

INFORMATION COLLECTION BURDEN ESTIMATE

Type of permit application	Annual number of respondents	Completion time (in hrs.)	Annual burden (in hrs.)
Competitively issued permit	180	30	5,400
Non-competitively issued permit	170	1.5	255
Combined Total	350	5,655

We invite comments concerning this renewal on (1) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of our functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) The accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (3) Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents. This information collection is part of a system of record covered by the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552(a)).

Dated: February 10, 2003.

Anissa Craghead,

Information Collection Officer, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Availability of a Draft National Management Plan for the Genus *Eriocheir*

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of a Draft National Management Plan for the Genus *Eriocheir* for public review and comment. The document was prepared by the Chinese Mitten Crab Control Working Group of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, as authorized by section 4722(c) of the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act (NANPCA) of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*). Comments received will be considered in preparing the final National Management Plan for the Genus *Eriocheir*, which will become the basis for cooperative and integrated management of the Chinese Mitten Crab, *Eriocheir sinensis*, with the involvement of Federal, State, Tribal, and local resource agencies.

DATES: Comments on the draft National Management Plan for the Genus *Eriocheir* should be received by March 31, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written responses and requests for copies of the document should be mailed to Chair, Chinese Mitten Crab Control Working Group, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento/San Joaquin Estuary Fishery Resources Office (SSJEFRO), 4001 North Wilson Way, Stockton, CA 95205-2486.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kim Webb, Chair, Chinese Mitten Crab Control Working Group, at 209-946-6400 ext. 311 or by e-mail at kim_webb@fws.gov or Sharon Gross, Executive Secretary, Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force at 703-358-2308 or by e-mail at sharon_gross@fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Chinese mitten crab, *Eriocheir sinensis*, is a recently introduced species to the San Francisco Estuary and associated watershed. The most probable mechanisms of introduction to the estuary were deliberate release to establish a fishery and/or accidental release via ballast water. This species is native to coastal rivers and estuaries of Korea and China along the Yellow Sea. The Chinese mitten crab is presently well-established throughout the San Francisco Bay, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and the mainstems of the major rivers and tributaries that flow into the estuary. Both the distribution and population size of this species continue to rapidly increase.

The establishment of this species in North America is of concern because the crab is considered a pest in northern Europe. The crab was accidentally introduced to Germany in the early 1900s, proliferated and spread to many northern European rivers and estuaries, where it impacted local fisheries and levee integrity. Once mitten crabs become established, there may be numerous negative impacts. The following description of negative impacts has been developed from a review of the literature and from experience with the California crab populations:

- Levees and/or banks are weakened due to mitten crab burrowing, leading to increased maintenance/repair requirements, slumping and/or failure of banks and/or levees. The tidal marsh and the mouth of San Francisco Creek has experienced enhanced erosion where horizontal mitten crab burrows cut into the marsh sediments.

- Mitten crab feeding behavior contributes to a decrease in vegetation in agriculture fields and/or natural habitats.

- Fish in fish salvage or fish passage operations face increased mortality due to the presence of mitten crab in the facilities. At peak times of fall migration period, estimated fish mortality attributed to the crabs at the federal facility at Tracey is reported to be 98-99%. The economic impact incurred to the fish salvage facilities amounted to over one million dollars.

- Water diversion/industrial use activities are subject to interference due to crabs blocking or clogging systems.

- Recreational and commercial fishing are subject to interference and reductions in opportunities/efficiencies due to blocking/clogging of traps/nets, bait stealing and/or damage to gear or catch.

- The impacts of predation, competition, habitat alteration and/or foodweb disturbance on biotic populations leads to a decrease in biotic populations and/or biodiversity, and a change in the community structure.

- Public and wildlife health risks arising from potential bioaccumulation and biomagnification of contaminants, the transfer of disease, or spread of parasites leads to a decrease in public/wildlife health. These risks are escalated both by direct consumption of the crab or indirectly by consumption/association with animals that prey on or associate with the crab.

In recognition of these threats, the California Department of Fish and Game added the genus *Eriocheir* to its List of Prohibited Species (Section 671, Title 14) in 1986. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service added the genus to its injurious wildlife list under the Lacey Act in 1989 (50 CFR 16.13). The ANS Task Force has followed the status of the mitten crab