

State and Federal land management agencies, local agencies and property owners, including the California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Inyo National Forest, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The plan calls for restoration of wetland and aquatic habitats throughout the Owens River drainage. The plan describes tasks that, when accomplished, should ensure the survival of target species, and thereby justify their removal from the endangered and threatened species list.

The draft Management Guidelines Plan for rare species was completed to provide management guidance to the Department of Fish and Game. The Management Guidance Plan is supplemental to, but independent from, the draft recovery plan. In essence, they are separate documents.

Public Comments Solicited

The Service solicits written comments on the draft recovery plan and Management Guidelines Plan described herein. All comments received by the date specified above will be considered prior to approval of the plan or completion of a final Management Guidelines Plan.

Authority

The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Dated: January 3, 1997.

Thomas J. Dwyer,

Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 97-721 Filed 1-10-97; 8:45 am]

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Notice

Notice of Scoping Meeting on Intent to Prepare Environmental Impact Statement in Anticipation of Receiving a Permit Application to Incidentally Take Listed Species From the Endangered San Marcos and Comal Springs Ecosystems Under Section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act, by the Bexar Metropolitan Water District and Possibly Others, Comal, Bexar, and Hays Counties, Texas

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement and announcement of scoping meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) intends to gather information necessary to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for an anticipated incidental take permit application, including a required Habitat Conservation Plan, from the

Bexar Metropolitan Water District (District) and possibly others. The species proposed to be taken from the San Marcos and Comal Springs Ecosystems (Edwards Aquifer), include the federally-listed San Marcos gambusia (*Gambusia georgei*), fountain darter (*Etheostoma fonticola*), and Texas wild-rice (*Zizania texana*).

This notice is provided as required by the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), (50 CFR 17.22) and National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR 1501.7) regulations.

The Service is soliciting information and comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the human environment. NEPA scoping procedures are intended to insure that information on the proposed action, alternatives and impacts are solicited from the public, and that all information is available to public officials and citizens before planning decisions are made. Accurate scientific analysis, expert agency comments, and public scrutiny are essential to implementing NEPA. NEPA documents concentrate on the issues that are significant to the action in question. The Service invites the public to submit information and comments either at a meeting on 13 February 1997, or in writing. The Service requests that comments be as specific as possible.

Major environmental and species concerns in this scoping process include the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that implementation of the proposal could have on endangered and threatened species, critical habitat, and other environmental resources, and the quality of the human environment. Other relevant issues include effects of aquifer and water withdrawal levels on Comal and San Marcos spring flows, effects of various aquifer water use management options and alternative water supply options on the environments affected by those options, and effects on the downstream environment.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before 1 May 1997. A public hearing for receipt of comments will be held in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, Thursday, 13 February 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to Steve Helfert, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas

78758-4460. The public hearing will be held from 7 to 10 pm, at Dwight Middle School, 2454 W. Southcross, San Antonio, Texas 78211. For further information on the scoping meeting location contact Janie Valenzuela at Bexar Metropolitan Water District, 2047 West Malone, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas 78225, (210) 345-6500.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Alisa M. Shull, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, at the above address, telephone (512) 490-0057, facsimile (512) 490-0974.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The Service proposes to prepare an EIS to evaluate the impacts of alternatives associated with issuing an incidental take permit under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA. Several parties, including the Bexar Metropolitan Water District, have indicated an interest in pursuing incidental take authorization.

Section 9 of the ESA prohibits the taking of federally listed animal species, unless authorized under the provisions of section 7 or 10 of the ESA. The term "take" under the ESA includes actions that may directly kill or injure listed species, actions that significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns such as feeding and breeding, and actions that detrimentally modify habitat to the extent that it harms individuals of the species.

Section 10(a)(1)(B) allows the Fish and Wildlife Service to permit taking of listed species provided that taking is incidental to an otherwise legal activity and that it will not jeopardize a listed species. A Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) must be submitted as part of the incidental take permit application by the applicant.

The San Marcos and Comal Springs Ecosystems are dependent upon adequate springflow from the San Antonio Segment of the Edwards Aquifer to support endangered species and critical habitat, as well as several species proposed for federal listing. The Edwards Aquifer is the sole source of drinking water for over 1.5 million people in the San Antonio Metropolitan Region. Given the growing water use, anticipated for the San Antonio Region, an overall management plan seems necessary to assure the sustained springflow in the two systems.

