



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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In Reply Refer to:
L&R 2023 10-001

October 27, 2023
Sent Electronically

Lauren Dennhardt
Senior Director of Conservation
Catalina Island Conservancy
P.O. Box 2739
Avalon, California 90704

Subject: Support for the Catalina Island Restoration Project

Dear Lauren Dennhardt:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is writing to express support for projects to restore native habitats and manage threats to listed species, including the Catalina Island Restoration Project.

As the landowner and manager of 88 percent of Catalina Island, the efforts of the Catalina Island Conservancy are critical to conserve the island's unique fauna and flora. The Catalina Island Restoration Project has three pillars: (1) habitat restoration to combat soil erosion, minimize wildfire risk, and conserve species and ecosystems; (2) plant restoration by propagating and reintroducing native plants; and (3) nonnative species management to remove deer and invasive plant species (Catalina Island Conservancy 2023, p. 1).

We anticipate that this project will support recovery of four federally listed plants (Table 1) and enhance habitat for other plant and animal species found only on Catalina Island. Introduced nonnative herbivores threaten rare plants by direct herbivory and habitat degradation and soil erosion (Service 2000, pp. 43, 69; 2019, pp. 6–8; 2021, p. 3). To eliminate these threats and recover ecosystems, we have recommended nonnative herbivore control on all of California's Channel Islands (Service 2000, p. 69; 2019, p. 8).

Nonnative herbivore removal has already contributed to the recovery of federally listed species on two of the California Channel Islands. On San Clemente Island, the removal of nonnative herbivores (goats, sheep, pigs, cattle, and mule deer) led to vegetation and listed plant recovery, resulting in our 2023 delisting of four plant species and one bird (Service 2023, p. 4761). Similarly, on Santa Cruz Island, the removal of sheep and feral pigs—and subsequent soil and vegetation recovery—contributed to our 2022 proposed rule to delist two plant species (Service 2022, pp. 73724, 73730). Therefore, the removal of nonnative herbivores from California's islands conserves and enhances rare plant populations and their habitats.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Catalina Island Conservancy to conserve the endemic flora and fauna of Catalina Island for future generations. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Service biologist [Mary Crawford](#)¹ of the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office.

Sincerely,

Stephen P. Henry
Field Supervisor
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office

Scott Sobiech
Field Supervisor
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office

cc:

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Table 1. Federally Listed Plant Species on Catalina Island.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status
<i>Crocianthemum (=Helianthemum) greenii</i>	Island rush-rose	Threatened
<i>Pentachaeta lyonii</i>	Lyon's pentachaeta	Endangered
<i>Sibara filifolia</i>	Santa Cruz Island rockcress	Endangered
<i>Cercocarpus traskiae</i>	Catalina Island mountain-mahogany	Endangered

LITERATURE CITED

Catalina Island Conservancy. 2023. Catalina Island Restoration Project fact sheet. 1 page.

[Service] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2000. Thirteen plant taxa from the northern Channel Islands Recovery Plan. Region 1, Portland, OR. 105 pages.

[Service] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2019. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 5-year review, Island rush-rose (*Crocانthemum* (= *Helianthemum*) *greenei*). Department of the Interior, 10 pages. Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, Ventura, CA.

[Service] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2021. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 5-year review, *Cercocarpus traskiae*, Catalina Island mountain-mahogany. Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, Carlsbad, CA. 10 pages.

[Service] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2022. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; removing island bedstraw and Santa Cruz Island dudleya from the list of endangered and threatened plants. *Federal Register* 87:73722–73741.

[Service] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2023. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; removing five species that occur on San Clemente Island from the federal lists of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants. *Federal Register* 88:4761–4792.