



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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July 27, 1992

Mr. Joe DiDonato
Wildlife Specialist
East Bay Regional Parks District
2950 Peralta Oaks Court
Post Office Box 5381
Oakland, California 94605-0381

Dear Joe:

As you discussed on the phone with wildlife biologist, Jean Takekawa, the following is information and comments regarding feral cat impacts and management at San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

During recent years, we have been conducting studies on the status, biology, and survival of the endangered California clapper rail. The rail population has plummeted in recent years, and we estimate that fewer than 500 may now remain. The only known population is found in San Francisco Bay. We have collected extensive information during the past 3 years documenting the impact of non-native predators on rails. We have detected many feral cats foraging in tidal salt marshes in all tidal conditions in south San Francisco Bay, during spotlight predator surveys, as well as during high tide airboat surveys. Furthermore, we have documented rail predation by what we have concluded was a feral cat, in a marsh in the East Palo Alto area where many feral cats are found. A radioed rail that was part of our telemetry study was found dead with cuts and other physical damage clearly caused by very sharp claws and teeth. Service biologists have also observed a light-footed clapper rail, the endangered counterpart in southern California, that was killed by a feral cat. We have even seen a feral cat swimming in flooded tidal salt marshes in south San Francisco Bay, as it foraged for rodents, which likely included the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse.

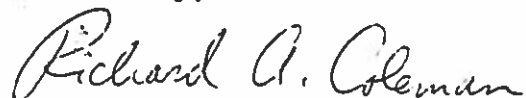
Refuge policy nationwide addresses the issue of feral cat management in the 50 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 28.43, which allows the removal of feral cats observed to be harassing wildlife or humans. Our predator management plan identifies feral cats as one of the predators requiring management in order to provide much needed protection to the imperiled clapper rail population. Cats are trapped and removed from habitats of crucial importance to rails. All management activities are designed to be as selective and humane as possible. Any animals suspected of being domestic pets are taken to the local animal shelter.

The issue of feral animals in native habitats is a difficult and emotional one. However, feral cats do not belong in native Bay habitats. They create additional predation pressures on populations already stressed beyond their limits. Cats in particular, become adept hunters and can adapt to life in and

adjacent to our native salt marshes, quickly becoming a new force that rails have not evolved to defend themselves against.

If we can provide further information, please contact me or Jean Takekawa.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard A. Coleman". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Richard A. Coleman
Refuge Manager