



FRONT VIEW  
 Fig 27

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**Barry Felrice,**  
 Associate Administrator for Safety  
 Performance Standards.

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****Fish and Wildlife Service****50 CFR Part 17**

RIN: 1018-AC19

**Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Reopening of Comment Period on Proposed Threatened Status for the Alaska Breeding Population of the Steller's Eider**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Extension of proposed rule; reopening of comment period.

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provides notice that the comment period on the proposal to classify the Alaska breeding population of the Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*) as threatened is extended until January 14, 1996, due to significant scientific controversy over the species' status. In addition, the public comment period is hereby reopened.

**DATES:** The comment period, which originally closed on November 14, 1994, is reopened effective immediately and closes on January 14, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments and materials should be sent to Fairbanks Ecological Services field Office, Endangered Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1412 Airport Way, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99701, telephone (907) 456-0427 or facsimile (907) 456-0346. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ted Swen at the above address (telephone 907/456-0427).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Background**

The smallest of four eider species, the Steller's eider breeds in coastal areas of arctic Alaska and Russia. Worldwide, Steller's eiders still number over one hundred thousand, with the vast majority of individuals nesting in Asia and wintering in Alaskan waters. A small portion of the world's Steller's eiders nest in Alaska and this nesting population is being proposed for listing as a distinct vertebrate population under the endangered Species Act. In recent years the breeding range of the species in Alaska has contracted. The species, which nests locally at several coastal locations in the central Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, has now virtually disappeared from this region. In Alaska, the species currently nests only in the

northwest portion of the North Slope. Recent surveys suggest the species no longer nests in certain areas in which it originally occurred on the North Slope. Factors causing the decline of the species and the contraction of its breeding range in Alaska are not known. Due to the reduction in numbers and contraction of the species' breeding range in Alaska, the Service believes that the remaining population of Steller's eiders is increasingly vulnerable to extirpation.

On July 14, 1994, the Service published a proposed rule (59 FR 35896; July 1, 1994) to list the Alaska breeding population of Steller's eiders as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Comments received during the initial public comment period indicate scientific controversy exists over the Service's technical interpretation of available data. In order to insure that decisions on endangered and threatened species are based upon the best scientific and commercial data available, the Service now requires that listing proposals be reviewed by three appropriate independent specialists (59 FR 34270). To comply with this recent policy and to adequately address the scientific controversy, the Service is reopening the comment period on the proposal to list the Alaska breeding population of Steller's eiders and now solicits the expert opinions of three independent specialists. All interested parties are invited to comment on this proposal during the comment period. Written comments may now be submitted until January 14, 1996, to the Service office in the ADDRESSES section.

**Authors**

The primary author of this notice is Ted Swen (see ADDRESSES section).

**Authority**

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: June 20, 1995.

**John G. Rogers,**

Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 95-16075 Filed 6-29-95; 8:45 am]

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**50 CFR Part 17****Endangered and Threatened Species; Notice of Reclassification of 32 Candidate Species**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of candidate species reclassification.

**SUMMARY:** In this document, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provides explanation for changes in the candidate status of 32 species of plants and animals that are under review for possible addition to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants (List) under the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended. The changes for which explanation is provided in this document were previously published for 20 plants in the 1993 Plant Notice of Review and for 12 animals in the 1994 Animal Notice of Review.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** E. LaVerne Smith, Chief, Division of Endangered Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240 (703/358-2171).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Background**

In December 1992, the Service reached a settlement agreement (agreement) with the plaintiffs in the Fund For Animals *et al. v. Lujan et al.* case (Civ. No. 92-800) that provides for the Service to review the listing status of species regarded as Category 1 candidates as of September 1, 1992. The Service has historically classified species regarded as candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) into two primary categories. Category 1 candidates are those species for which the Service has on file sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to support proposals to list them as endangered or threatened species. Category 2 candidates are taxa for which information now in the possession of the Service indicates that proposing to list as endangered or threatened is possibly appropriate, but for which substantial data on biological vulnerability and threat are not currently available to support a proposed listing. Species classified as Category 2\* are those whose continued existence is in doubt. Species classified as Category 3 were once considered for listing as threatened or endangered but are no longer under such consideration. For any candidate species covered by the agreement and removed from Category 1 because listing is not warranted, the Service must publish a notice in the **Federal Register** that provides explanation for the removal from Category 1.

This notice provides explanations for previously announced decisions to