The Service's 90-day finding for the subject petition (65 FR 51578) found that the western sage grouse population in Washington may represent a DPS for the following reasons: (1) It is discrete from other populations of the subspecies; (2) the population represents the only western (or greater) sage grouse occurring within the Columbia Plateau Ecological Reporting Unit (ERU) (after Quigley and Arbelbide 1997), which represents approximately one half of the historic range of western sage grouse; (3) the life history attributes of western sage grouse in Washington may demonstrate persistence of the subspecies (and species) in an ecological setting unusual or unique for the taxon; and (4) the loss of this population segment may result in a significant gap in the range of the taxon. Currently, there is not enough information to determine if the population of western sage grouse in Washington may exhibit a significantly different genetic makeup compared to the remainder of the taxon.

Since the early 1900s, large portions of the shrub steppe ecosystem in Washington have been converted for dryland and irrigated crop production (Daubenmire 1988, WDFW 1995). Dobler (1994) estimated that approximately 60 percent of the original shrub steppe habitat in Washington had been converted for other, primarily agricultural, uses. While at much reduced levels, shrub steppe habitat continues to be converted for crop production. Cassidy (1997) considered major portions of Washington's shrub steppe ecosystem as the least protected biogeographic zones in the state.

Excessive grazing pressure can have significant impacts on the shrub steppe ecosystems found throughout the historic range of greater sage grouse (Fleischner 1994), and these impacts may be exacerbated in portions of the Columbia Plateau that support western sage grouse. In this region, excessive grazing removes herbaceous growth and residual cover of native grasses and forbs, and can increase the canopy cover and density of sagebrush and undesirable invasive species (Daubenmire 1988, WDFW 1995, Livingston 1998). These impacts may be especially critical to the reproductive success of western sage grouse during the spring nesting and brood rearing periods (Crawford 1997, Connelly and Braun 1997, Schroeder *et al.* 1999).

Lands under the Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) have become important to the subpopulation of western sage grouse in north-central Washington (Schroeder, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, pers. comm. September 1999). However, CRP contracts extend for only 10 years, and new standards for CRP lands may be implemented that require replanting of significant acreage under existing contracts (USDA 1998). Presently, it is unclear what effects these changes have had, or will have, on the northern subpopulation of western sage grouse in Washington.

Large-scale military training exercises occur at the YTC, and are scheduled at roughly 18 to 24 month intervals (USDD 1989, Livingston 1998). Modeling exercises indicate that sagebrush cover at YTC would decline due to large-scale training scenarios if conducted on a biannual basis (Cadwell *et al.* 1996). The Army conducts aggressive revegetation efforts for sagebrush and native grasses at the YTC (Livingston 1998) and has eliminated season-long grazing on the installation (USDD 1996). However, evaluation of the quality or quantity of naturally recovered areas and the efficacy of revegetation efforts is currently not available.

Natural and human-caused fire is a significant threat to western sage grouse throughout Washington because, at increased frequencies, it can remove sagebrush from the vegetation assemblage (WDFW 1995). Fire may be especially damaging at the YTC where military training activities provide multiple ignition sources, vegetative cover is relatively continuous, and invasive species may provide fine fuels that can carry a fire. Livingston (1998) indicates that a single, large range fire within the identified western sage grouse protection areas could jeopardize the species' persistence at the installation.

The fragmented, isolated nature of the population of western sage grouse that occurs in Washington is a concern for the conservation of the species in the northwestern extension of its historic range. Preliminary viability analyses conducted by the WSGWG (1998) indicates that neither subpopulation is likely viable at current levels over the long-term (approximately 100 years).

The Service published a notice in the **Federal Register** on August 24, 2000, that a range-wide status review of the Washington population of western sage grouse was being conducted (65 FR 51578). The original comment period for this status review closed October 23, 2000. The Service will now accept information concerning this status review through February 16, 2000. The Service will also solicit the opinions of appropriate specialists regarding the data, assumptions, and supportive information presented for this status review, per the Interagency Cooperative Policy for Peer Review in Endangered Species Act Activities (59 FR 34270).

References Cited

A complete list of all references cited herein, as well as others, is available upon request from the Upper Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Office (see **ADDRESSES** section).

Author: The primary author of this notice is Chris Warren of the Upper Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 11103 East Montgomery Drive, Spokane, Washington 99206 [Telephone: (509) 893–8020].

Authority: The authority of this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: January 3, 2001.

