

prefer mature longleaf pine forests, but also inhabit loblolly, pond, slash, shortleaf, and Virginia pine stands. Without periodic fire to control hardwoods, red-cockaded woodpeckers abandon clusters as other cavity competitors and predators typical of hardwood habitats move in. The decline of the red-cockaded woodpecker is due primarily to loss of the old-growth, fire-maintained southern pine ecosystem as a result of logging, fire suppression, and conversion to non-forest land uses.

Recovery activities for the red-cockaded woodpecker are focused on Federal lands. Private lands are also important in the Service's recovery strategy to supplement habitat where the Federal land base is insufficient to support recovery, to establish and maintain connectivity with populations on public lands, and to provide a donor source of juvenile red-cockaded woodpeckers for translocation into designated recovery populations. Red-cockaded woodpeckers have generally declined on private lands because of a lack of active habitat management, and habitat fragmentation. The Service considers that red-cockaded woodpeckers geographically isolated on private lands, as on the Project site, will eventually cease to exist unless private landowners are encouraged to manage their lands for the species.

The Applicants intend to harvest 86 acres of merchantable timber and reforest the Project site in loblolly pine. This would result in the take of one group of red-cockaded woodpeckers (in recent surveys, numbering 2 adults and 2 juveniles) through harm due to alteration of their habitat. The affected group of red-cockaded woodpeckers are not part of a larger population. The nearest known groups outside the applicants' property are about five miles away and do not regularly interact with the group in the project area. This demographic isolation, in a region of fragmented, discontinuous habitat availability, greatly limits any contribution to species' recovery by the red-cockaded woodpeckers affected by the project. The biological goal of the applicants' HCP is to create a new, or augment an existing, group of red-cockaded woodpeckers, via translocation of juveniles from a donor population, into an area of better habitat

and thereby help to consolidate a more stable red-cockaded woodpecker population within the species' historic range. This would be accomplished by the applicants' contribution of \$13,000 into an existing National Fish and Wildlife Foundation fund. This fund is dedicated to purposes consistent with the mitigation goal stated above. Expenditures from this fund would be made as potential donor and recipient populations of red-cockaded woodpeckers are identified in the future.

The Applicants and the Service believe the biological goal of the HCP to augment or create a new group of red-cockaded woodpeckers at an area of better habitat which would help to consolidate a more stable red-cockaded woodpecker population at an opportune time in the future would offset project impacts while allowing the applicants profitable use of their property.

Under section 9 of the Act and its implementing regulations, "taking" of endangered and threatened wildlife is prohibited. However, the Service, under limited circumstances, may issue permits to take such wildlife if the taking is incidental to and not the purpose of otherwise lawful activities. The Service's regulations for approving such permit requests are contained in section 10(a)(2)(B) of the Act.

As stated above, we have determined that the HCP is a low-effect plan that is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis, which does not require the preparation of an EA or EIS. Low-effect HCPs are those involving: (1) Minor or negligible effects on federally listed or candidate species and their habitats, and (2) minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources. The Applicant's HCP qualifies for the following reasons:

1. Approval of the HCP would result in minor or negligible effects on the red-cockaded woodpecker and its habitat. We do not anticipate significant direct or cumulative effects on this species as a result of this project.
2. Approval of the HCP would not have adverse effects on known geographic, historic, or cultural sites, or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
3. Approval of the HCP would not result in any significant adverse effects on public health or safety.

4. The project does not require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, nor does it threaten to violate a federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for protection of the environment.

5. Approval of the HCP would not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

We will evaluate the HCP and public comments to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Act. We will also evaluate whether the issuance of the ITP complies with section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service Section 7 consultation to ensure the ITP will not jeopardize the continued existence of this species. We will use the results of this consultation, in combination with the above findings, to determine if the requirements of the ITP are met and whether or not to issue the ITP.

Dated: January 16, 2002.

John R. Lemon,

Acting Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Letters of Authorization to Take Marine Mammals

AGENCY: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

ACTION: Notice of issuance of Letters of Authorization to take marine mammals incidental to oil and gas industry activities.

SUMMARY: In accordance with section 101(a)(5)(A) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service implementing regulations [50 CFR 18.27(f)(3)], notice is hereby given that the following Letters of Authorization to take polar bears incidental to oil and gas industry exploration activities in the Beaufort Sea and adjacent northern coast of Alaska have been issued to the following companies:

Company	Activity	Location	Date issued
Phillips Alaska, Inc	Exploration	Rendezvous #3	Dec. 10, 2001.
Phillips Alaska, Inc	Exploration	Tuvaq 1, 2, and 3	Dec. 10, 2001.
Phillips Alaska, Inc	Exploration	Pioneer #1	Dec. 10, 2001.
Phillips Alaska, Inc	Exploration	Spark 6, 7, and 8	Dec. 10, 2001.
Phillips Alaska, Inc	Exploration	Nova 1 and 2	Dec. 10, 2001.

