



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex
1 Marshlands Road
Fremont, California 94555



June 18, 2012

RE: Support for OWCN proposal by Island Conservation

Dear OWCN Review Panel,

As manager of the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and a cooperator on the proposed project, I would like to offer my full support of the proposal by Island Conservation to test the efficacy of hazing Western Gulls and other gull species from the Farallon Islands. These trials are critical for helping us determine if hazing can be a successful measure to minimize non-target risk during a proposed mouse eradication project. This proposed project would be conducted to help restore the native Farallon ecosystem and to mitigate the impacts of the Luckenbach oil spill.

The results of these trials will go far beyond their use in our proposed mouse eradication project. Bird hazing is a constantly changing field, as new techniques are developed and different situations arise. The Farallones project presents a somewhat unique situation, where we are dealing with non-resident, roosting gulls as well as island breeders making occasional visits to breeding territories outside the breeding season. We are challenged with keeping all of these birds off the islands for up to several weeks. Given the relatively large area and difficult terrain over portions of the islands, this will not be easy. Thus, a number of techniques will be necessary as well as the ability to adjust techniques as needed. Monitoring the effort poses another challenge, since terrain limits visual complete tracking of where birds are and where they may move to once hazed. That's why I'm excited about the trials using UAVs for this purpose. Other potential uses for UAVs also may be discovered.

The situation on the Farallones has analogies to an oil spill. In both situations, birds landing in the affected area are at high risk of detrimental harm. If a large oil spill were nearby to a major gull roost, breeding or feeding area, responders would be faced with the challenge of hazing large numbers of birds for long periods of time in order to keep them out of harm's way. Thus, the results of these trials could greatly assist responders in future spills charged with such a task.

Island Conservation is an important and trusted partner in our efforts to protect and restore the ecosystem of the Farallon NWR, and I have great faith that the trials they propose will be highly successful and informative. But we need additional financial assistance to perform the trials in the best way possible. I ask you to support Island Conservation's proposal so that they can.



Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gerry McChesney
Manager, Farallon National Wildlife Refuge