

degradation of water quality; the loss and degradation of riparian buffer; and the fragmentation of forest through the lack of management for health and good species composition and;

- Potential effects on populations of flora and fauna by injurious, exotic, or invasive species; the lack of scientific data; and the lack of management for rare, threatened, or endangered species and waterfowl.

What are the important problems affecting fish and wildlife?

The most serious impacts on the refuge complex and the Chesapeake Bay surrounding it arise from the fragmentation of habitats by urbanization, timbering, and agriculture; the lack of forest management; the erosion of Bay islands; the loss and degradation of wetlands and emergent and submergent aquatic vegetation; the proliferation of injurious, invasive, or exotic species; the lack of scientific data on wildlife populations, habitats, and the effectiveness of management actions; and the inadequacy of the refuge complex land base for ensuring its long-term health and ecological integrity and the diversity of Federal trust species.

How will our preferred management actions benefit fish, wildlife, and people?

We believe that our preferred management Alternative B, Conservation Biology for Diversity of Trust Species, best fulfills our statutory mission, responsibilities, and refuge purposes, while considering economic, environmental, technical and other factors. It proposes to increase protection for more than 270 species of rare, threatened, or endangered species; to significantly contribute to delisting the Delmarva fox squirrel from endangered species status; to provide habitat necessary to sustain 10 percent of Maryland's wintering Atlantic population of Canada geese, lesser snow geese, and dabbling ducks; to restore 10,000 acres of emergent marsh to 1933 conditions; to provide high quality forest habitat for 22 species of globally significant forest interior dwelling species of migratory birds; to control or eradicate injurious, invasive, and exotic species; to increase waterfowl and songbird utilization and production; to enhance habitat and improve resident populations of waterfowl; to restore wetlands and hydrology; to expand opportunities for research; to provide additional, wildlife-dependent recreation, particularly the Big 6 mentioned above; to improve significant facilities and add staff; to protect

additional, adjoining land by easement, agreement, or fee title acquisition; to restore Atlantic white cedar forest; and to improve public understanding of the dynamics of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and the interactions among all its populations.

How do our draft management alternatives differ?

Alternative A, Species-specific Management (No Action Alternative), represents traditional, single-species management. It focuses on providing for the habitat needs of key wildlife trust species and groups of species. It proposes to provide habitat for wintering and nesting waterfowl, for nesting colonial waterbirds, for endangered species such as the Delmarva fox squirrel, and for species of special emphasis such as Canada geese and lesser snow geese, wintering dabbling ducks, nesting black ducks, wood ducks, tundra swans, ospreys, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and colonial bird species such as great blue herons, great egrets, least terns, and black skimmers. It proposes generally to follow the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Station Management Plan of 1991.

Alternative B, Conservation Biology for Trust Species Diversity (our Preferred Alternative), represents adaptive management based on the results of scientific survey and monitoring programs. It focuses on restoring, enhancing, and maintaining ecological processes and natural biological communities and biodiversity. It emphasizes managing the refuge complex for the benefit of all migratory bird species; maintaining and recovering endangered or threatened species; restoring submerged aquatic vegetation and wetlands; reducing or eliminating invasive plant and animal species; and adding research and inventories, including butterflies, reptiles, amphibians and fish.

Our preferred alternative also proposes to expand the boundary of Blackwater NWR, primarily through partnerships and easements, in two areas: 15,300 acres surrounding the refuge; and 16,000 acres east of the refuge along the Nanticoke River. All of that acreage contains low-lying forest and marsh habitats.

Finally, our preferred alternative improves our ability to provide opportunities for compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation, by proposing a new, accessible fishing pier and parking area at Key Wallace Bridge, new hiking and canoe trails, a canoe access ramp and wetland observation deck; and, by rebuilding the wildlife observation

tower, remodeling and expanding the visitor center, updating the exhibits at the center, enhancing signage, providing new hunting opportunities (turkeys, resident Canada geese, and waterfowl), and providing many more outreach and environmental education programs.

Alternative C, Maximum Public Use with No Habitat Management, represents reduced management of wildlife and resources, but the maximum compatible recreational use of the refuge complex: All of the use proposed in alternative B; plus, expanding the hours of guided tours, offering more education programs, constructing more trails, piers, and kiosks, and opening more islands to bank fishing. However, its much-reduced scope of wildlife and resource management would address only those mandates by Federal law and executive directive, with no habitat restoration or manipulation, only intervention to avert catastrophic emergencies. It would not address the rise in sea level, impacts on water quality, or other known or suspected impacts. We would burn prescribed fires periodically, but only as a safety precaution to reduce fuel load. This alternative would not counteract natural forces or human activities that may impact the ecological communities, habitats, and species of the refuge complex.

Please send us your comments in the manner described above, or join us at our public meetings soon to be scheduled in Cambridge, Salisbury, and Crisfield, Maryland.

Dated: February 18, 2005.

Richard O. Bennett,

Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hadley, Massachusetts 01035-9589.

