

marine mammals. The applications were submitted to satisfy requirements of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, *as amended* (16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.*) and/or the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, *as amended* (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing endangered species (50 CFR part 17) and/or marine mammals (50 CFR part 18). Written data, comments, or requests for copies of the complete applications or requests for a public hearing on these applications should be submitted to the Director (address above). Anyone requesting a hearing should give specific reasons why a hearing would be appropriate. The holding of such a hearing is at the discretion of the Director.

**PRT-072135.**

*Applicant:* Paul M. Vial, Fresno, CA

The applicant requests a permit to import a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sport hunted from the Lancaster Sound polar bear population in Canada for personal use.

*Applicant:* Mark D. Nuessle, Scottsdale, AZ

**PRT-072138.**

The applicant requests a permit to import a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sport hunted from the Lancaster Sound polar bear population in Canada for personal use.

*Applicant:* Michael B. Thomas, Atlanta, GA

**PRT-072240.**

The applicant requests a permit to import a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sport hunted from the Lancaster Sound polar bear population in Canada for personal use.

*Applicant:* Scott S. Snyder, McCook, NE

**PRT-072383.**

The applicant requests a permit to import a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sport hunted from the Lancaster Sound polar bear population in Canada for personal use.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has information collection approval from OMB through March 31, 2004, OMB Control Number 1018-0093. Federal Agencies may not conduct or sponsor and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a current valid OMB control number.

Dated: May 23, 2003.

**Monica Farris,**

*Senior Permit Biologist, Branch of Permits, Division of Management Authority.*

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**BILLING CODE 4310-55-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for Issuance of Incidental Take Permits Associated With a Habitat Conservation Plan for East Contra Costa County, CA**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, we, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) are advising the public that we intend to gather information necessary to prepare, in coordination with the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan Association (Association), a joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) on the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan (Plan), which is being prepared in conjunction with a Natural Community Conservation Plan. The Plan is being prepared under Section 10 (a)(1)(B) of the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, (ESA); whereas the Natural Community Conservation Plan is being prepared under the State of California's Natural Community Conservation Planning Act. The Association intends to request an ESA permit for 7 species federally listed as threatened or endangered and 18 unlisted species that may become listed during the term of the permit. The permit is needed to authorize take of listed species that could occur as a result of activities implemented under the Plan.

We provide this notice to obtain suggestions and information from other agencies and the public on the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS/EIR. We invite written comments from interested parties to ensure that the full range of issues related to the permit request are identified.

**DATES:** Written comments should be received on or before August 4, 2003. Public meetings will be held on: July 17, 2003, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Pittsburg, CA.

**ADDRESSES:** The public meetings will be held at: Pittsburg City Hall, 65 Civic

Drive, Pittsburg, CA, 94565.

Information, written comments, or questions related to the preparation of the EIS/EIR and the NEPA process should be submitted to Sheila Larsen, Conservation Planning, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, 2800 Cottage Way, W-2605, Sacramento, California 95825; FAX (916) 414-6713.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Sheila Larsen, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office at (916) 414-6600.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Reasonable Accommodation**

Persons needing reasonable accommodations in order to attend and participate in the public meeting should contact Sheila Larsen as soon as possible. In order to allow sufficient time to process requests, please call no later than one week before the public meeting. Information regarding this proposed action is available in alternative formats upon request.

**Background**

Section 9 of the ESA and its implementing Federal regulations prohibit the "take" of a species listed as endangered or threatened. Take is defined under the ESA as harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect listed animal species, or attempt to engage in such conduct (16 U.S.C. 1538). However, under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA, we may issue permits to authorize "incidental take" of listed species. "Incidental take" is defined by the ESA as take that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity. 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.

We anticipate that the Association will request an ESA incidental take permit. The Association is a Joint Powers Authority consisting of seven member agencies: Contra Costa County; cities of Brentwood, Clayton, Oakley, and Pittsburg; Contra Costa Water District; and East Bay Regional Park District.

Currently, 26 species are proposed for coverage under the Plan. These include the federally listed endangered San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotus mutica*), longhorn fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta longiantenna*), vernal pool tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardii*), the threatened Alameda whipsnake (*Masticophis lateralis euryxanthus*), giant garter snake