

observed or where observer coverage is low.

Response: The predominant type of fishing gear that has been known to interact with sea otters are salmon set and drift gillnets. Available information suggests that fisheries using other types of gear, such as trawl, longline, pot, and purse seine appear to be less likely to have interactions with sea otters due to either the areas where such fisheries operate, or the specific gear used, or both. Gillnet fisheries occur throughout the range of sea otters in Alaska; however, the nature of their potential for interaction depends on several factors including sea otter distribution and abundance relative to the distribution and effort expended in these fisheries. We believe that application of entanglement rates derived from small sample sizes in observed fisheries to unobserved fisheries in other areas would produce questionable results.

Comment 10: Stock assessment reports do not consider other impacts from oil and gas development besides oil spills.

Response: We considered disturbance from oil and gas exploration, development, and production in the draft stock assessments; however, we did not state this point explicitly in the draft stock assessment reports. We have revised the final stock assessment reports accordingly.

Comment 11: Fuel oil spills from ship traffic should be considered for the southcentral and southeast Alaska stocks.

Response: We have included additional information from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation spill reporting database about ship traffic and other sources that have resulted in discharges of crude and noncrude oil into the marine environment for all 3 stock assessment reports.

Comment 12: The stock assessment reports should describe the reasons for and implications of the age/sex distribution of the subsistence harvest on the demography and dynamics of sea otter populations.

Response: We believe the suggested additional in-depth analysis of the subsistence harvest is beyond the scope of these reports as it relates to determining the status of the stocks.

Comment 13: The impact of other factors, such as contaminants, should be evaluated.

Response: Available information is insufficient to quantitatively estimate the impacts of these factors.

Comment 14: Additional detail on the Unusual Mortality Event should be

included in the stock assessment reports.

Response: Studies of sea otter disease, mortality, and survival are ongoing. Results are not yet available for inclusion in this stock assessment report.

Comment 15: Given the dates of the various surveys used to estimate the population size of the southwest Alaska stock, the current population may be lower than the estimated value.

Response: We acknowledge that population estimates for some of the regions within the southwest Alaska stock are somewhat dated; however, they are the best available scientific information at this time. Population monitoring for this stock is an important component of the recovery plan that is in development. As this stock is listed as threatened under the ESA, it is considered strategic under the MMPA and subject to annual review, regardless of the actual population size.

Comment 16: Apparent regional population trends in the southeast Alaska stock should be discussed in greater detail.

Response: The U.S. Geological Survey collected survey information for the southeast Alaska stock. A summary report that addresses this issue is in preparation; however, conclusions are not available at this time.

Comment 17: Information gathered from the fishing industry cannot be relied upon for truthfulness or accuracy because of their concern for profits.

Response: The Service relied on the best available scientific information in the preparation of these stock assessment reports, and readily acknowledges the limitations of these data. Although some of the information is self-reported, we also rely on fisheries observer programs when available.

Comment 18: The agency's system for observing the catch is incorrect and untruthful. Cameras on boats and fines and jail times are needed.

Response: Observer programs are conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service of the Department of Commerce. We have forwarded these suggested improvements to them for consideration.

Comment 19: The words "optimum sustainable population" are opposed as the phrase promotes overutilization of the wildlife.

Response: The term "Optimal Sustainable Population" is defined in the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1362).

References Not Cited in the Notice of Availability of Draft Revised SARs

Manly, B.F.J. 2006. Incidental catch and interactions of marine mammals and birds

in the Cook Inlet salmon driftnet and setnet fisheries. Western EcoSystems Technology Inc. Report. Cheyenne, Wyoming, USA. 98pp.

Manly, B.F.J. 2007. Incidental take and interactions of marine mammals and birds in the Kodiak Island salmon set gillnet fishery, 2002 and 2005. Western EcoSystems Technology Inc. Report. Cheyenne, Wyoming, USA. 221pp.

Authority: The authority for this action is the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407).

Dated: July 29, 2008.

Rowan W. Gould,

Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. E8-17804 Filed 8-1-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R4-R-2008-N0147; 40136-1265-0000-S3]

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington Counties, NC

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability: Final comprehensive conservation plan and finding of no significant impact.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of our final comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. In the final CCP, we describe how we will manage this refuge for the next 15 years.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the CCP may be obtained by writing to: Howard A. Phillips, Refuge Manager, Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 329, Columbia, NC 27925. The CCP may also be accessed and downloaded from the Service's Internet site: <http://southeast.fws.gov/planning>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Howard A. Phillips; Telephone: 252/796-3004.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

With this notice, we finalize the CCP process for Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. We started this process through a notice in the **Federal Register** on November 3, 2000 (65 FR 66256). For more about the process, see that notice.

