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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Channel Islands National Park
1901 Spinnaker Drive
Ventura, California 93001-4354

February 1, 2024

Whitney Latorre
CEO/President, Catalina Island Conservancy
PO Box 2739
Avalon, CA 90704

Ms. Latorre:

Located off the coast of Southern California, the eight Channel Islands encompass a diverse and unique environment like few places on earth. Isolated from the mainland for millennia, the islands support sensitive, unique, and rare plants and animals, fragile ecological communities, and sacred cultural sites. In recognition of the uniqueness and special fragility of these resources, five of the islands—Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, San Miguel, and Santa Barbara—and the submerged lands and waters within 1 nautical mile of each island, were designated by Congress as Channel Islands National Park (park) on March 5, 1980.

Since that time, the park and other land stewards within the archipelago—The Nature Conservancy, the US Navy, and the Catalina Island Conservancy—have worked to reverse the ecological impacts of over 100 years of degradation caused by past land management practices and the introduction of non-native species that left the islands in various states of ecological degradation. Early park managers recognized that ecological restoration must start by first removing the threats—non-native animals—which were the root cause of ongoing environmental degradation. Subsequently, the park and its partners undertook a comprehensive and sometimes controversial initiative to remove deer, elk, pigs and various other introduced animals from park lands.

As a result of our efforts, the islands are recovering. Just a few months ago, the park and its partners celebrated the removal of two plant species (Santa Cruz Island Dudleya and Island Bedstraw) from the Endangered Species List and we expect to recover additional plant species in the years to come. In 2015, the park and its partners celebrated the delisting of the island fox, one of the greatest conservation success stories of our time, and one that required the removal of introduced pigs from Santa Cruz Island. Vegetation communities and native animal assemblages on all islands where ungulates were present and removed are recovering. These successes show that nature can recover once threats—like non-native animals—are removed.

Now, Catalina Island faces similar ecological challenges. The Catalina Island Conservancy's Catalina Island Restoration Project builds on lessons learned from animal removal projects at the park and from around the world. The plan includes well-established and vetted methods that have been proven to quickly, safely, and humanely remove non-native animals, along with other essential conservation tools such as seed farming, out-planting, and weed control.

The Catalina Island Conservancy has developed a comprehensive restoration plan that focuses on addressing the root causes of ecological degradation. Based upon our success at the park using similar practices, we believe your plan will bring about substantial environmental benefits for Catalina Island, enhance the Conservancy's ability to effectively manage resources into the future, and contribute to restoration efforts of all partners across the archipelago.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about conservation successes at Channel Islands National Park, please contact Ken Convery, Chief of Natural Resources Management, at ken_convery@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

Ethan McKinley
Superintendent