encourage common murres to recolonize lost subcolonies or prospect and nest on unoccupied rocks. The goal would be to prevent colony loss without negatively impacting existing subcolonies. If, for any reason, social attractants are not deemed advisable after 2 years, the colonies at these sites will be evaluated for 3 more years. This monitoring will occur to ensure adequate reproductive success, colony survival, and recovery and, if necessary, to develop alternative restoration techniques.

This restoration project will provide unique opportunities to enhance public knowledge concerning seabirds, seabird conservation, and the marine environment. Every attempt will be made to educate the public through presentations, news coverage, and other appropriate venues. Emphasis will be placed on greater awareness of seabird resources in the area, the problems caused by oil pollution and oil spills, gill nets, and other anthropogenic factors as well as the restoration efforts conducted by the cooperating agencies, environmental organizations, and biologists. In addition, the location of the recolonization sites near Monterey along scenic Highway 1 provides excellent viewing opportunities for the public and attracts large numbers of visitors each year. As a result, informal public outreach will be conducted at the recolonization sites.

## Schedule

Spring and Summer 1995: Preliminary work will begin, including selection of observation points, obtaining access permits, planning, and purchasing. Aerial surveys of breeding common murre colonies will be conducted in May or June to obtain baseline data. These surveys will be conducted in conjunction with aerial common murre surveys for central California. Observations of breeding colonies will continue each year from December 1995 until August 1997, at a minimum. In August 1997, the use of social attractants will be assessed to restore these common murre colonies. In fall 1997, social attractants will be deployed where suitable. These efforts will continue until at least 2004, unless success is achieved, or failure declared, prior to that date.

## V. Common Murre Project Goals

The APEX HOUSTON oil spill killed an estimated 6,000 common murres, was a major factor in the eradication of the Devil's Slide Rock colony, and damaged colonies at Castle and Hurricane Point rocks. If the latter 2 colonies are lost, over 75 percent of the recent range of the central California common murre population will have been lost. The Trustees have selected restoration alternatives designed to restore common murres to colonies in the areas most severely affected by the spill. Both short-term and long-term goals have been established for this restoration project.

The short-term goal of this project is to restore common murres at historic breeding colonies in areas where colonies were extirpated or severely depleted by the APEX HOUSTON oil spill. The timeframe needed for common murres to become established at extirpated colonies is unknown but is suspected to be several years. Therefore, the Trustees will consider the shortterm goal achieved if significant progress is made toward the establishment of 100 breeding pairs of common murres at the Devil's Slide Rock and San Pedro Rock colonies. The Trustees believe this goal can be achieved within 10 years if oceanic conditions are favorable for murre breeding during most of the years of the project.

The long-term goal is to restore the colonies to pre-spill population levels. Ultimately, this restoration project should aid in restoring the portion of the central California common murre population most affected by the APEX HOUSTON spill to its historic range, colony sizes, and reproductive potential. However, the timeframe needed for common murres to reach pre-spill population levels is unknown and is suspected to take several generations (i.e., more than 10 years). Thus, the accomplishment of the longterm goal of restoring the central California common murre population to its historic range and colony sizes is likely to occur only after the conclusion of the recolonization project. The Trustees believe that this is appropriate because the social facilitation that results from the presence and activity of the birds that were attracted to breed at the recolonization sites will take the place of the artificial stimuli provided by the decoys and recorded vocalizations, enabling long-term goals to be achieved without continued human intervention.

The Trustees plan to review the common murre restoration project at least annually at which time the effectiveness of the project and possible improvements will be considered. In addition, public comments will be taken and considered by the Trustee Council throughout the project. The annual review process may result in revisions to the plan.

## VI. Common Murre Project Implementation

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been designated as Lead Trustee for the common murre recolonization project and will utilize staff and facilities of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the Sacramento Ecological Services Field Office to implement the project. The National Biological Service's Dixon Field Office will be asked to provide the Service with technical expertise and field support to assist in the implementation of this project through an inter-agency agreement. The Service will obtain additional assistance from one or more experts in seabird recolonization/restoration via contracts or cooperative agreements. Reference site work conducted at the South Farallon Islands may be accomplished through an existing cooperative agreement between the San Francisco Bay NWR Complex and the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. Other contracts or agreements may be developed as necessary to achieve project goals over the anticipated 10-year duration of this project.

## VII. Environmental Compliance

The Service has determined that the project is categorically excluded from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq, according to the Department of Interior's Departmental Manual, 516 DM 6, Appendix I, 516 DM 2, Appendix I. Resource management activities such as the type described for this project, which include research, reintroduction of established species into their historic range, and small structures or improvements, are categorically excluded from NEPA. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared an Environmental Action Memorandum setting forth the basis for the categorical exclusion of this project.

The California Department of Fish and Game has also determined that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Cal. Pub. Resources Code 21000 et seq., and has filed a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

The California Coastal Commission staff has concurred with the Trustees negative determination made pursuant to 15 CFR 930.35(d) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration implementing regulations relative to the Coastal Zone Management Act.