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Congress of the United States
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June 22, 2022

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE – CHAIR
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ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
CLIMATE CRISIS

Director Martha Williams
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Williams:


I am writing to thank your team for providing information to me and my staff regarding the upcoming plans for the South Farallon Islands Invasive House Mouse Eradication. I know we both value the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge and its unique ecological significance as one of the most spectacular and biodiverse marine ecosystems on the planet, and we take seriously our roles in preserving and protecting this special place. To that end, I ask that you and your team commit to considering the most current alternative eradication strategies available up to the time immediately before implementing the use of the Brodifacoum-25D rodenticide, the eradication strategy that has been selected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and conditionally approved by the California Coastal Commission.

As you are aware, the Farallon Islands have unique ecological significance due to the diverse and endangered species that inhabit the island. The Islands' host the largest seabird breeding colony in the contiguous United States and are home to 25% of California's breeding seabirds. The Ashy Storm-Petrel, an endangered seabird with a limited habitat range, breed and nest throughout the islands. Other wildlife such as the Farallon arboreal salamander and the Farallon camel cricket are endemic to the islands making them an essential part of the ecosystem. Pinnipeds rely on the shoreline for breeding and resting and are highly sensitive to human disturbances.

The ongoing threat that invasive mice pose to the Islands' wildlife must be addressed, and I appreciate the USFWS's thorough environmental review and management plan. However, the use of Brodifacoum-25D rodenticide is an extreme intervention with negative impacts that must be mitigated for the Islands' sensitive ecosystem. Non-toxic alternatives which are still in the research and development phase have the potential to provide a safer and effective substitute to rodenticides. Targeted gene editing and contraceptive technology are two such alternatives that are being rigorously studied for potential use in island rodent eradication. Though the USFWS did not consider these alternatives to be feasible at the time the Environmental Impact Statement was published, there have been promising advances in this field. I urge you to closely follow those developments and keep open the possibility of using non-toxic alternatives until such time as USFWS believes it must move forward with rodenticide.

The invasive mice population, combined with the added pressure of climate change, is a growing threat to the South Farallon Islands' wildlife. Eradication will give the ecosystem a chance to recover and build resilience, but this must be done without creating further damage. I appreciate USFWS's review of non-toxic alternatives, and thank you in advance for your due diligence and continued monitoring of advances in this field of study.

Sincerely,



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

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