

Dated: September 30, 1996.
 Juliette Falkner,
Special Assistant to the Secretary.
 [FR Doc. 96-25477 Filed 10-3-96; 8:45 am]
 BILLING CODE 4310-RP-M

Fish and Wildlife Service

Emergency Exemption Issuance

The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has been authorized, via permit number PRT-819908, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Region to capture, retain for veterinary treatment, and release a specific Florida panther, *Felis concolor coryi*. The 30-day public comment period required by the Endangered Species Act was waived in accordance with Section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The Fish and Wildlife Service determined that an emergency affecting the life and health of the subject Florida panther existed and no reasonable alternative other than treating it in captivity was available to the applicant. The subject Florida panther suffers from a fungal infection that requires veterinary treatment in captivity for an extended period of time. Treatment is expected to last up to 6 months and the Florida panther will be returned to its home territory. This specific Florida panther is a successful breeder and is important for recovery of the species.

Dated: September 26, 1996.
 Judy L. Jones,
Acting Regional Director.
 [FR Doc. 96-25475 Filed 10-3-96; 8:45 am]
 BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

Notice of Availability of Final Environmental Impact Statement

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for water rights acquisition for the Lahontan Valley Wetlands, Churchill County, Nevada, is available for public review. Five alternatives are being considered, including the Proposed Action. This notice is being furnished pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

DATES: A Record of Decision will be issued no sooner than 30 days following the publication of the Notice of Availability of the final EIS filed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the final EIS may be inspected at the following locations:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Refuges and Wildlife, Eastside Federal Complex, Third Floor, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97232
 Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, 1000 Auction Road, Fallon, NV 89406
 Churchill County Public Library, 553 South Maine St., Fallon, NV 89406
 Nevada State Library and Archives, Reference Desk, 1000 Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701
 Washoe County Public Library, Reno Branch, 301 S. Center Street, Reno, NV 89501

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Refuge Manager, Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 1236, Fallon, NV 89407, (702) 423-5128.

Individuals desiring a copy of the final EIS should contact the above address. Copies have been sent to all agencies and individuals who participated in the scoping process and were added to the mailing list, and to those people that requested to be added to the mailing list.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The Truckee-Carson-Pyramid Lake Water Rights Settlement Act (Public Law 101-618) directs the Secretary of the Interior to acquire enough water and water rights to sustain, on a long-term average, approximately 25,000 acres of primary wetland habitat in the Lahontan Valley. Primary wetland habitat refers to wetland habitat within Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, Stillwater Wildlife Management Area, Carson Lake and Pasture, and Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation wetlands. It was determined that up to 125,000 acre-feet (AF) of water will be needed each year to sustain a long-term average of 25,000 acres of primary wetland habitat. Consequently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) developed and analyzed four alternatives, including the Proposed Action, for securing up to 125,000 acre-feet (AF) of water for Lahontan Valley wetlands. A No Action Alternative was also developed and analyzed. The purpose of the final EIS is to analyze the potential consequences of the five alternatives being considered.

A draft EIS describing and evaluating the alternatives was released in July 1995, followed by a 90-day public comment period. The Service reviewed, carefully considered, and responded to all comments received on the draft EIS. The document was revised based on comments received and on necessary factual corrections and editorial changes.

The five alternatives are: (1) No Action Alternative, which includes the acquisition of 20,000 AF of water rights

from within the Carson Division of the Newlands Project; (2) Proposed Action, which proposes the purchase of up to 122,000 AF of water rights; (3) Least Cost Alternative, which would result in the purchase of up to 100,000 AF of water rights; (4) Maximum Acquisition Alternative, which would result in up to 133,500 AF being purchased; and (5) the Service's Preferred Alternative, which would result in (a) the acquisition of up to 75,000 AF of water rights in the Carson Division, (b) leasing of water, (c) acquisition of water rights from the Middle Carson River corridor, (d) use of conserved U.S. Navy water as available, and (e) pumping of groundwater. Alternatives 2-5 each include the acquisition of 20,000 AF under the No Action Alternative.

Under the Preferred Alternative, the Service would acquire sufficient water and water rights to provide a total annual average of 125,000 AF of inflow to primary wetland areas to achieve the objective of sustaining 25,000 acres of primary wetland habitat in the Lahontan Valley. The amount acquired by the Service would supplement available drainwater, spills, water being acquired by the Service under earlier authorizations, and water being acquired by the State of Nevada for primary wetland areas.

To meet the needed 125,000 AF of annual average wetland inflow, the Service would, under the Preferred Alternative, acquire up to 75,000 AF of water rights (including the ongoing 20,000 AF acquisition program). This would amount to about 40 percent of the water rights in the Carson Division of the Newlands Irrigation Project (Newlands Project). Because the Service would exercise a use-rate of 2.99 AF/acre for the agricultural water rights acquired (which have 3.5 and 4.5 AF/acre/year entitlements), the wetlands would receive an annual average of about 62,000 AF from this source of water. Under this alternative, it is expected that about 19,700 AF of agricultural drainflows and about 9,700 AF of Lahontan Reservoir spill-water would reach the primary wetland areas on average over the long term. A combination of other methods (e.g., leasing) and other sources would be used, under the Preferred Alternative, to meet the 125,000 AF/year demand for wetland protection. These sources would contribute an average of about 33,600 AF/year to the wetland demand.

Purchase of water rights would be from willing sellers only. In addition to purchase and leasing of water rights, donations and exchange of water rights would be utilized as opportunities arise.