Rowan W. Gould

Acting Regional Director, Region 1, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 01–507 Filed 1–8–01; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Re-opening of the Public Comment Period for Status Review of the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo in the Western United States

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Status Review; notice of the re-opening of comment period.

SUMMARY: On February 17, 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (we), announced a 90-day finding on a petition to list the yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) as endangered, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (65 FR 8104). We found that the petition presented substantial information indicating that the listing of the yellow-billed cuckoo may be warranted. At that time, we initiated a status review for the yellow-billed cuckoo and announced that a 12-month finding would be prepared at the conclusion of the review.

DATES: Comments and materials related to this petition may be submitted on or before February 8, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Data, information, comments, or questions concerning this petition finding and status review should be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, 2800 Cottage Way, Room W–2605, Sacramento, California

95825. The petition, finding, and supporting data and comments will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dwight Harvey or Stephanie Brady at the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office (see **ADDRESSES** section above), or at 916/414–6600.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 4(b)(3)(A) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), requires that we make a finding on whether a petition to list, delist, or reclassify a species presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted. To the maximum extent practicable, this finding is to be made within 90 days of the receipt of the petition, and the finding is to be published promptly in the **Federal Register**. If the finding is that substantial information was presented, we are also required to promptly commence a review of the status of the involved species. The Act requires that we make this finding within 12 months of the receipt of the petition.

On February 17, 2000, we announced a 90-day finding for a petition to list the yellow-billed cuckoo under the Act (65 FR 8104). In addition, the petition asked that since the yellow-billed cuckoo is endangered in a significant portion of it's range (*i.e.,* the western United States) and that this range represents the range of a valid subspecies, the western yellow-billed cuckoo, they would concur with a decision to list only this subspecies. In that finding, we found that the petition presented substantial information indicating that the listing of the western yellow-billed cuckoo subspecies (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) may be warranted, although the taxonomy of this subspecies is unclear.

At this time, we continue to seek additional data, information or comments on yellow-billed cuckoos in the western U.S. from the public, other concerned government agencies, the scientific community, industry or any other interested persons. We are also interested in information from throughout the potential breeding range in Canada, Mexico and the overwintering range in Central and South America.

Public Comments Solicited

Of particular interest is information regarding:

1. Subspecies taxonomy and geographic variation in the species, in the form of genetic, behavioral, physiological, morphological, and/or ecological data which might be used to evaluate subspecies and the distinctness of population segments;

2. Historic and current distribution in your area, region, or state, indicating breeding or wintering range;

3. Historic and current population estimates and/or trends in your area, region, or state. If known please indicate whether the population is increasing, stable, or decreasing, and the sources of this information;

4. Any ongoing research or monitoring efforts in your area, region, or state;

5. Summarize any threats in your area, and specifically address the following categories:

(a) Present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat;

(b) Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;

(c) Disease or predation;

(d) Inadequate regulatory mechanisms;

(e) Other natural or manmade factors affecting the species' continued existence;

6. Seasonal habitat requirements and habitat conditions in your area or region or state;

7. Relative abundance of cuckoos on private vs. public lands in your area, region or state;

8. Past, current and planned conservation efforts in your area, region, or state that may be beneficial to the species;

9. Any banding information that has not been sent to the Bird Banding Laboratory in Patuxent, Maryland.

Authority: The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: January 3, 2001.

Rowan W. Gould,

Acting Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 01–506 Filed 1–8–01; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 010201D]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Public meetings.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold several public meetings, including a 3-day Council meeting, on January 23, 24, and 25, 2001, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). During this period, the Council's Enforcement, Red Crab and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) Committees also will meet independently from and report back to the Council.

DATES: Both the Enforcement and Red Crab Committees will meet on Tuesday, January 23, at 9 a.m. The Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 23, 2001, beginning at 1:00 p.m., and on Wednesday and Thursday, January 24 and 25, at 8:30 a.m. The Magnuson-Stevens Act Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 24, at 6 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at the Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel, 50 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA, 01923; telephone (978) 777-2500. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone (978) 465-0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Tuesday, January 23, 2001

Enforcement Committee Meeting

The committee intends to initiate a review of enforcement activities since the implementation of Amendment 5 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The information will be used in documents supporting Amendment 13 to the FMP. The committee also will finalize recommendations for Sea Scallop Framework Adjustment 14 and discuss issues related to measuring the cod-end mesh in fishing nets.

Red Crab Committee Meeting

The committee intends to discuss recent events in the red crab fishery and develop recommendations to the Council on issues related to potential overfishing of the red crab resource.

Council Meeting

After introductions, the meeting will begin with a report from the Council's