

Pacific Seabird Group



DEDICATED TO THE STUDY AND CONSERVATION OF PACIFIC SEABIRDS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

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13 February 2014

Mr. Eric Loft, Chief
Wildlife Branch
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1812 9th Street
Sacramento, California 95811

Re: Section 6 Grant Application by the California State Parks Department for Preparation of a Marbled Murrelet Management Plan in Zone 6

Dear Mr. Loft:

On behalf of the Pacific Seabird Group (PSG), we strongly support the funding request by California State Parks to develop a Murrelet Landscape Management Plan and implement allied monitoring and management activities for Conservation Zone 6.

The PSG is an international, non-profit organization that was founded in 1972 to promote the knowledge, study, and conservation of Pacific seabirds. It has a membership drawn from the entire Pacific basin, including Canada, Mexico, Russia, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. PSG's members include biologists and scientists who have research interests in Pacific seabirds, government officials who manage seabird refuges and populations, and individuals who are interested in seabird conservation.

This joint effort by California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service and California State Parks to develop a murrelet conservation plan for Zone 6 would fulfill a long-term goal of the Marbled Murrelet Technical Committee (MMTC) of PSG to see such a plan prepared. At their January 13, 2009 meeting, the MMTC, when considering marbled murrelet research and management needs throughout their entire range, recommended that research, monitoring, and recovery efforts that are directed at murrelets in Zone 6 be given the highest priority by state and federal wildlife agencies.

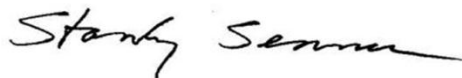
Zone 6 is in dire need for a management plan and for the updated inland use information necessary to prepare such a plan. It is the only Marbled Murrelet Conservation Zone that does not have an existing murrelet landscape management plan. The Recovery Plan for the Marbled Murrelet (Washington, Oregon, and California populations) (USFWS 1997) calls for the development of a

landscape management plan for each zone and considers the Zone 6 murrelet population to be "the smallest, most isolated, and most susceptible to extinction." The 2004 5-Year Status Review of the Marbled Murrelet in Washington, Oregon, and California (McShane et al. 2004) found that murrelet populations in Zone 6, as well as in Zone 5, were at the greatest risk of extinction during the next century. That report goes on to attribute losses in these zones to several factors, including landscape alteration (i.e., logging, urbanization, etc.), but does not provide any management actions that could mitigate or overcome those losses.

The MMTC has seen strong local support for the preparation of a murrelet management plan for Zone 6. In 2011, a local land conservancy, the Sempervirens Fund, called a meeting to brainstorm actions that could be taken to stabilize and grow the Zone 6 murrelet population. Attending the meeting were 21 individuals representing federal and state wildlife and park agencies, murrelet research community, conservation groups, and local timber industry. A consensus reached by this group was the need for corvid management in nesting areas within parks (Sempervirens Fund 2011). The installation of 74 food storage lockers in campgrounds in Portola and Big Basin state parks will directly address this need by reducing food subsidies for corvid predators of murrelet nests, and provide some immediate habitat improvement while the plan is being prepared.

In consideration of the serious threats facing the Zone 6 murrelet population, its highly vulnerable status, and the urgent need for the preparation of a landscape management plan, PSG strongly supports the Section 6 grant application and urges that you fund it in full. If you have questions or need further assistance, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Stanley E. Senner
Vice-Chair for Conservation

References cited

- McShane, C., T. Hamer, H. Carter, G. Swartzmann, V. Friesen, D. Ainley, R. Tressler, K. Nelson, A. Burger, L. Spear, T. Mohagen, R. Martin, L. Henkel, K. Prindle, C. Strong, and J. Keany. 2004. Evaluation Report for the 5-Year Status Review of the Marbled Murrelet in Washington, Oregon, and California. Unpublished report. EDAW, Inc., Seattle, WA. Prepared for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1. Portland, OR.
- Sempervirens Fund, 2011. Marbled Murrelet Brainstorming Session Summary Notes. Unpublished report. Sempervirens Fund, Los Altos, CA.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1997. Recovery Plan for the Threatened Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) in Washington, Oregon, and California. Portland, OR.