January through June and July through December of each year. Section 221(g)(4) is implemented in the HUD regulations at 24 CFR 221.255 and 24 CFR 221.790.

The Secretary of the Treasury has determined that the interest rate to be borne by debentures issued pursuant to section 221(g)(4) during the 6-month period beginning July 1, 2008, is 3⅞ percent.

The subject matter of this notice falls within the categorical exemption from HUD's environmental clearance procedures set forth in 24 CFR 50.19(c)(6). For that reason, no environmental finding has been prepared for this notice.

Authority: Sections 211, 221, 224, National Housing Act, 12 U.S.C. 1715b, 1715l, 1715o; Section 7(d), Department of HUD Act, 42 U.S.C. 3535(d).

Dated: July 25, 2008.

Brian D. Montgomery,

Assistant Secretary for Housing—Federal Housing Commissioner.

[FR Doc. E8–17742 Filed 8–1–08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4210–67–P

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission

Notice of Meeting

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 552b of Title 5, United States Code, that a meeting of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission will be held on Thursday, September 18, 2008.

The Commission was established pursuant to Pub. L. 99–647. The purpose of the Commission is to assist federal, state and local authorities in the development and implementation of an integrated resource management plan for those lands and waters within the Corridor.

The meeting will convene on September 18, 2008 at 9 a.m. at Banneker Industries, located at 582 Great Road, North Smithfield, RI for the following reasons:

1. Approval of Minutes
2. Chairman's Report
3. Executive Director's Report
4. Financial Budget
5. Public Input

It is anticipated that about thirty people will be able to attend the session in addition to the Commission members.

Interested persons may make oral or written presentations to the Commission or file written statements. Such requests should be made prior to the meeting to: Jan H. Reitsma, Executive Director, John H. Chafee, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, One Depot Square, Woonsocket, RI 02895, Tel.: (401) 762–0250.

Further information concerning this meeting may be obtained from Jan H. Reitsma, Executive Director of the Commission at the aforementioned address.

Jan H. Reitsma,

Executive Director, BRVNHCC.

[FR Doc. E8–17789 Filed 8–1–08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–RK–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary

Reestablishment of the Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Control Alternatives Workgroup

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Reestablishment.

SUMMARY: The Secretary of the Interior (Secretary), after consultation with the General Services Administration, has reestablished the Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Control Alternatives Workgroup (Workgroup) for 2 years. The Workgroup provides an opportunity for stakeholders to give policy and technical input on efforts to develop and implement sea lamprey control techniques alternative to lampricides in Lake Champlain.

DATES: The Council's charter will be filed under the Federal Advisory Committee Act August 19, 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dave Tilton, Fish and Wildlife Service, Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Resources Complex, 11 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452, 802–872–0629, extension 12.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Workgroup conducts its operations in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. Appendix). It reports to the Secretary through the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative (Cooperative) and functions solely as an advisory body. The Workgroup provides recommendations and advice to the Cooperative. Specific responsibilities of the Workgroup are to provide recommendations on: (1) Feasible and appropriate sea lamprey management methods alternative to lampricides; (2) funding priorities for research and/or demonstration projects; (3) facilitating coordinated research between Lake Champlain and the Great Lakes; and (4) development of requests for proposals, project proposals, and research efforts affecting the Lake Champlain Basin.

The Workgroup consists of up to 20 members representing Federal and State agencies and stakeholders. In addition, up to five of the members may be special Government employees, selected for their scientific expertise. All members are knowledgeable about Lake Champlain fishery management issues, including sea lamprey control.

The Certification for reestablishment is published below.

Certification

I hereby certify that the Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Control Alternatives Workgroup (Workgroup) is necessary and is in the public interest in connection with the performance of duties imposed on the Department of the Interior through the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for a Long-term Program of Sea Lamprey Control in Lake Champlain as published in 2001 (66 FR 46651, September 6, 2001).

Dated: July 24, 2008.

Dirk Kempthorne,

Secretary of the Interior.

[FR Doc. E8–17737 Filed 8–1–08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R8–ES–2008–N0114; 80221–1113–0000–C2]

Draft Revised Recovery Plan for Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise (Gopherus agassizii)

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability for review and comment.

SUMMARY: We, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft revised recovery plan for the Mojave population of the desert tortoise for public review and comment.

DATES: We must receive any comments on the draft recovery plan on or before November 3, 2008.

