

species. Management of the hardwood forest would also be directed towards providing early successional habitat.

Actions Common to All Alternatives

All three alternatives share the following management concepts and techniques for achieving the goals of the refuge:

- Restoring native habitats;
- Establishing, maintaining, and improving partnerships with landowners and local, state, and federal agencies and organizations;
- Coordinating management actions with local and state land and resource management agencies;
- Monitoring breeding red-cockaded woodpecker populations in partnership with others;
- Removing non-native invasive plants;
- Encouraging scientific research on the refuge; and
- Exploring expansion of the refuge boundary.

DATES: A meeting will be held at the refuge's education center to present the plan to the public. Mailings, newspaper articles, and postings on the refuge website will be the avenues to inform the public of the date and time for this meeting. Individuals wishing to comment on the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge should do so within 60 days following the date of this notice. Public comments were requested, considered, and incorporated throughout the planning process in numerous ways. Public outreach has included public scoping meetings, technical workgroups, planning updates and a **Federal Register** notice.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment should be addressed to Refuge Manager, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, 224 Office Road, Brooksville, Mississippi 39739. Comments may also be submitted via electronic mail to Noxubee@fws.gov. If you wish to submit comments by electronic mail, please submit them as an ASCII file, avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please include your name and return address to your Internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your Internet message, contact us at the phone number or address listed in this notice. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individuals respondents may

request that we withhold their home addresses from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, located in east-central Mississippi, consists of 47,959 acres, of which 42,500 acres are in bottomland hardwood, upland hardwood, mixed pine/hardwood, and pine forests. These forests support a variety of upland species including turkey, deer, and quail. The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker is found in the refuge's old-growth pine habitat. Many neotropical bird species benefit from refuge forests. Greentree reservoirs, natural ponds, and man-made impoundments provide important habitat for other migratory birds, as well as wintering habitat for waterfowl and bald eagles.

Annually, more than 150,000 visitors participate in refuge activities, including fishing, hunting, hiking, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, and environmental education and interpretation.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Refuge Manager, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge at 662/323-5548; fax 662/323-5806, or by writing to the Refuge Manager at the above address.

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

Dated: May 14, 2003.

J. Mitch King,

Acting Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for the Harley John Reservoir Replacement in Riverside County, CA

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability and receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Western Municipal Water District (Applicant) has applied to the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for an incidental take permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended. The Service is considering issuing a 3-year permit to the Applicant that would authorize take of the threatened coastal

California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*, "gnatcatcher") incidental to otherwise lawful activities associated with the replacement of an existing 300,000 gallon water tank reservoir with a 4 million gallon reservoir on 2.7 acres in Riverside County, California. The project would result in the incidental take of one pair of gnatcatchers on the project site through permanent removal of approximately 2.3 acres of habitat.

We request comments from the public on the permit application and an Environmental Assessment, both of which are available for review. The permit application includes the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and an accompanying Implementing Agreement. The HCP describes the proposed action and the measures that the Applicant will undertake to minimize and mitigate take of the gnatcatcher. To review the permit application or Environmental Assessment, see "Availability of Documents" in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section.

DATES: We must receive your written comments on or before July 21, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Please address written comments to Mr. Jim Bartel, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92009. You also may send comments by facsimile to (760) 918-0638.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Karen Evans, Assistant Field Supervisor, at the above address or call (760) 431-9440.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Availability of Documents

You may obtain copies of these documents for review by contacting the Assistant Field Supervisor (**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**). Documents also will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address (see **ADDRESSES**) and at the Woodcrest Library, Riverside County Library System, 17024 Van Buren Blvd., Riverside, California.

Background

Section 9 of the Act and federal regulations prohibit the "take" of fish and wildlife species listed as endangered or threatened. Take of federally listed fish and wildlife is defined under the Act as including to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct." The Service may, under limited circumstances, issue permits to