



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)

February 26, 2002

Subject: Transmittal of Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment for Reestablishment of Bald Eagles to the Northern Channel Islands

Dear Interested Party:

We are pleased to announce that the Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment for the Reestablishment of Bald Eagles to the Northern Channel Islands (FS/EA) is available for public review. We are asking for your input regarding this proposal. This document is being prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act. The comment period will begin immediately and we request that all written input be received by April 4, 2002. A public meeting to discuss this project will be held on March 28th at 7:00 p.m. at the Channel Islands National Park Robert J. Lagomarsino Visitor Center auditorium at 1901 Spinnaker Drive in Ventura Harbor, Ventura.

Bald eagles were a 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 the 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 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 in the environment.

In late 2000, 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 DDTs 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 have drafted the Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment (FS/EA) and are initiating public review of the plan in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act.

Comments 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

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

Sincerely,

Tim Setnicka
Superintendent