Company	Activity	Location	Date issued
Phillips Alaska, Inc	Exploration	Mitre #1	Dec. 10, 2001.
Fairweather Geophysical	Exploration	NPR-A and Colville Rvr	Dec. 10, 2001.
BP Exploration	Production	Northstar Unit	Dec. 10, 2001.
Harding ESE, Inc	Production	Gwydyr Bay State A1	Dec. 12, 2001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. John W. Bridges at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503 (800) 362-5148 or (907) 786-3810.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Letter of Authorization is issued in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Rules and Regulations "Marine Mammals; Incidental Take During Specified Activities (65 FR 16828; March 30, 2000)."

Dated: December 19, 2001.

David B. Allen,

Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 02-1665 Filed 1-22-02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Geological Survey

Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC); Application Notice Announcing the Opening Date for Transmittal of Applications for Funding Assistance Under the FGDC National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) Cooperative Agreements Program (CAP) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2002

AGENCY: U.S. Geological Survey, Interior.

ACTION: Notice inviting applications for NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program awards for fiscal year 2002, with performance to begin in August 2002 through September 1, 2003.

SUMMARY: The purpose of the NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program is to facilitate and foster partnerships, alliances and technology within and among various public and private entities to assist in building the NSDI. The NSDI consists of technologies, policies, organizations and people necessary to promote cost-effective production, ready availability, and greater utilization of high quality geospatial data among a variety of sectors, disciplines and communities.

The FY 2002 NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program will fund projects in four categories of activities: (1) Metadata implementation assistance, (2) metadata trainer assistance (3) clearinghouse integration with OpenGIS

services, and (4) US and Canadian Spatial Data Infrastructure development. Applications may be submitted by Federal agencies, State and local government agencies, educational institutions, private firms, non-profit foundations, and Federally acknowledged or state-recognized Native American tribes or groups. Applications from Federal agencies will not be competed against applications from other sources. Authority for this program is contained in the Organic Act of March 3, 1879, 43 U.S.C. 31 and Executive Order 12906.

DATES: The program announcements and application forms for the FY 2002 NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program are expected to be available on or about December 15, 2001. Applications must be received on or before March 15, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Copies of each Program Announcement #02HQPA0005 for the NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program will be available through the Internet at www.usgs.gov/contracts/index.html and www.fgdc.gov. Copies of Program Announcement #02HQPA0005 may also be obtained by writing to Patricia Masters, U.S. Geological Survey, Office of Acquisition and Grants, National Assistance Programs Branch, MS 205G, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, VA 20192, or e-mailing pmasters@usgs.gov. Requests must be in writing; verbal requests will not be honored.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For NSDI technical information contact: David Painter, U.S. Geological Survey, Federal Geographic Data Committee, Mail Stop 590, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, Virginia 20192; (703) 648-5513, fax (703) 648-5755, e-mail dpainter@fgdc.gov.

For the NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program contact: Ms. Patricia Masterson, U.S. Geological Survey, Office of Acquisition and Grants, National Programs Assistance Branch, Mail Stop 205G, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, Virginia 20192; (703) 648-7356, fax (703) 648-7359, e-mail pmasters@usgs.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program a total of \$385,000 is available for award.

2002 NSDI Cooperative Agreement Program Categories

Category 1: "Don't Duck Metadata:" Metadata Implementation and Creation Assistance. The objectives for this category are the documentation of geospatial data through metadata creation and serving that documentation on the Internet through a NSDI clearinghouse. Under this category funds are provided for organizations needing assistance in receiving metadata training and in metadata creation.

Category 2: "Don't Duck Metadata:" Metadata Trainer Assistance. Funding in this category is for those organizations and individuals that can provide training assistance to other organizations in becoming skilled and knowledgeable in metadata creation.

Category 3: Clearinghouse Integration with OpenGIS services will provide funding to extend existing Clearinghouse Nodes with OpenGIS Consortium (OGC) compliant web mapping service capabilities and related standards-based services in a consistent way.

Category 4: Canadian/U.S. Spatial Data Infrastructure Project will provide funding assistance to support a collaborative project between organizations in the U.S. and Canada to coordinate, create, maintain, and share geospatial data to support decision-making over a common geography. The FGDC in partnership with the GeoConnections of Natural Resources Canada will fund lead organizations in their respective countries in a collaborative cross-border project.

Dated: January 14, 2002.

Carol F. Aten,

Chief, Administrative Policy and Services, U.S. Geological Survey.

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BILLING CODE 4310-07-M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Proposed Agency Information Collection Activities; Comment Request

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.