ADDRESSES: The draft recovery plan and reference materials are available for inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the following location: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, 1340

Financial Boulevard, Suite 234, Reno, NV 89502 (telephone: 775–861–6300). Submitted comments regarding the draft revised recovery plan will also be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours following the public review and comment period. Requests for copies of the draft revised recovery plan and submission of written comments or materials regarding the plan should be addressed to the Field Supervisor at the above address. You may also submit electronic comments on the recovery plan to: *DTrecovery@fws.gov*. An electronic copy of the draft recovery plan is available at: *http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html#plans*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Roy Averill-Murray, Desert Tortoise Recovery Coordinator, at the above address or telephone number.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Recovery of endangered or threatened animals and plants is a primary goal of the Endangered Species Act (Act) (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and our endangered species program. Recovery means improvement of the status of listed species to the point at which listing is no longer required under the criteria set out in section 4(a)(1) of the Act. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for the conservation of the species, establish criteria for downlisting or delisting listed species, and estimate time and cost for implementing the measures needed for recovery. The Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) was first published in 1994 wherein the status of the species, threats, recovery actions and recovery criteria were presented. Since that time a great deal of effort has been dedicated to recovery and conservation activities, and additional information has been obtained through research and observation that allows us to better focus our recovery strategy. The revised recovery plan for the Mojave Population of the desert tortoise is the focus of this notice.

Section 4(f) of the Act directs the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce to develop and implement recovery plans for species listed as endangered or threatened, unless such plans will not promote the conservation of the species. We and the National Marine Fisheries Service, as appropriate, have been delegated responsibility for administering the Act. Section 4(f) of the Act requires that public notice, and an opportunity for public review and comment, be provided during development of recovery plans. We will consider all information presented during the public comment period on each new or revised recovery plan. Substantive comments may or may not result in changes to a recovery plan. However, any substantive comments regarding recovery plan implementation will be forwarded to appropriate Federal agencies or other interested entities so that they can take these comments into account during the implementation of their respective management programs. Individual responses to submitted comments will not be provided.

The desert tortoise is a large, herbivorous reptile that can reach 20 to 38 centimeters (cm) (8 to 15 inches (in)) in carapace length and 10 to 15 cm (4 to 6 in) in shell height. Hatchlings emerge from eggs at about 5 cm (2 in) in length. Adults have a domed carapace and relatively flat, unhinged plastrons (lower shells). Their shells are high-domed and greenish-tan to dark brown in color with tan scute (horny plate on the shell) centers. Adult desert tortoises weigh 3.6 to 6.8 kilograms (8 to 15 pounds). The forelimbs have heavy, claw-like scales and are flattened for digging. Hind limbs are more elephantine.

Throughout most of the Mojave Desert, the desert tortoise occupies a variety of habitats: From flats and slopes dominated by creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) scrub at lower elevations, to rocky slopes in the blackbrush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*) scrub, and juniper (*Juniperus* spp.) woodland interface at higher elevations. Records of desert tortoises range from below sea level to an elevation of 2,225 meters (m) (7,300 feet (ft)), with the most favorable habitat at elevations between 305 and 914 m (1,000 and 3,000 ft). Desert tortoises most commonly occur on gently sloping terrain with sandy-gravel soils that are friable for burrowing and where there is sparse cover of low-growing shrubs and a high diversity of both perennial and annual plants.

The desert tortoise occurs in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts in southern California, southern Nevada, Arizona, and the southwestern tip of Utah in the United States, as well as in Sonora and northern Sinaloa in Mexico. The listed Mojave population of the desert tortoise includes those animals living north and west of the Colorado River in the Mojave Desert of California, Nevada, Arizona, and southwestern Utah, and in the Sonoran (Colorado) Desert in California. A recovery plan was published in 1994 and critical habitat was also designated in all four States supporting the species.

Three other tortoise species in the genus *Gopherus* occur in the United States, and another occurs in Mexico; however, all are geographically separated from the Mojave population. The Sonoran population of the desert tortoise is significantly different both genetically and ecologically, but could be confused visually with tortoises of the Mojave population; therefore, we determined the Sonoran population also warranted protection as a threatened species under section 4(e) of the Endangered Species Act (similarity of appearance) when located outside of its natural range.

The vast majority of threats to the desert tortoise or its habitat are associated with human land uses. The threats identified in the 1994 Recovery Plan, and that formed the basis for listing the tortoise as a threatened species, continue to affect the species. Habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation from urbanization, off-highway vehicle use in the desert, linear features such as roads and utility corridors, livestock grazing and mining, and military activities were cited as some of the primary reasons for the decline in desert tortoise populations. Disease and increased incidence of fire in the Mojave Desert have also been implicated in desert tortoise declines.

The data amassed between 1979 and 2002 from permanent study plots throughout the range of the species were used to explore regional and recovery-unit-level analyses and trends, and to develop within-population spatial analyses at various scales on the landscape and in different management units. Despite the challenges in comparing data from year to year, the apparent downward trend in desert tortoise populations in the western portion of the range that was identified at the time of listing is considered ongoing. Results from other portions of the range were inconclusive, but recent surveys of some populations found too few tortoises to produce population estimates, suggesting that declines may have occurred more broadly.

Collectively, the various analyses that have been performed do not suggest that implementation of specific management actions over time has abated declines of, or resulted in detectable increases in, desert tortoise populations across most of the range. The life history of the species (i.e., delayed reproductive maturity, low reproductive rates, and relatively high mortality early in life) is such that observing relatively rapid increases in populations is highly unlikely, even over the 23-year monitoring period evaluated.