[FR Doc. 05-8763 Filed 5-2-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Availability of Environmental Document and Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit Associated With a Safe Harbor Agreement for Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Ormond Beach Property, Ventura County, CA

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) has applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

(Service or "we") for an enhancement of survival permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The permit application includes a proposed Safe Harbor Agreement (Agreement) between the applicant and the Service. The Agreement proposes to enroll 296 acres of land, which includes 276 acres that is to provide for the preservation of coastal marsh and wetlands to aid in the conservation of the endangered brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), California least tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*), light-footed clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris levipes*), tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*), salt marsh bird's beak (*Cordylanthus maritimus* ssp. *maritimus*), Ventura marsh milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*) and threatened western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), and 20 acres of ongoing farming activities which will eventually be developed for industrial or commercial use. The proposed enrolled lands are properties owned by MWD at Ormond Beach, Ventura County, California. The proposed duration of the Agreement and permit is 75 years.

The Service has made a preliminary determination that the proposed Agreement and permit application are eligible for categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The basis for this determination is contained in an Environmental Action Statement, which also is available for public review.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before June 2, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Please address written comments to Diane Noda, Field Supervisor, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, California 93003. You may also send comments by facsimile to (805) 644-3958. (see Public Review and Comment section below).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chris Dellith, Senior Biologist for northern Los Angeles/Ventura/southern Santa Barbara counties, (see **ADDRESSES**) telephone: (805) 644-1766.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Under a Safe Harbor Agreement, participating landowners voluntarily undertake management activities on their property to enhance, restore, or maintain habitat benefiting species listed under the Act. Safe Harbor Agreements encourage private and other non-Federal property owners to implement conservation efforts for listed species by assuring property

owners they will not be subjected to increased property use restrictions if their efforts attract listed species to their property or increase the numbers or distribution of listed species already on their property. Application requirements and issuance criteria for enhancement of survival permits through Safe Harbor Agreements are found in 50 CFR 17.22(c). The Applicant has developed the proposed Agreement for 296 acres of enrolled land for the conservation of the federally listed brown pelican, California least tern, light-footed clapper rail, tidewater goby, salt marsh bird's beak, Ventura marsh milk-vetch, and the western snowy plover (Covered Species) on property at Ormond Beach in Ventura County. The conservation measure in the Agreement calls for the preservation of 276 acres of coastal wetland. The preservation of these 276 acres will be accomplished through the sale of the property to a non-profit conservation organization with a deed restriction, in perpetuity, that requires the property be used for open space, habitat preservation, wetland restoration, and public access only. The MWD plans to retain 20 acres, of the 296 acres of enrolled lands, at the Ormond Beach project site for ongoing farming operations and potential development for commercial and industrial use.

Although none of the Covered Species, except for western snowy plover, currently occur on the 296 acres of enrolled lands, the preservation of the 276 acres, with the deed restriction, could benefit all of the Covered Species in the future. The Covered Species are threatened with loss and degradation of the coastal habitats with which they are strongly associated. All of the species are likely to benefit through the preservation of open space and suitable habitat into which dispersing individuals from expanding populations elsewhere can move, or, in the case of the covered plants, direct introduction from source populations.

The conservation measure set forth in the Agreement is expected to result in the following net conservation benefits to the Covered Species: (1) Insurance against the decline of the Covered Species in the general area as a result of habitat loss; (2) increased availability of suitable breeding and foraging habitat through preservation and eventual restoration of the property; (3) reduced fragmentation, and potential increased connectivity of populations in the general area; and, (4) likelihood of increased population sizes of the Covered Species in the general area.

Consistent with the Service's Safe Harbor policy and regulations, the

Service proposes to issue a permit to MWD authorizing incidental take as a result of normal farming activities currently occurring on the 20 acre property. Normal farming activities include planting, harvesting, weed and insect control, pruning, mowing, discing, operation of vehicles and farm equipment, and similar activities.

This Agreement and permit will also authorize MWD incidental take of the Covered Species above MWD's baseline responsibilities on the 296 acres of enrolled lands, at the end of the term of the 75-year Agreement, if so desired by MWD.

The Service has made a preliminary determination that approval of the Agreement qualifies as a categorical exclusion under NEPA, as provided by the Department of Interior Manual (516 DM 2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1) based on the following criteria: (1) Implementation of the Agreement would result in minor or negligible effects on federally listed, proposed, and candidate species and their habitats; (2) implementation of the Agreement would result in minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources; and (3) impacts of the Agreement, considered together with the impacts of other past, present and reasonably foreseeable similarly situated projects would not result, over time, in cumulative effects to environmental values or resources which would be considered significant. This is more fully explained in our Environmental Action Statement.

Based upon this preliminary determination, we do not intend to prepare further NEPA documentation. The Service will consider public comments in making its final determination on whether to prepare such documentation.

Public Review and Comments

Individuals wishing copies of the permit application, the Environmental Action Statement, or copies of the full text of the Agreement, including a map of the proposed permit area, references, and legal descriptions of the proposed permit area, should contact the office and personnel listed in the **ADDRESSES** section above. Documents also will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office (**ADDRESSES** section above).

