

of foraging habitat through fire suppression and loss of mature trees, and the loss of valuable genetic resources because of small population size and isolation of populations.

The objective of this revision is to provide a framework for the recovery of the red-cockaded woodpecker so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. As recovery criteria are met, the status of the species will be reviewed and it will be considered for removal from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (50 CFR part 17). The red-cockaded woodpecker will be considered for delisting when (1) there are 10 populations that each contain at least 350 potential breeding groups (400 to 500 active clusters), and 1 population that contains at least 1,000 potential breeding groups (1,100 to 1,400 active clusters) from among 13 designated primary core populations (see recovery plan for the list of primary core populations and the recovery units in which they are located); (2) there are 9 populations that each contain at least 250 potential breeding groups (275 to 350 active clusters), from among 10 designated secondary core populations (see recovery plan for the list of secondary core populations and the recovery units in which they are located); (3) there are at least 250 potential breeding groups (275 to 350 active clusters) distributed among designated essential support populations in the South/Central Florida Recovery Unit, and six of these populations (including at least two of the following—Avon Park Air Force Range, Big Cypress National Preserve, and Ocala National Forest) exhibit a minimum population size of 40 potential breeding groups; (4) the following populations are stable or increasing and each contain at least 100 potential breeding groups (110 to 140 active clusters)—(a) Northeast North Carolina/Southeast Virginia Essential Support Population of the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain Recovery Unit, (b) Talladega/Shoal Creek Essential Support Population of the Cumberlands/Ridge and Valley Recovery Unit, and (c) North Carolina Sandhills West Essential Support Population of the Sandhills Recovery Unit; and (5) for each of the populations meeting the above size criteria, responsible management agencies shall provide (a) a habitat management plan that is adequate to sustain the population and emphasizes frequent prescribed burning, and (b) a plan for continued population monitoring.

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

Dated: March 5, 2003.

Sam D. Hamilton,

Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Intent To Conduct Public Scoping and Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement Regarding the Development of a Habitat Conservation Plan for the Pacific Coast Population of the Western Snowy Plover in Oregon

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are advising the public that we intend to gather information necessary to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and conduct public scoping regarding the potential issuance of an incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended, for the threatened Pacific coast population of the western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) within Oregon. We anticipate that the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation (OPRD) will develop a habitat conservation plan (HCP) and apply for an incidental take permit for this species covering beach management activities. Incidental take permits are authorized under section 10(a) of the Act. We are providing this notice to advise other agencies and the public of our intent to prepare an EIS and to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to include in the EIS. This EIS will provide a comprehensive analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of beach management alternatives. It will also analyze proposed mitigation and minimization measures for anticipated incidental take from the implementation of an HCP for the western snowy plover resulting from the HCP.

DATES: Written comments for this initial scoping phase will be accepted until April 28, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to State Supervisor, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2600 SE 98th Avenue, Suite 100, Portland, OR 97266. Comments

may also be submitted by electronic mail (e-mail) to orp&r_hcp@r1.fws.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Richard Szlemp, Fish and Wildlife Service; telephone 503-231-6179; or Michelle Michaud, Project Manager, OPRD, telephone 503-378-4168, ext. 288.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 9 of the Act, and its implementing Federal regulations prohibit the "taking" of a species listed as endangered or threatened. The term "take" means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, capture or collect listed wildlife, or attempt to engage in such conduct. Harm includes habitat degradation or modification that kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering. Under section 10(a) of the Act, we may issue permits for take of listed species that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Regulations governing permits for threatened and endangered species are found in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 17.32 and 50 CFR 17.22.

The OPRD has management responsibility on all Oregon coastal beaches (approximately 260 miles) for such activities as recreation, ocean shore alterations (riprap, seawalls, etc.), natural product removal (sand), and non-traditional activities (e.g., weddings, commercial filming, fireworks displays). Such activities may result in take of the threatened Pacific coast population of the western snowy plover.

In accordance with section 10(a) of the Act, OPRD will prepare an HCP which will address conservation of western snowy plovers and their habitat, while providing for recreational use, non-traditional uses, and for ocean shore alteration activities on the entire length of Oregon's beaches. The proposed HCP will consider all uses on ocean beaches from low mean tide to the actual or statutory vegetation line, whichever is furthest inland, as well as all OPRD owned and managed coastal park units.

Availability of Comments

Comments will be available for public inspection at OPRD, 1115 Commercial Street, NE, Salem, Oregon. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be