Despite the clear demonstration that the threats identified at the time of listing impact individual tortoises, there are few data available to evaluate or quantify the effects of threats on desert tortoise populations. While current research results can lead to predictions about how local tortoise abundance should be affected by the presence of threats, quantitative estimates of the magnitude of these threats, or of their relative importance, have not yet been developed.

While precise correlations between the multitude of threats and desert tortoise populations have not been clearly shown, a great deal of effort has been put forth by research scientists and land managers to actively conserve the species. Substantive datasets pertaining to disease, non-native invasive plant species, and fire have been assembled over the years that will be used to inform decisions relative to desert tortoise recovery. Conservation actions such as land acquisitions, installing protective fencing, retiring grazing allotments, limiting off-highway vehicle access, and implementing restoration projects have been important recovery and management efforts based on our current state of knowledge regarding the threats facing the species.

The revised strategy emphasizes partnerships to direct and maintain focus on implementing recovery actions and a system to track implementation and effectiveness of those actions. The strategic elements listed herein are part of a multi-faceted approach designed to improve the 1994 Recovery Plan. The goals of the revised recovery plan are recovery and delisting of the desert tortoise. The objectives and recovery criteria address demography (maintain self-sustaining populations of desert tortoises within each recovery unit into the future); distribution (maintain well-distributed populations of desert tortoises throughout each recovery unit); and habitat (ensure that habitat within each recovery unit is protected and managed to support long-term viability of desert tortoise populations. The strategic elements include the following: (1) Develop, support, and build partnerships to facilitate recovery; (2) protect existing populations and habitat, instituting habitat restoration where necessary; (3) augment depleted populations in a strategic, experimental manner; (4) monitor progress toward recovery, includes population trend and effectiveness monitoring; (5) conduct applied research and modeling in support of recovery efforts within a strategic framework; and (6) implement a formal adaptive management program that integrates new information and utilizes conceptual models that link management actions to predicted responses by desert tortoise populations or their habitat. The success of this revised recovery strategy will rely heavily upon the involvement of our partners and our commitment to implementing the strategic elements listed above coupled with a functioning adaptive management program.

Public Comments Solicited

We solicit written comments on the draft revised recovery plan described in this notice. All comments received by the date specified above will be considered in development of a final revised recovery plan for the Mojave population of the desert tortoise.

Authority: The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Jim A. Bartel,

Acting Regional Director, Region 8, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. E8–17520 Filed 8–1–08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R9–FHC–2008–N0185; 71490–1351–0000–M2]

Marine Mammal Protection Act; Stock Assessment Reports

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of final revised marine mammal stock assessment reports for three stocks of northern sea otters in Alaska; response to comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has incorporated public comments into revisions of marine mammal stock assessment reports for the three stocks of northern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris kenyoni*) in Alaska. The 2008 final stock assessment reports are now complete and available to the public.

ADDRESSES: Send requests for printed copies of the final stock assessment reports to: Chief, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503; (800) 362–5148. Copies of the final revised stock assessment reports are also available on the Internet in Adobe Acrobat format at *http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/seaotters/reports.htm*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: One of the goals of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361–1407) is to ensure that stocks of marine mammals occurring in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States do not experience a level of human-caused mortality and serious injury that is likely to cause the stock to be reduced below its optimum sustainable population level (OSP). OSP is defined as '' * * * the number of animals which will result in the maximum productivity of the population or the species, keeping in mind the carrying capacity of the habitat and the health of the ecosystem of which they form a constituent element.''

To help accomplish the goal of maintaining marine mammal stocks at their OSPs, section 117 of the MMPA requires the Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to prepare stock assessment reports for each marine mammal stock that occurs in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States. These stock assessments are to be based on the best scientific information available and are, therefore, prepared in consultation with established regional scientific review groups. Each stock assessment must include:

(1) A description of the stock and its geographic range; (2) minimum population estimate, maximum net productivity rate, and current population trend; (3) estimate of human-caused mortality and serious injury; (4) commercial fishery interactions; (5) status of the stock; and (6) potential biological removal level (PBR). The PBR is defined as '' * * * the maximum number of animals, not including natural mortalities, that may be removed from a marine mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its OSP.'' The PBR is the product of the minimum population estimate of the stock (N_{min}); one-half the maximum theoretical or estimated net productivity rate of the stock at a small population size (R_{max}); and a recovery factor (F_r) of between 0.1 and 1.0, which is intended to compensate for uncertainty and unknown estimation errors.

Section 117 of the MMPA also requires the Service and the NMFS to review and revise the stock assessment reports: (a) At least annually for stocks that are specified as strategic stocks; (b) at least annually for stocks for which significant new information is available; and (c) at least once every 3 years for all other stocks.

A strategic stock is defined in the MMPA as a marine mammal stock: (A) For which the level of direct human-caused mortality exceeds the PBR; (B) which, based on the best available