



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Channel Islands National Park  
1901 Spinnaker Drive  
Ventura, California 93001

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
W32 (CHIS)

June 1, 2001

Subject: Request for Comments on a Proposal to Study the Feasibility of Reintroducing Bald Eagles to the Northern Channel Islands

Dear Interested Party:

Bald eagles were a historic resident breeding species on all eight of the California Channel Islands. It is estimated that a minimum of 35 eagle nest sites existed on the Channel Islands earlier in this century, making the Channel Islands a stronghold for this species in Southern California. Between the mid-1940s and early 1960s, bald eagles disappeared from all of the Channel Islands.

Bald eagles historically played an important role in the ecology of the Channel Islands by serving as both a top carnivore and a scavenger. Bald eagles prey primarily upon fish taken live from the ocean, however they also feed upon seabirds and the carcasses of animals that may wash up on shore. In addition to their role in the environment, bald eagles were revered by Native American cultures historically occupying the Channel Islands and are still admired and valued by people who see the eagle as both a striking bird and our nation's symbol.

Bald eagles have not naturally reestablished on the Channel Islands and those that have been released by humans on Santa Catalina Island have not been able to naturally reproduce due to DDT contamination. It is uncertain if a breeding population of bald eagles can be successfully reestablished on the northern Channel Islands.

Recently, the state and federal governments settled the final remaining legal claims brought in 1990 against several companies for releasing DDTs and PCBs into southern California coastal waters. A total of \$140 million in damages will be paid under four separate settlement agreements. These funds will be used to support two different types of activities under the Superfund Law. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control will use a portion of the funds to reduce exposure to DDT and PCBs, for example, by covering contaminated sediments with clean sediments. In addition, the Natural Resource Trustees (the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, California Department of Fish and Game, California State Lands Commission, and the California Department of Parks and Recreation) will use a portion to restore natural resources which were harmed by these releases of DDTs and PCBs into the marine environment.

Bald eagles were identified as one of the primary injured resources and they continue to be impacted by DDT contamination. The Natural Resource Trustees will be developing a comprehensive plan for the restoration of natural resources injured by DDTs and PCBs. As an initial step in that planning effort, they are considering undertaking a study, which may take as long as 5 years, to determine the feasibility, given the continued presence of DDT in the marine environment, of recolonizing the Northern Channel Islands with bald eagles.

The Feasibility Study will consist of the following actions:

- Release captive-bred or translocated wild nestling bald eagles onto Santa Cruz Island using previously developed techniques.
- Monitor contaminants in the released birds and/or their eggs to determine if concentrations of DDT are accumulating which may impact the ability of the eagles to successfully reproduce.

We are asking for your input regarding issues that should be addressed and reasonable alternative actions that should be considered by the Trustees as we prepare a Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment (FS/EA) that will describe these proposed actions. This request, called “scoping”, is the first step in preparing the document. A draft FS/EA will be released, which considers input received during the scoping process, for public review under the National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act. We would like to receive all input by August 6, 2001 in order to ensure that comments are fully considered. We hope that you will be involved throughout this planning process. Comments and suggestions on our proposed bald eagle feasibility study, and requests to be placed on a mailing list for future notices, should be sent to the following address:

Montrose Settlements Restoration Program  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
501 W. Ocean Blvd; Suite 4470  
Long Beach, CA 90802

or

[msrp@noaa.gov](mailto:msrp@noaa.gov)

If you have specific questions about this project, please send e-mail to [msrp@noaa.gov](mailto:msrp@noaa.gov). Thank you for your interest and participation in the restoration of resources impacted by DDTs and PCBs.

Sincerely,

***Tim J. Setnicka***

Tim Setnicka  
Superintendent