



Government Media Statement

29 April 2010

**Department of Primary Industries, Parks,
Water and Environment
Parks and Wildlife Service**

Tasman Island Restoration Project

A project to restore the natural values of Tasman Island will begin next week with an aerial baiting program to eradicate cats from the island.

The project, costing approximately \$100,000, is a cooperative effort between WILDCARE Inc through the Tasmanian Coast Conservation Fund, the Parks and Wildlife Service and the Resource Management and Conservation Division of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.

Eco-cruising pioneer Rob Pennicott, who established the Tasmanian Coast Conservation Fund, said that he and his staff at Bruny & Tasman Island Cruises are proud to be strong supporters of the cat eradication project.

“Every time our cruises pass beneath the spectacular sea crags of Tasman, it’s great to be able to explain to our local, interstate and international guests that the funds we donate are helping Tasmania’s Parks and Wildlife Service to complete this important task,” he said.

“Each year, we’re privileged to show tens of thousands of visitors the magnificent coastlines of south-east Tasmania. Our continuing support of the Tasmanian Coast Conservation Fund further strengthens our commitment to preserving this precious coastal environment for the future.”

Parks and Wildlife Service general manager, Peter Mooney, said this will be the first feral cat eradication operation to be undertaken on a near offshore island in Tasmania.

"Despite a long history of human use, the island retains many biodiversity values and the objective of the project is not just the removal of every last cat, but the restoration of the island's ecosystem," Mr Mooney said.

Tasman Island is an important seabird breeding site and feral cats are having a big impact on the island's birds. They feed almost exclusively on fairy prions and short-tailed shearwaters, with occasional lizards and insects.

"The island's colony of fairy prions is the largest in Tasmania, consisting of between 300-700,000 breeding pairs.

"We estimate that there may be between 50-100 feral cats on the island, but they are killing an estimated 50,000 fairy prions each year. Cats are surplus killers, often killing and then not consuming their prey," Mr Mooney said.

Research has been under way on the island during the past year in an effort to ensure that environmental impacts of the eradication program are minimised, while maximising the effectiveness of the operation against the cats.

The baiting operation will take place next week, when there is a marked drop in the number of seabirds on the island and food is in short supply for the cats. A meat bait using the toxin PAPP (para-aminopropiophenone) will be used as part of on-going research into the use of the toxin as an alternative bait.

PAPP is a humane and effective toxin which kills the cats rapidly, but without distress; in a process similar to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Trapping, then active hunting of any surviving cats, will follow the aerial baiting. Remote cameras and other technology

will be used to continue surveillance of the island for another one to two years.

Tasman Island is 1.6 kilometres long and about 1 kilometre wide, with an area of 120 hectares. It is part of the Tasman National Park and is located south of Cape Pillar on the Tasman Peninsula. More information about the project is available on the PWS website at

<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=17689>

Contact: Liz Wren 6233 2109

<http://www.tas.gov.au>

Contact for Pennicott Wilderness Journeys:

Trina Mangels

Marketing Manager

Bruny Island Cruises www.brunycruises.com.au

Tasman Island Cruises www.tasmancruises.com.au

Pennicott Wilderness Journeys www.pennicottjourneys.com.au

Phone: (03) 6239 6878

Mobile: 0407 833 741

Email: marketing@pennicottjourneys.com.au