

Pacific Seabird Group



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

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Charlene Hall
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way, Suite 2605
Sacramento, California 95825

Re: Support for New Zealand Shearwater Restoration Project

Dear Ms. Hall:

On behalf of the Pacific Seabird Group (PSG), we wish to express our support for the Rakiura Titi Restoration Project, which has been proposed to you for funding from the Command Oil Spill Trust Fund by Henrik Moller, Hannah M. Nevins and Josh Adams. As you may know, PSG is an international non-profit organization that was founded in 1972 to promote knowledge, study and conservation of Pacific seabirds. PSG takes a broad international perspective in recognition that the oceans are tied together by the wandering of seabirds and the flow of ocean currents. Our membership is drawn from the entire Pacific basin, including Canada, Mexico, Russia, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. Among PSG's members are biologists who have research interests in Pacific seabirds, government officials who manage seabird refuges and populations and individuals who are interested in marine conservation. PSG has long advised and worked cooperatively with government agencies to further these interests, especially with regard to oil spill restoration. PSG was funded by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council to host an international seabird restoration workshop in Alaska in 1995 and produced a monograph on this subject.

We understand that the T/V Command oil spill took place in late September 1998 in Monterey Bay, and that shearwaters were the second most frequent species among the oiled birds that were recovered in beached bird surveys subsequent to the spill. Shearwaters were the most numerous species identified in aerial surveys. In addition, a dead sooty shearwater that had been banded in New Zealand was recovered. Sooty shearwaters are abundant in Monterey Bay during autumn

as they feed and prepare to migrate south to New Zealand and Chilean breeding colonies. Sooty shearwater populations may be declining off the coasts of California in recent years. PSG believes that it is appropriate to restore populations that have been damaged in oil spills at their colonies when this is the most efficacious means of restoration. Several years ago, PSG supported the proposal and ultimate decision of the American Trader Oil Spill Trustee Council in Southern California to restore a brown pelican colony in Baja, Mexico. We believe that this was the first instance of using such funds outside the United States.

In this instance, restoring a shearwater colony in New Zealand makes ecological sense and seems to be an excellent means of assisting the recovery of this species. The proposed project seeks funds to eradicate introduced rats from four nesting islands in the Big South Cape Group. As you may know, for over a decade PSG has been an international leader in advocating the removal of introduced predators from seabird colonies, including foxes from the Aleutian Islands, rats from Anacapa Island off California and numerous introduced predators from Mexican colonies. PSG was awarded one of the first NAFTA grants to bring New Zealand biologists to North American to train Mexican seabird biologists on predator removal techniques. The project proposed by Moller, Nevins and Adams appears to us to be an ideal restoration project, and we urge you to provide funds to restore Sooty Shearwaters. It fits perfectly within long-standing PSG policies, and we welcome the opportunity to support it.

PSG appreciates your consideration of our comments on this proposal, and is always interested in providing our views on these important issues.

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Sincerely,

Craig S. Harrison
Vice Chair for Conservation