

Pacific Seabird Group



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

12 August 1996

Ms. Molly McCammon
Executive Director
Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
645 G Street, Suite 401
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

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RE: Draft Fiscal Year 1997 Work Plan

Dear Ms. McCammon,

As you may be aware, The Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) is an international organization founded in 1972 to promote knowledge, study and conservation of Pacific seabirds. Among PSG's members are biologists who have educational or research interests in Pacific seabirds, state and federal officials who manage seabirds and the marine environment, and individuals who are interested in marine conservation.

PSG has regularly provided input to the Trustees regarding funding of restoration studies related to seabirds. In addition, during September 1995 we conducted the PSG/EVOS Seabird Restoration Workshop with at Aleyska with EVOS funding. Proceedings of the workshop are soon to be completed and will ultimately be published as a state-of the-art guide to seabird restoration.

We wish to provide comments on the FY97 workplan proposals, drawing on the background of our members and the synthesis of expert opinion that came from the workshop. We are pleased that several of the injured seabird species are included in the plan, as part of the APEX ecosystem study. We also approve of the effort to investigate forage fish in the spill zone, which could lead to improved understanding of the ecosystem and recovery of injured species.

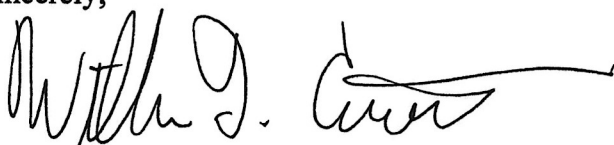
Our main concern is the future of studies on the Marbled Murrelet, which have been deferred, and which may be in jeopardy of not being funded at all. No Marbled Murrelet field work was funded in FY96, other than as a minor component of the APEX study. The proposed Marbled Murrelet productivity study would be an important step towards furthering the goals of the Trustees.

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The depleted status of the Marbled Murrelet is a great concern throughout its range, and individuals within the spill zone represent a large portion of the world population. This species was injured in the oil spill, and it still faces problems in the spill zone similar to those which led to its being listed as Threatened in the lower 48 states under the Endangered Species Act. We appreciate the fact that the Trustees have supported murrelet studies in the past, and we believe the Trustees have benefitted from the results of these studies in the decision making process related to land acquisitions. Now that the emphasis is on the marine ecosystem, and since the murrelet is a significant avian component in Prince William Sound, it is important to continue this work. In particular, better understanding of the reproductive success of Marbled Murrelets and of their use of the marine environment will improve our chances of managing recovery of the species.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this information for consideration by the Trustees, and hope the murrelet productivity study can be funded in addition to the important APEX work already underway. Please contact us if we can provide any additional information on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William T. Everett", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William T. Everett, Chair
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