



ISLAND CONSERVATION

Preventing Extinctions

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May 30, 2017

Ms. Cristiana Paşca Palmer
Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
413 St. Jacques Street West, Suite 800
Montreal, Quebec
H2Y 1N9, Canada

Re: Nominating Heath Packard and Royden Saah to the UN CBD Synthetic Biology Open-Ended Forum.

Honorable Cristiana Paşca Palmer,

Thank you in advance for considering this nomination for Heath Packard and Royden Saah to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Synthetic Biology Open-Ended Forum. The CBD Secretariat and the Parties to the CBD will benefit greatly from Mr. Packard's and Mr. Saah's perspectives, expertise, and contributions to the Forum.

[Island Conservation](#) (IC) is the world's only global, not-for-profit conservation organization whose mission is to prevent extinctions by removing invasive species from islands. We work where the concentration of both biodiversity and species extinction is greatest – islands. Removing a primary threat – introduced invasive vertebrates – is one of the most critical interventions for saving threatened plants and animals and restoring island ecosystems. Once invasive species are removed, native island species and ecosystems recover with little additional intervention. Since 1994, Island Conservation and partners have deployed teams to protect 994 populations of 389 species on 66 islands. IC is headquartered in Santa Cruz, CA with conservation biologists based in Australia, the Bahamas, British Columbia, Chile, Ecuador, Hawaii, New Zealand, Palau, and Puerto Rico.

While there have been more than 1000 successful invasive species eradications on islands to date, and more than 400 of those have been of rodents using rodenticides, the conservation tools we have today (i.e. rodenticides) have limitations that prevent us from matching the solution to the scope and scale of the problem. Invasive species have been introduced to 90% of our world's islands and are implicated in most of all recorded extinctions.

As such, we have helped to form an international [Genetic Biocontrol of Invasive Rodents \(GBIRD\) partnership](#) of seven institutions researching whether, or not, gene drives could be utilized to create a self-limiting mouse, that when introduced to an isolated, oceanic island, could drive natural sex selection to be all male or female, thereby affecting an eradication by attrition. While hopeful about the potential of such a tool, we are also extremely cautious and committed to a holistic evaluation of this technology before even considering field trials. We know that there are many unanswered questions that must first be answered. Because of our research and international partnership of research universities, governments, and NGOs, we are uniquely positioned to contribute to the UN CBD Synthetic

Biology Open-Ended Forum. We would like to nominate Island Conservation communications director, Mr. Heath Packard and the GBIRD partnership coordinator, Mr. Royden Saah to participate.

Heath earned his MA degree in Philosophy and Social Policy from American University in Washington, DC, and holds a bachelor's degree in Biology and Philosophy from State University of New York (SUNY) at Oswego. Heath has 20-years of experience working at the intersection of biological sciences and conservation policy at global, national, and local levels. Heath coordinates the GBIRD partnership's communications and outreach and supports the partnership's global policy and government relations efforts. Heath has worked for National Wildlife Refuge Association; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries; the National Audubon Society; the Washington State Department of Natural Resources; and the independently elected Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands. He has been with Island Conservation since 2012. Heath's training, experience, and responsibilities uniquely position him to help inform the UN CBD Secretariat and Parties in their considerations of synthetic biology, and gene drive research guidelines and policies.

Royden joined Island Conservation in 2016 as part of our Innovation Program, which explores advanced technologies to [increase efficiency](#) in rodent removal projects. Royden brings a dozen years of scientific management experience in highly regulated arenas to lead us to new methods of island restoration using the best available technology. Royden is based out of North Carolina State University, where he earned a BS in Zoology and an MS in Microbiology. Prior to Island Conservation, Royden worked in food protection and public health, including biosecurity and international emergency response. These experiences help inform our GBIRD partnership and Island Conservation's Innovation Program in an effort to bring awareness to the public, scientific, and regulatory communities on the issue of biodiversity loss and emerging technologies that may help to mitigate this crisis.

Heath Packard can be reached at heath.packard@islandconservation.org, +1-360-584-3051.

Royden Saah can be reached at royden.saah@islandconservation.org, +1-360-584-3051.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen D. Poiani". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Karen Poiani
Chief Executive Officer
Island Conservation