

Pacific Seabird Group



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

17 January 1983

Robert A. Jantzen, Director
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
18th and C Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Jantzen,

As you may know, our organization has been active in research and conservation of Pacific seabirds for the past decade. Part of our role is to monitor the activities of government agencies at all levels to insure that marine birds are considered in development and resource planning.

We have recently become disturbed concerning two issues in Alaska that may have serious impacts on the marine bird resource there. First, we understand that various oil company proposals have been made to use St. Matthew Island as a staging area for OCS exploration. This wildlife refuge is the only large, uninhabited island in the Bering Sea and consequently is very important to marine birds specifically and the marine ecosystem generally. We strongly object to any changes in the status of this island.

Second, we are disturbed to learn that the Alaska Maritime Refuge, which provides habitat for marine mammals and some twenty million seabirds, is scheduled to be disbanded during 1983 only a year after its establishment. This refuge is the largest conservation area devoted to seabirds on earth. Marine birds are unique in many aspects of their biology and are faced with many conservation challenges including oil pollution, introduced predators to breeding islands, and conflicts with commercial fisheries. These challenges cannot be effectively met by scattering the management of seabird colonies among the various waterfowl and big game refuges on the Alaska mainland. Managers of those refuges are unlikely to have the special training and experience necessary to properly manage a seabird refuge. We urge you to reconsider this internal FWS administrative action. We believe that this action is contrary to the mission of the refuge, contrary to the wishes of Congress, and requires a full environmental impact statement.

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Please inform us of the status of these issues at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Harrison

Craig S. Harrison, Chairman
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cc Michael Bean, Environmental Defense Fund
Warren King, ICBP-USA
Honorable John B. Breaux