



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Pacific Islands Ecoregion
300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122
Box 50088
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

In Reply Refer To: Seabirds (kwr)

JUN 19 1998

Craig S. Harrison
Vice Chair for Conservation
4001 North Ninth Street #1801
Arlington, Virginia 22203

Dear Mr. Harrison:

This responds to your April 28, 1998, letter to Regional Director Michael J. Spear on behalf of the Pacific Seabird Group concerning the status of Newell's shearwaters (*Puffinus auricularis newelli*) in Hawaii. Your letter was forwarded to our office for response.

Please accept my apology for the lack of response to your January 1996 correspondence on this matter. Upon receipt of your previous letter, members of my staff met with local biologists and land managers on the island of Hawaii to determine the current situation at Puulena Crater and Puu Kaliu Crater in Puna, Hawaii. The meeting was attended by Tonnie Casey, the biologist for Kamehameha Schools/B.P. Bishop Estate (Bishop Estate), private consultant Reggie David, Michelle Reynolds, the biologist with Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey (BRD-USGS) who undertook previous seabird surveys at the sites mentioned in your correspondence, Joey Mello, Wildlife Biologist with the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Scott Johnston. During this meeting and in follow-up conversations, Reggie David, Michelle Reynolds, and Tonnie Casey informed us that Bishop Estate's lessees continue to remove cinder from Puu Kaliu and there are no Newell's shearwaters currently using this puu. This information has recently been confirmed by Peter Simmons, the Senior Land Manager for Bishop Estate's Hawaii Island Region.

Puulena Crater and nearby Pawai Crater are the only confirmed nesting locations for the Newell's shearwater in lower Puna and are viewed as important habitat by the Service. The State, County, and private landowners in the area are well aware of the presence of Newell's shearwaters in the crater and the importance of protection of this site. To the best of our knowledge, cinder is not being removed from Puulena Crater. We have offered our assistance in undertaking surveys, monitoring, and protective measures for the shearwaters at Puulena and the landowner of property encompassing part of the crater (TMK 3 13 045 034), Mr. Gaudencio Arellano, has offered Service biologists access to his lands for such purposes.

We believe that it is highly likely that Heihei Crater, located on land owned by Campbell Estate, also supports a breeding colony of Newell's shearwaters; however, nest searches have not been conducted to date. Although your letter states that cinder mining is occurring at this crater, we have been unable to confirm this information.

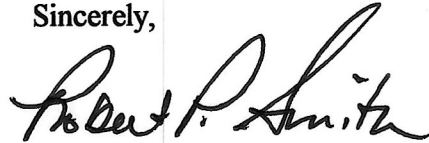
As you know, a priority for conservation of the shearwaters and other seabirds in Hawaii is the location and protection of important nesting sites. The Service has carried out and funded surveys on the islands of Kauai and Hawaii in recent years and members of my staff are currently working with DOFAW biologists to develop and fund additional surveys on these islands. Specifically, our Federal Aid program has provided partial funding with fiscal year (FY) 1998 section 6 monies for radar surveys by Dr. Brian Cooper of ABR, Inc., on the island of Kauai and my staff has solicited a proposal from Dr. Cooper to conduct island-wide radar surveys on the island of Hawaii. Unfortunately, we were unable to fund the island-wide surveys this year due to budgetary constraints. However, members of my staff are currently working with DOFAW biologists to further develop the project, by including not only the needed radar surveys, but also follow-up surveys for locating nesting colonies and undertaking protective measures, such as predator control, in these areas. Members of my staff who are currently discussing the development of this proposal for anticipated funding in FY 1999 are Assistant Field Supervisor Karen Rosa and Fish and Wildlife Biologist Lorena (Tap) Wada.

Other seabird conservation activities currently being undertaken by members of my staff are: 1) assistance with a seabird monitoring workshop being put on by the Hawaii Chapter of The Wildlife Society this fall on the island of Kauai; 2) the development of a network of individuals and facilities to care for fallen seabirds on the island of Oahu during the breeding/fledging season; 3) revision of the Hawaiian Dark-Rumped Petrel and Newell's Manx Shearwater Recovery Plan (USFWS 1983); and, 4) revision of the draft proposed rule to list the band-rumped storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*). We also intend to contact Bishop Estate, Campbell Estate, and landowners in the vicinity of Puulena Crater to initiate discussions with them and DOFAW about appropriate seabird conservation measures on these private lands and to devise the most appropriate methods for implementing them (e.g., Safe Harbor Agreements, Habitat Conservation Plans, Cooperative Agreements, etc.).

In your letter, you ask that the Service: 1) conduct additional surveys to refine our knowledge concerning nesting locations and population trends; 2) update and implement the recovery plan; c) designate critical habitat; and, d) list some populations of the Newell's shearwater as endangered. As described above, we intend to conduct additional surveys and are working on revision of the recovery plan. A decision on whether to list certain populations as endangered and whether to designate critical habitat will be made following the completion of adequate surveys. We are hoping to fund and carry out the needed surveys, in collaboration with DOFAW, in FY 1999.

I hope I have adequately addressed your concerns in this letter. If I have not, or you have additional questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact me or Assistant Field Supervisor Karen Rosa of my staff (phone: 808/541-3441; fax: 808/541-3470).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert P. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Smith" being clearly legible despite the cursive style.

Robert P. Smith
Pacific Islands Manager

cc: Ron Lambertson, USFWS Regional Director, Portland, OR
Laverne Smith, USFWS Division of Endangered Species, Washington, D.C.
Vicky Finn, USFWS Division of Endangered Species, Portland, OR
Michael Buck, DOFAW, Honolulu, HI
Jon Giffin, DOFAW, Hilo, HI
Gerald Winegrad, American Bird Conservancy