

ACTION: Notice of Intent To Prepare a Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Associated Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is preparing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Thurston and Pierce Counties, Washington. The Service is furnishing this notice in compliance with Service CCP policy and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations to advise other agencies and the public of our intentions.

DATES: Submit comments on or before March 10, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Address comments and requests for more information to: Refuge Manager, Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, 100 Brown Farm Road, Olympia, Washington, 98516.

Submit electronic mail comments to: FW1Public_Comments@Nisqually@fws.gov. See Submitting Comments under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for file formats and other information about electronic commenting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Refuge Manager Jean Takekawa at (360) 753-9467 (see **ADDRESSES** section for mailing address).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

During the Environmental Assessment development process, a further determination was made that an EIS should be prepared to address NEPA requirements for the development of the CCP. A previous notice to prepare a CCP was published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 52764-52765, Oct. 9, 1997).

It is Service policy to have all lands within the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System managed in accordance with an approved CCP. The CCP guides management decisions and identifies refuge goals, long-range objectives, and strategies for achieving refuge purposes. Public input into this planning process is encouraged. The CCP will provide other agencies and the public with a clear understanding of the desired conditions for the Refuge and how the Service will implement management strategies.

The Nisqually NWR was established in 1974, “* * * for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purposes, for migratory birds” (16 U.S.C. 715d). A CCP is needed to update the 1978 Nisqually NWR Conceptual

Plan and facilitate potential changes in habitat management and public uses, with full public participation. The major issues to be addressed in the CCP include habitat protection and enhancement, boundary expansion and completion of the Refuge, riparian and tidal restoration, control of invasive and exotic vegetation, future flooding, compatibility of secondary uses, public access and accessibility, fishing, and waterfowl hunting.

Starting in 1996, issues, goals, and other comments on the CCP were submitted by persons and organizations involved in the scoping process including: the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Ft. Lewis; the Nisqually Indian Tribe; Thurston and Pierce Counties; members of national, state, and local conservation organizations; neighboring landowners; and other interested citizens. Comments and concerns received are being used to draft alternatives.

Five planning updates have been mailed out to approximately 600 addresses. The first two updates soliciting comments were mailed in August and November 1996. The third update, which announced the public open houses, was mailed in November 1997. Comments received were used to develop goals, key issues, and habitat management strategies that were presented at public open houses in the fall of 1997. In addition, more than 600 issues workbooks were mailed or distributed at the open houses. The workbook, offered people a chance to provide input on the CCP, draft Refuge goals, and four main issues, including: (1) Changing the mix of habitat types at the Refuge; (2) trail access and configuration; (3) waterfowl hunting; and (4) Refuge expansion and land protection. Planning update number four, mailed in April 1998, summarized the comments received from the workbook. Update number five was mailed in December 1998, and summarized the results of three workshops which focused on: public use; grasslands; and estuarine and freshwater wetlands restoration and management. Copies of these planning updates may be requested from the Refuge.

Submitting Comments

With the publication of this notice, the public is encouraged to send written comments. Comments already received are on record and need not be resubmitted. All comments received from individuals on a draft EIS become part of the official public record. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the

Freedom of Information Act, Council on Environmental Quality’s NEPA regulations 40 CFR 1506.6(f), and other Service and Department policy and procedures. When requested, the Service generally will provide comment letters with the names and addresses of the individuals who wrote the comments. However, the telephone number of the commenting individual will not be provided in response to such requests to the extent permissible by law. Additionally, public comment letters are not required to contain the author’s name, address, or other identifying information. Such comments may be submitted anonymously to the Service.

You may submit comments by sending electronic mail (e-mail) to: FW1Public_Comments@Nisqually@fws.gov. Submit comments as an ASCII file, avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. On the e-mail message title line, please note that your message is in response to the Nisqually NWR Draft CCP and Draft EIS.

The environmental review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), other appropriate Federal laws and regulations, Executive Order 12996, and Service policies and procedures for compliance with those regulations. We estimate that the Draft CCP and Draft EIS will be available by Summer 2000.

Dated: January 28, 2000.

Thomas Dwyer,

Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.
[FR Doc. 00-2871 Filed 2-8-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Endangered and Threatened Species Permit Application

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of application.

The following applicant has applied for a permit to conduct certain activities with endangered species. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.*).

