

Exhibit C

U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
California/Nevada Refuge Planning Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Environmental Assessment for Management of Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge Marin County, California

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has completed the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The CCP will guide Refuge management for the next 15 years. The CCP and EA (herein incorporated by reference) describe the Service's proposals for managing the Refuge and their associated effects on the human environment under three alternatives, including the no action alternative.

Decision

Following comprehensive review and analysis, the Service selected Alternative C for implementation because it is the alternative that best meets the following criteria:

- Achieves the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- Achieves the purposes of the Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge;
- Achieves the Service's vision and goals for the Refuge;
- Maintains and restores the ecological integrity of the habitats and populations of the Refuge;
- Addresses important issues identified during the scoping process;
- Address the legal mandates of the Service and the Refuge;
- Consistent with scientific principles of sound fish and wildlife management; and
- Incorporates priority public uses which are compatible with the Refuge purposes and the Refuge System mission.

Alternatives Considered

The following is a brief description of the alternatives for managing Marin Islands Refuge, including the selected plan (Alternative C). For a complete description of each alternative, see the draft EA.

Alternative A

Under the No Action Alternative, the Service would continue current management activities on the Refuge. The Refuge currently has no comprehensive management plan. Current management activities include egret and heron colony surveys, limited non-native vegetation control, limited native plantings, and volunteer plant restoration opportunities. The Refuge would remain closed to visitors other than the limited supervised volunteer opportunities. This alternative was not selected because it lacks consideration for habitat restoration needs, management of the migratory birds that use the Refuge, and accommodation of local needs for wildlife-dependent recreation.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, the Service would restore the Refuge to natural conditions to the extent possible. Prior to human occupation, the Refuge was primarily described as a coastal sage scrub, coastal sea-bluff scrub, coastal grassland, and oak-buckeye woodland habitat. The Refuge was exposed to various invasive and ornamental plants during private ownership that resulted in significant colonies of non-native vegetation. The Service would undertake a vegetation mapping project to determine the location and extent of non-native and native plants on the East and West Island. From this mapping, a coordinated plan would be developed to reduce non-native colonies and replace those areas with native plantings. The vegetation management objective is intended to restore the natural landscape of the islands in support of the wildlife on the Refuge. Native vegetation is used for nesting by the egret and heron colony. Building structures would also be removed to expand migratory bird habitat. This alternative was not selected because it does not include any wildlife-dependent opportunities for the public.

Alternative C (selected alternative)

Under Alternative C, the Service will implement habitat restoration activities as described under Alternative B. In addition, the Service will provide guided tours to East Marin Island at a frequency no greater than once per month. A walking trail and interpretive panels will be constructed to facilitate the tour. A cultural resources assessment will also be conducted under this alternative. The assessment will produce an inventory of the important cultural elements on the Refuge, as well as, provide a cultural element to the guided tours.

Effects of management of the Refuge on the human environment

As described in the EA, implementing the selected alternative will have no significant impacts on any of the environmental resources identified in the EA. A summary of the impacts analysis and conclusions follows:

Soils

Removal of structures on East Marin Island could result in large areas of bare soil that could be subject to erosion, especially in the marine environment. However, these removal activities will take place on flat terrain in the middle of the island where the soil would be protected from marine weather by vegetation that surrounds the island. Moreover, removal activities would take place during the dry season to further reduce erosion impacts. These bare areas will also be replaced by native vegetation which would offset erosion potential.

Water Quality

Under the selected plan, the Service plans to remove non-native vegetation through manual and chemical means. Herbicides would be used on a limited basis and are not expected to negatively impact the water quality of San Pablo Bay. Soil that is disturbed from manual removal will be replanted with native vegetation to counteract any long-term impacts to the water quality of the Bay. Activities under the plan are not expected to result in significant impact to the water quality.

Air Quality

Management activities under the selected plan are expected to increase air particulates in the immediate area. However, these particulates should dissipate given the windy condition on the Bay. Vessel emissions from increased management activities, and possibly public visitation,

would result in a long-term minor increase in particulates, reactive organic gasses, and carbon monoxide in the area. Given the current air quality conditions of the San Francisco Bay area and the mitigation measures described in the EA, the minor emission increases are not considered significant.

Vegetation

Management under the selected plan will result in widespread removal of non-native vegetation on East Marin Island. This vegetation will be replaced by native vegetation which is beneficial to the heron and egret colony on the Refuge. Herbicides will be used to reduce non-native vegetation. Herbicides are not likely to impact non-target plants because spraying will be done by hand to individual plants. This restoration activity will support regional biodiversity goals by expanding native coast live oak and coastal scrub plant communities that have been lost to development in the surrounding San Francisco Bay area.

Wildlife

The selected plan will result in both beneficial and adverse impacts on wildlife. Increased public access to the Refuge may result in disturbance to the wildlife. Even with proper boating instruction and supervised tours as prescribed under the CCP, the public could still disturb wildlife. Guided tours will be limited to East Marin Island, where no heron and egret nesting occurs. Furthermore, these guided tours will not take place while breeding and nesting is occurring on West Marin Island. Should wildlife begin to nest on East Marin Island, tours will be further limited to non-sensitive periods. West Marin Island will continue to be closed to access to protect the heron and egret colony.

Removal of structures and restoration of vegetation on the Refuge could also result in temporary disturbance of wildlife. Activities will be limited to non-breeding season of the colony to reduce possible impacts to young. These management activities would have the long-term benefit of providing further habitat and native vegetation appropriate for the migratory birds on the Refuge.

Wildlife-dependent Recreation

Under the selected plan, wildlife-dependent recreation will be expanded to include guided tours on the Refuge. Interpretive panels, brochures and a designated walking trail will be created for public safety as well as to enhance the tours and prevent trampling of restored vegetation. Fishing and wildlife viewing will continue to be allowed in the Refuge waters, but boats will not be allowed to dock at the islands. Fishing brochures and information will be created to communicate appropriate wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities at the Refuge.

Public Review

The planning process incorporated public involvement in developing and reviewing the CCP. This included a public scoping meeting, four planning updates, and public review and comment on the planning documents. The details of the Service's public involvement process are described in the CCP and EA.

Conclusions

Based on review and evaluation of the information contained in the supporting references, I have determined that implementing Alternative C as the CCP for management of Marin Islands

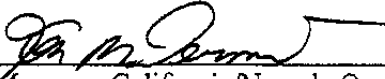
National Wildlife Refuge is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. Accordingly, the Service is not required to prepare an environmental impact statement.

This Finding of No Significant Impact and supporting references are on file at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 1 Marshlands Road, Fremont, California, 94536 (telephone 510/ 792 0222) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California/Nevada Refuge Planning Office, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, California, 95825 (telephone 916/ 414 6500). These documents can also be found on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/cno/refuges/planning.html>. These documents are available for public inspection. Interested and affected parties are being notified of this decision.

Supporting References

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2006. Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2006. Draft Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Assessment.



Manager, California/Nevada Operations
Sacramento, California

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Date