

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

20 April 2008

Re: O-1 petition on behalf of **Peter Garden**

Dear Immigration Officer:

1. My name is Don Merton and I have worked in the biodiversity conservation field in New Zealand since 1957. I joined the New Zealand Wildlife Service as a trainee in 1957 and held various positions as a junior and later senior field biologist involved in endangered species management and ecological restoration of islands until 1987 when the Service merged with other government departments to form a new Department of Conservation. Within this new Department I continued my involvement with endangered species and island restoration until retiring in 2005. Since then I have continued this work as an Honorary Technical Associate of the New Zealand Department of Conservation. I shall attach a brief profile outlining my career and achievements.

2. I have known of Peter Garden since the mid 1990's, and have worked closely with him on a number of occasions. He has flown on many of the New Zealand Department of Conservation's projects on off-shore and subantarctic islands in which I have been associated. I have also contracted him to assist on island restoration projects I have led in the Seychelles Islands (2000) and in Fiji (2008).

3. Eradication of introduced mammalian pests (such as rats) is an integral part of the ecological restoration of off-shore islands, and often involves application of pelleted bait by helicopter. Peter Garden, a helicopter pilot with many years experience, has had long involvement in aerial baiting having helped pioneer the technology and techniques of applying bait by air, and at precise rates, positioning and coverage. Peter is a highly experienced, skill and respected helicopter pilot. He is also committed to the ecological restoration of islands. For instance, in the Seychelles Islands he not only flew the helicopter in a successful mission to eradicate rats from three important islands, but pitched in to help carry countless 25kg bags of bait from a landing-craft up the steep slippery beach to the loading site, and almost single-handedly constructed a helipad to the satisfaction of local aviation authorities – carting swards of turf hundreds of meters in a wheel-barrow in the tropical sun *when 15 local national park labourers were clearly not up to the task!*

4. Peter Garden is known in New Zealand and beyond for his pioneer work in developing techniques and flying missions that have revolutionized biological conservation in mountainous terrain and on islands – and thus helping save countless forest and island ecosystems, as well as globally-threatened species such as the kakapo, Campbell Island teal and Seychelles magpie robin!