Permit Number TE022454-0

Applicant: The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Chapter, East Lansing, Michigan; Helen Taylor, State Director

The applicant requests a permit for the purpose of determining management strategies for the Karner blue butterfly (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*) in southwestern Newaygo County, Michigan. The applicant proposes to complete the following activities which may take the Karner blue butterfly: (1) Control and eliminate invasive alien plants, particularly spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*), by the initiation of a proposed burn regime, hand-pulling and spot-burning, (2) research and monitoring of the species to determine the impacts of the management regime described above, and (3) to expand and restore suitable habitat for occupation by the species. Take (kill, harass) is expected to occur in association with proposed activities. Activities are proposed for the enhancement of survival of the species in the wild.

Written data or comments should be submitted to the Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Operations, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111-4056, and must be received within 30 days of the date of this publication.

Documents and other information submitted with this application are available for review by any party who submits a written request for a copy of such documents to the following office within 30 days of the date of publication of this notice: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Operations, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111-4056. Telephone: (612/713-5350); FAX: (612/713-5292).

Dated: February 3, 2000.

Charles M. Wooley,

Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 3, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.
[FR Doc. 00-2986 Filed 2-8-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

Environmental Assessment for Construction of a Raised Boardwalk and Improvements to Wildlife Viewing Areas at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve

AGENCY: National Park Service, Interior.

ACTION: Availability of the Environmental Assessment for the proposed construction of a raised boardwalk and improvements to wildlife viewing areas at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve (Dyke Marsh).

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality regulations and National Park Service policy, the National Park Service announces the

availability of an Environmental Assessment for the proposed construction of a raised boardwalk and improvements to wildlife viewing opportunities at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, within the George Washington Memorial Parkway (Parkway). The Environmental Assessment examines several alternatives for the specific location, size, and configuration of the boardwalk. The National Park Service is soliciting comments on this Environmental Assessment. These comments will be considered in evaluating it and making decisions pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

DATES: The Environmental Assessment will remain available for public comment 30 days from the date of publication in the **Federal Register**. Written comments should be received no later than March 10, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Comments on this Environmental Assessment should be submitted in writing to: Ms. Audrey F. Calhoun, Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Turkey Run Park, McLean, Virginia 22101. The Environmental Assessment will be available for public inspection Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m. at GWMP Headquarters, Turkey Run Park, McLean, VA, on the National Park Service Website www.nps.gov/gwmp/Dmcons.html and at several libraries in Alexandria, Fairfax and Arlington, Virginia.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Park Service proposes to construct a raised boardwalk and viewing platform at the end of the "Haul Road" trail in Dyke Marsh, now called Dyke Marsh trail, an area that is currently difficult to access because of persistent wet conditions. The intent of the proposed raised boardwalk is to provide better access and viewing opportunities than the current proliferation of informal social trails currently afford, and to encourage visitor use patterns that are more consistent with protection of the area's sensitive ecosystem. Specifically, the proposed action aims to:

- Provide enhanced opportunities to view wildlife and the environs of Dyke Marsh by improving access to the area, and affording a slightly elevated vantage point from which visitors may view wildlife and enjoy the surroundings.

- Enhance the protection of the area's natural resources by providing appropriate facilities (*i.e.*, a raised boardwalk and interpretive waysides) that encourage visitor use patterns and activities that are consistent with

responsible management of the Dyke Marsh ecosystem.

- Provide for increased educational opportunities and public understanding of Dyke Marsh and wetland ecology.

The proposed action is based on longstanding observations by National Park Service staff, general park visitors, and members of the Friends of Dyke Marsh. The current trail system neither provides adequate access to the marsh, nor is appropriate for the protection of vegetation and wildlife, including migratory and nesting bird species. While the Dyke Marsh trail provides reasonably good access to a point somewhat beyond the existing wooden footbridge, beyond that point the trail simply degenerates into a network of poorly defined, muddy social trails, many of which are inundated at high tide. While the social trails suggest a desire by visitors to be able to access the area, it is clear that there is no well defined or officially provided trail to meet that need. The existing conditions are insensitive to protection of vegetation and wildlife, and encourage the inappropriate and unmanaged development of more social trails. In addition, tidal fluctuations effectively limit opportunities to access some of the most scenic and interesting portions of the marsh, since much of the area is inundated or excessively muddy much of the time.

Increasingly, Dyke Marsh serves as a venue for environmental education and science programs for local school systems. The Parkway's expanding Parks-As-Classrooms program, as well as a multi-park science oriented program brings elementary and high school aged students to Dyke Marsh for educational programs. Construction of the boardwalk and viewing platform would enhance educational opportunities by making the marsh more easily accessible and improving wildlife viewing opportunities.

All interested individuals, agencies, and organizations are urged to provide comments on the Environmental Assessment. The National Park Service in making a final decision regarding this matter will consider all comments received by the closing date.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Bart Truesdell, (703) 289-2530.

Audrey F. Calhoun,

Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway.

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