The Service provides this notice pursuant to section 10(c) of the Act and pursuant to implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1506.6). All comments received on the permit application and Agreement, including

names and addresses, will become part of the Administration record and may be released to the public. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment.

Anonymous comments will not be considered. All submissions from organizations or businesses are available for public inspection in their entirety.

We will evaluate the permit application, the Agreement, and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Act and NEPA regulations. If the requirements are met, the Service will sign the proposed Agreement and issue an enhancement of survival permit under section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Act to MWD for the take of the seven covered species incidental to otherwise lawful activities of the project. The Service will not make a final decision until the end of the 30-day comment period and will fully consider all comments received during the comment period.

Dated: April 26, 2005.

Ken McDermond,

Deputy Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office, Sacramento, California.

[FR Doc. 05-8752 Filed 5-2-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-U

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CA-180]

Meeting of the Central California Resource Advisory Council

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Central California Resource Advisory Council (RAC) will meet as indicated below.

DATES: The meeting will be held Thursday, Friday and Saturday, June 23, 24, and 25, 2005. On Thursday, the RAC will meet at 7 p.m. in Amante's Restaurant, 3300-C Coach Lane, Cameron Park, California, for dinner and a briefing on the Bureau's Wild and Scenic River study process. On Friday, June 24, the RAC will travel along the South Fork of the American River in El Dorado County from Chili Bar to the Cronan Ranch, arriving at the Cronan Ranch at about 4 p.m. During the trip, the RAC will hear speakers on Wild and Scenic River issues. At the Cronan

Ranch, the RAC will hear both advocates and opponents of the federal Wild and Scenic River program. On Saturday, June 25, the RAC will meet in formal session in the Conference Room of the Cameron Park Best Western Inn, 3361 Coach Lane, Cameron Park, California, from 9 a.m. until 12 noon. There will be a public comment period on Saturday, June 25 from 10:30 a.m. until 11 a.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Deane Swickard, Field Manager, 63 Natoma Street, Folsom, CA 95630, telephone (916) 985-4474.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The twelve-member Central California Resource Advisory Council advises the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, on a variety of public land issues associated with public land management in Central California. At this meeting, agenda topics include a discussion of possible Wild and Scenic River status for the South Fork of the American River. The RAC will also hear status reports from the Bakersfield, Bishop, Folsom, and Hollister Field Office Managers.

The meeting is open to the public. The public may present written comments to the Council, and time will be allocated for hearing public comments. Depending on the number of persons wishing to comment and the time available, the time for individual oral comments may be limited. Individuals who plan to attend and need special assistance such as sign language interpretation or other reasonable accommodations should contact the BLM as indicated above.

Dated: April 27, 2005.

D.K. Swickard,

Folsom Field Office Manager.

[FR Doc. 05-8750 Filed 5-2-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CO930-05-926NQ-COQB1]

Correction to Notice of Availability of the Draft Alamosa River Watershed Restoration Master Plan

AGENCIES: Bureau of Land Management, Interior [Lead]; Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior [cooperating agency], Forest Service, Agriculture, [cooperating agency].

ACTION: Notice of correction.

SUMMARY: On Monday, April 18, 2005, the Bureau of Land Management published a Notice of Availability of the

Draft Alamosa River Watershed Restoration Master Plan in the **Federal Register** [70 FR 20171]. The notice contains two errors in the **DATES** section. There will be no public meeting as mentioned in the previous notice and the 30 day comment period will end on June 2, 2005 instead of April 14, 2005 as the previous notice indicated.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rob Robinson at (303) 239-3642.

Robert H. Robinson,

Summitville Trustee Council Representative, Division of Energy, Lands and Minerals, Colorado State Office, Bureau of Land Management.

[FR Doc. 05-8812 Filed 5-2-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-JB-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

Notice on Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Lease Sales

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service, Interior.

ACTION: List of restricted joint bidders.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the authority vested in the Director of the MMS by the joint bidding provisions of 30 CFR 256.41, each entity within one of the following groups shall be restricted from bidding with any entity in any other of the following groups at OCS oil and gas lease sales to be held during the bidding period May 1, 2005, through October 31, 2005. The List of Restricted Joint Bidders published October 18, 2004, in the **Federal Register** at 69 FR 61402 covered the period November 1, 2004, through April 31, 2005.

Group I.

Exxon Mobil Corporation.
ExxonMobil Exploration Company.

Group II.

Shell Oil Company.
Shell Offshore Inc.
SWEPI LP.
Shell Frontier Oil & Gas Inc.
Shell Consolidated Energy Resources Inc.
Shell Land & Energy Company.
Shell Onshore Ventures Inc.
Shell Offshore Properties and Capital II, Inc.

Shell Rocky Mountain Production LLC.

Shell Gulf of Mexico Inc.

Group III.

BP America Production Company.
BP Exploration & Production Inc.
BP Exploration (Alaska) Inc.

Group IV.

TOTAL E&P USA, Inc.

Group V.