

responsibility under the Act beyond that which exists at the time he or she enters into the agreement; i.e., to provide a "safe harbor." The cooperative agreement will identify any existing RCW clusters and will describe the actions that the landowner commits to take (e.g., hardwood midstory removal, cavity provisioning, etc.) or allows to be taken to improve RCW habitat on the property and the time period within which those actions are to be taken and maintained. Participating landowners who enter into cooperative agreements with the Service will be included within the scope of the incidental take permit by Certificates of Inclusion. A participating landowner must maintain the baseline habitat requirements on his/her property (i.e., any existing RCW groups and associated habitat) but will be allowed to incidentally take RCWs at some point in the future on other habitat on the property if they are attracted to the site by the proactive management measures undertaken by the landowner. No incidental taking of any existing RCW group is permitted under this program except under the special circumstances that are described in the HCP. Further details about this program are found in the HCP.

The EA considers the environmental consequences of three alternatives, including the preferred alternative—to implement the "Safe Harbor" program. The likely effects of the no-action alternative are the continued decline of the Sandhills RCW population on private land and the continued lack of management of many of the longleaf pine stands that remain in the Sandhills. The third alternative involves offering interested landowners financial, rather than regulatory, incentives to undertake the desired land management activities for RCWs. This alternative is not being pursued because the Service is presently unable at present to fund such a program. The proposed action alternative is the issuance of an incidental take permit and implementation of the "Safe Harbor" program.

Dated: February 16, 1995.

Noreen Clough,

Acting Regional Director.

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Extension of the Public Comment Period—Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit from Mr. D. Gregory Luce, in Baldwin County, Alabama

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of extension of the public comment period.

SUMMARY: The Fish and Wildlife Service gives notice that the public comment period on the environmental assessment/habitat conservation plan for Mr. D. Gregory Luce's (Applicant) application for an incidental take permit pursuant to Section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) is being extended. The Applicant has been assigned permit number PRT-797979. The original 30-day comment period closed on February 8, 1995 (**Federal Register** 60:2400-2401). During the original comment period, numerous public commenters requested an extension to more fully address the potential impacts to the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge.

DATES: The public comment period for this proposal, which originally closed on February 8, 1995, is now extended until March 10, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the application may obtain a copy by writing the Service's Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia. Persons wishing to review the EA or HCP may obtain a copy by writing the Regional Office or the Jackson, Mississippi, Field Office. Documents will also be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the Regional Office, or the Field Office.

Written data or comments concerning the application, EA, or HCP should be submitted to the Regional Office. Please reference permit under PRT-797979 in such comments.

Regional Permit Coordinator (TE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 210, Atlanta, Georgia 30345, (telephone 404/679-7110, FAX 404/679-7280) Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite A, Jackson, Mississippi 39213 (telephone 601/965-4900, FAX 601/965-4340).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Will McDearman at the above Jackson, Mississippi, Field Office.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Alabama Beach Mouse (ABM), *Peromyscus polionotus ammobates*, is a subspecies of the common oldfield

mouse *Peromyscus polionotus* and is restricted to the dune systems of the Gulf Coast of Alabama. The known current range of ABM extends from Fort Morgan eastward to the western terminus of Alabama Highway 182, including the Perdue Unit on the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. The sand dune systems inhabited by this species are not uniform; several habitat types are distinguishable. The species inhabits primary dunes, interdune areas, secondary dunes, and scrub dunes. The depth and area of these habitats from the beach inland varies. Population surveys indicate that this subspecies is usually more abundant in primary dunes than in secondary dunes, and usually more abundant in secondary dunes than in scrub dunes. Optimal habitat consists of dune systems with all dune types. Though fewer ABM inhabit scrub dunes, these high dunes can serve as refugia during devastating hurricanes that overwash, flood, and destroy or alter secondary and frontal dunes. ABM surveys have not been conducted on the Applicant's property. The ABM occupied adjacent and nearby dunes of the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. Suitable habitat in the form of secondary and scrub dunes exist on the Applicant's property. These habitats are likely to be occupied by ABM. None of the Applicant's property resides in designated critical habitat for the ABM. Construction of the single family residence on about 0.1-0.2 acres of the Applicant's property may result in the death of, or injury to, ABM. Habitat alterations due to house placement and its subsequent use may reduce available habitat for food, shelter, and reproduction.

The EA considers the environmental consequences of three alternatives. The proposed action alternative is the issuance of the incidental take permit. This provided for restrictions that include house placement landward of the frontal crest of the scrub dune line, establishment of a walkover structure across that scrub dune, a prohibition against housing or keeping pet cats, scavenger-proof garbage containers, no landscaping, and the minimization and control of outdoor lighting. The HCP provides a funding source for these mitigation measures.

Dated: February 16, 1995.

Noreen K. Clough,

Acting Regional Director.

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