented in the final EIS no sooner than 30 days after its March 15, 2019 publication. The agency expects it will issue that Record of Decision in June, 2019.

Copies of the final EIS and supporting materials can be obtained from:

- *Internet:* go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box enter FWS-R8-NWRS-2013-0036, the docket number for the document. On the left side of the screen, under Document Type, click on Notices to locate the document.
- *In person (copies to view only):*
  - San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex Headquarters, 1 Marshlands Rd., Fremont, CA 94555
  - San Francisco Public Library, 100 Larkin St., San Francisco, CA 94102

More information on the restoration project can be found at: [www.restorethefarallones.org](http://www.restorethefarallones.org)

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov) ###*