



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Farallon National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 2 - Fall 2005

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Continues



Portion of Southeast Farallon Island
(©O'neil 2004).

This is the second update on the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process. These updates are sent out periodically to local residents, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and others who have requested to be included in the Refuge's mailing list.

Since the last update, the Refuge hosted a Public Scoping Meeting on May 25, 2005, at the Fort Mason Center in San Francisco, California. Approximately 15 people attended the meeting. Public comments on the CCP process were also collected via mail and e-mail. These comments are summarized in the following section. We have continued to collect and formulate data needed for the CCP and are currently in the process of developing management alternatives based on this data and the public comments. Also included in this update is a draft vision statement and goals for the Refuge.

Though the most recent public comment period has closed, we will be announcing another public comment period for the CCP and Environmental Assessment draft. At that time, we will welcome your suggestions, comments and questions. Our contact information is located on the last page of this update. We anticipate that the draft CCP will be available for your review in October 2006 and will notify you of its availability. Prior to that, we will keep apprised of the process through another update. Thank you very much for your continued interest in this process!

Joelle Buffa
Refuge Manager

The Planning Process

- Identify Public and Agency Issues
- Gather Data
- Develop Goals and Objectives
- Develop Management Strategies
- Evaluate Environmental Impacts
- Prepare Draft CCP/EA
- Public Review of Draft EA
- Public Notice of Decision

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Refuge Vegetation

Vegetation on the Refuge is limited by the rocky granite geology and the harsh marine environment. Farallon weed (*Lasthenia maritima*), *Spergularia macrotheca*, and *Spergularia marina* are some of the native species on the Refuge. Floral diversity is limited and invasive plants occur on the Refuge due to human transport. Primary invasive plants currently monitored and treated include New Zealand spinach (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*), *Malva spp.*, various non-native grasses, and plantain.



Native Farallon Weed (©Irwin 2004)

Current Nesting and Breeding Season

The nesting season tapers off at the end of summer, leaving behind late fledglings and stragglers. Chicks still observed around the Refuge into August included Ashy-storm petrels, Brandt's cormorants, western gulls, and common murre. Pigeon guillemots and tufted puffins were still seen delivering food to their breeding crevices in August. Due to an absence of krill, their primary food source, pelagic cormorants did not breed at all and Cassin's auklets produced very few chicks.

As for marine mammals, California sea lions, Steller sea lions, harbor seals and northern elephant seals were observed hauled out at many locations on the Refuge. A record high number of 24 northern fur seal pups were censused on West End in September. Fur seals first returned to pup on the Refuge in 1996 (they were eliminated from the Farallon Islands by seal hunters in the early 1800s) and numbers have been slowly increasing since then. Gray and humpback whale individuals have also been sighted on a regular basis. Pods of pacific white-sided dolphins, Risso's dolphins and Dall's porpoises have been sighted from observation points on the Refuge.

Summary of Public Comments

Comments from the public scoping period were arranged by the following issue areas:

- ***Access***
- ***Habitat and Wildlife Management***
- ***Habitat Restoration***
- ***Environmental Education/Outreach***

The comments summarized below will be considered during the development of the draft CCP and environmental document:

Expand outreach through tools such as a web-based camera, web page, media visits, educational materials, interpretive centers off-refuge.

Eliminate non-native species and restore the Refuge's historical landscape.

Continue limited research that benefits managing and protecting wildlife and vegetation on the Refuge.

Reduce human disturbance.

Provide access and relevant facilities for expanded public use and volunteer opportunities.

Prohibit all access and human presence, including web cameras.

Prohibit ham radio operators and other uses that do not promote the Refuge's mission.

Expand partnership opportunities.

An Update on the Refuge's CCP Process

Since the last update earlier this year, the CCP team has drafted a vision statement and goals. We continue to inventory seabird, marine mammal, and cultural resource data pertinent to developing appropriate objectives and strategies in the CCP. (*continued on following page*)

Our next steps are to refine goals, objectives and strategies with consideration for the public comments we have received. Once these options have been drafted, we will evaluate the environmental impacts of these potential management tools. We anticipate providing another planning update that will highlight these management options.

Draft Vision Statement

The imprint of California history and local wildlife is deeply embedded in the Farallon Islands, the largest seabird nesting colony in the contiguous United States. The human and natural history will be preserved and shared with San Francisco Bay area residents and visitors. Further, the Refuge will work to integrate the historic and future human imprint in a way that further supports habitat for nesting seabirds, marine mammals, and migratory species. The Refuge, in partnership with other organizations, will achieve this through monitoring, research, protection, and habitat restoration. Because the Refuge is difficult to access and the wildlife is sensitive to human disturbance, off-refuge charter boat tours will provide the most feasible viewing opportunities of the Refuge's biodiversity and cultural resources. Off-refuge environmental education will be developed in the San Francisco Bay area to promote awareness and stewardship of this jewel of the California coast.

Draft Goals

Maintain, restore, and enhance island habitat to support diverse habitat needs of seabirds, mammals, and vegetation.

Protect and enhance populations of seabirds, pinnipeds, and other native wildlife, with emphasis on habitat preservation and expansion.

Protect and support the recovery of federally-listed threatened and endangered species and birds of conservation concern, and California State species of concern and their habitats.

Protect and manage the Farallon Wilderness Area to maintain its wilderness character and values.

Provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation and education while maintaining wilderness and wildlife character of the Refuge.

Continue and expand effective coordination and cooperation with others to promote refuge resources through research, management, and interpretation partnerships.

Continue and enhance long-term monitoring of wildlife and habitat resources and sustain applied scientific research.

Support effective staffing and funding to achieve long-term protection and enhancement of refuge resources and achievement of CCP goals.



Baby gray whale and cormorants (©Irwin 2004).

Please feel free to contact us

We are available to provide additional information regarding the Refuge and the planning process. Feel free to call, write, or e-mail us.

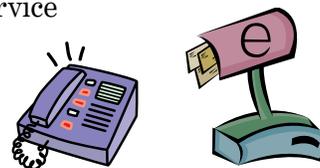
If you did not receive this update through the mail and would like to be on our mailing list, or if you would like to be removed from the list, please contact us.

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