Congress established the 12,000-acre Pungo National Wildlife Refuge in 1963 by the authorities of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 and the Fish

and Wildlife Act of 1956. In 1990, we established Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, making Pungo Refuge a unit of Pocosin Lakes Refuge. The refuge now consists of 110,106 acres. We named the refuge for the pocosin habitat that dominates the landscape and for the lakes that occur within the pocosin.

We announce our decision and the availability of the final CCP and FONSI for Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1506.6(b)) requirements. We completed a thorough analysis of impacts on the human environment, which we included in the draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment (Draft CCP/EA). The CCP will guide us in managing and administering Pocosin Lakes Refuge for the next 15 years.

The compatibility determinations for hunting; fishing; wildlife observation and photography; environmental education and interpretation; access for public uses; trapping of selected furbearers and feral hogs for nuisance animal management; refuge resource research studies; cooperative farming program; commercial photography; commercial tours and guiding; wood and reed gathering and cutting; and meetings of non-service agencies and organizations are all available in the CCP.

Background

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee) (Improvement Act), which amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose for developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year plan for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and our policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Improvement Act.

Comments

Approximately 130 copies of the Draft CCP/EA were made available for a 30-

day public review period as announced in the **Federal Register** on July 12, 2007 (72 FR 38097). Twelve agencies and/or individuals submitted comments, either in writing or at public forums. Four persons spoke at the public forums and eight presented written comments, representing state agencies, local government agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and local citizens.

Selected Alternative

We developed four alternatives for management of the refuge and chose Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative. We selected Alternative 2 based on the sound professional judgment of the staff and after considering the comments we received on the draft document. The primary focus under Alternative 2 will be to optimize management of the impoundments very intensively by controlling water levels and vegetation to create optimum habitat for migrating waterfowl. Implementing the CCP will result in moderate program increases to address the refuge's highest priorities. We will manage pine forests and marshes with prescribed fire and will manage the vegetative composition of habitats in selected areas. Waterfowl will be surveyed on a routine basis. We will develop inventory plans for all species and implement them in selected habitats. We will develop and implement a black bear management plan. The visitor center will be maintained by volunteers and cooperating agency personnel supplementing refuge personnel. The volunteer program will be expanded by recruiting volunteers to contribute 4,000 hours of service. We will construct two pads for recreational vehicles in order to attract volunteers. There will be 17.5 staff members dedicated to refuge management and 7.5 staff members dedicated to fire management. The six priority public uses will be allowed, with the refuge staff conducting environmental education and interpretation programs to meet local needs.

Authority: This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105–57.

Dated: June 10, 2008.

Cynthia K. Dohner,

Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. E8–17766 Filed 8–1–08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Information Collection Activities, Submission to the Office of Management and Budget

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of renewal of a currently approved information collection.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has submitted to the Office of Management and Budget a request for approval and renewal of information collections, OMB Control No. 1076–0017, Financial Assistance and Social Service Program application form 5–6601.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before September 3, 2008.

ADDRESSES: Interested parties are invited to submit written comments regarding this proposal to the Desk Officer of the Department of the Interior by facsimile to (202) 395–6566. You may also send comments by e-mail to: OIRA_DOCKET@omb.eop.gov.

Copies of comments should refer to the proposal by name and/or OMB Control Number and should be sent to Kevin Sanders, Acting Chief, Office of Indian Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW., MS–4513–MIB, Washington, DC 20240. Telephone (202) 513–7621.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Copies of the collection of information form or requests for additional information should be directed to Kevin Sanders, Office of Indian Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW., MS–4513, Washington, DC 20240. Telephone (202) 513–7621.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The Bureau of Indian Affairs needs the information collected. Funding of these programs is authorized by 25 U.S.C. 13 to make determinations of eligibility for the BIA's social service financial assistance programs: General Assistance, Child Welfare Assistance, Miscellaneous Assistance, and services only (no cash assistance).

A 60-day notice for public comments was published in the **Federal Register** on February 4, 2008 (73 FR 6524). No comments were received regarding this form.