



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Fisheries Center Honolulu Laboratory
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F/SWC2:GHB

Mr. David A. Vogel
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P. O. Box 667
Red Bluff, CA 96080

Dear Mr. Vogel:

I am writing to offer my congratulations for the excellent report you prepared mapping out a long-term corrective course of action for the ecological management of Tern Island. I was duly impressed with your fresh perspective to solve what seems like an age-old problem associated with the integrity of French Frigate Shoals for threatened and endangered species. I was especially struck with your innovative yet simple thesis of emphasizing the need to protect surrounding marine habitats from contaminants on or in Tern Island, rather than merely worrying about man-made entities being washed away. Those of us who place such tremendous importance on French Frigate Shoals are grateful for the time and talent you contributed to this report.

There are, however, two topics that I would like to comment upon and make additional input for your consideration, as well as others who may be contemplating your recommendations.

Renaming the Refuge

With regard to your rationale (p. 30-31) on the need to rename the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, I am in absolute agreement. However, your proposal to change the name to "Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge" still does not, in my opinion, rectify the fundamental problem of inadequate place-name recognition and geographic description. To support this view, it should be pointed out that you yourself mentioned in the report that you were previously unaware of the existence of the "Northwestern Hawaiian Islands," even after working for the Fish and Wildlife Service for 15 years. Historically, this segment of the chain has been commonly called the Leeward Islands, or Leeward Hawaiian Islands. I note, with some amusement, that the December 1989 issue of Smithsonian Magazine actually has a photo caption (on p. 51) with the place-name "Leeward Islands National Wildlife Refuge." A green sea turtle is shown in the photo and the caption states it was taken near Tern Island. Overall, the name Leeward (Hawaiian) Islands probably does indeed have stronger justification for usage and recognition than Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Nevertheless, both names fall short in this regard. In addition, neither name would be an accurate reflection of the composition of the National Wildlife Refuge, since Kure, Midway, and Kaula (along with various shoals and banks) are not included in the Refuge.



I believe that the most logical and effective solution to this naming dilemma is to do what has already been done for nearly all other national wildlife refuges in Hawaii and elsewhere in the Pacific islands. That is, to assign the accurate geographic place-name that applies to the specific refuge location in question. For example, Kilauea Point is the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge (NWR); Hanalei is the Hanalei NWR; Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands are, respectively, the Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Island NWR; and Rose Atoll is the Rose Atoll NWR. The Hawaiian Islands NWR, as you know, consists of eight widely separated and discrete sites. Each location has its own special geographic place-name that is clearly identifiable. These names also have considerable exotic and historical appeal, heretofore not fully taken advantage of due to their obscured identities in the ambiguous title of Hawaiian Islands NWR. Under this nomenclature suggestion, which is really nothing more than a continuation of existing Fish and Wildlife Service policy, the refuge sites in the Leeward Islands would be renamed: Nihoa Island NWR, Necker Island NWR, French Frigate Shoals NWR, Gardner Pinnacles NWR, Laysan Island NWR, Lisianski Island NWR, Maro Reef NWR, and Pearl and Hermes Reef NWR.

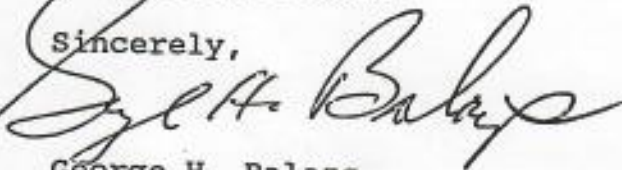
In further support of this proposal is the fact that the new refuge at Midway has been named the Midway Atoll NWR, rather than being integrated into the Hawaiian Islands NWR. The naming of each site as a NWR will also eliminate the perennial problem of the "boundary" of the Hawaiian Islands NWR being erroneously shown, or suggested, on maps to include all islands, shoals, banks, and pelagic waters extending from Nihoa to Pearl and Hermes Reef. Figure 1 of your report, and the text on page 1, serve to illustrate this point of potential confusion which has been repeated time and time again over the years.

Debris and Contamination

I want to strongly recommend that any efforts pursued to clean up debris and contamination on Tern Island under the Defense Environmental Restoration Account, or any other possible avenue, should from the onset be done in association with a similar proposal for nearby East Island. While a good start was made in December 1980 to clean up abandoned Coast Guard materials at East Island, the task remains unfinished. Bill Gilmartin and I initiated this 5-day project, funded mainly by the National Marine Fisheries Service, but carried out jointly with Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. The second phase of the project was to have involved, among other things, removal and proper disposal of considerable concrete debris resulting from our demolition of old building foundations. The opportunity to finish this East Island work in conjunction with an initiative at Tern Island should not be overlooked.

Again, I acknowledge with appreciation the conscientious work you did in preparing your timely and important report.

Sincerely,



George H. Balazs
Zoologist

cc: W. Gilmartin
G. Boehlert
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