Decline of springflow in the two systems will result in "take" of listed species and in an appreciable reduction of the value of critical habitat, and an appreciable reduction in the likelihood of survival and recovery of listed species. The Service has estimated minimum springflow for the two

systems necessary to avoid any of these conditions.

All parties who either directly withdraw Edwards Aquifer water or who reduce recharge to the aquifer, contribute to diminished springflows. Between late May and August 1996, minimum necessary flows were not sustained in either system, owing to widespread drought conditions and the level of a regional pumpage, particularly during emergency conditions. In August 1996, a Federal Court found that an emergency exists and ordered implementation of emergency measures in accord with the 1996 Emergency Withdrawal Reduction Plan, prepared by the court appointed Monitor.

Bexar Metropolitan Water District (District) is the second largest water purveyor in Bexar County, Texas and largely dependent upon withdrawals from the Edwards Aquifer.

The District proposes to adopt a Habitat Conservation Plan consistent with objectives of the approved San Marcos and Comal Springs and Associated Aquatic Ecosystems (Revised) Recovery Plan for the spring associated ecosystems, with the Federal Court ruling, and with Sections 9 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act. The District proposes to reduce its pumpage from the Edwards Aquifer on a pro rata basis to achieve compliance with the Withdrawal Reduction Plan. The District proposes to accomplish this purpose by implementing one or more measures, including but not limited to: development of alternative water resources (ground-water resources, surface water resources, reuse of treated effluents, etc.), landscape management practices (Xeriscape™, zoned irrigation, designated watering days, etc.); employment of water efficient devices; adoption of policies encouraging conservation; public education; deployment of alternative technologies in intensive water-using industries; other appropriate and effective measures; etc.

The District also proposes to include a mechanism in its Habitat Conservation Plan, for inclusion of other pumpers (municipal, industrial, commercial, or military) which, acting in concert with the District, meet certain criteria (for example, a target reduction rate in Edwards Aquifer withdrawals) that would be developed and included in the Habitat Conservation Plan and incidental take permit conditions.

In addition to considering impacts on listed species and their habitat, the EIS must include information on impacts from the proposal and alternatives to the proposal on other components of the human environment. These other

components include such things as air and water quality, cultural resources, other fish and wildlife species, social resources, and economic resources.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is gathering information necessary for the preparation of an EIS. Information such as the following topics that would assist the Service in assessing the impacts of the issuance of an incidental take permit under the provisions of an HCP is being sought: the hydrogeology of the Edwards Aquifer and the effects of aquifer levels on springflows at Comal and San Marcos Springs as they relate to the habitat needs of federally listed species; potential water conservation measures and strategies to reduce the withdrawal demands on the Edwards Aquifer and their effects on springflows; alternate water supplies and their potential effect on reducing Edwards Aquifer water withdrawals and maintaining springflows; effects of aquifer level management and springflow changes on the quality of the human environment; and, any other issues or suggestions that would be relevant toward the Fish and Wildlife Service's review and development of alternatives.

Nancy M. Kaufman,

Regional Director, Region 2, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

[FR Doc. 97-722 Filed 1-10-97; 8:45 am]

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Bureau of Land Management

[(CA-067-7122-6606); CACA-35511]

Imperial Project, CA; Draft Environmental Impact Statement; Correction

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Amendment.

SUMMARY: In the Federal Register of November 1, 1996 (Vol. 61, p. 56567), a notice was published (FR Doc. 96-27519). This amends that notice. Because of expressed interest, the comment period is extended an additional 31 days until January 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Keith Shone (619) 337-4412, or Thomas Zale (619) 337-4420.

Dated: December 31, 1996.

Patricia A. Weller,
Acting Area Manager.

[FR Doc. 97-649 Filed 1-10-97; 8:45 am]

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[OR-130-1020-00; GP7-0058]

Notice of Meeting of the Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District.

ACTION: Meeting of the Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council; February 14, 1997, in Spokane, Washington.

SUMMARY: A meeting of the Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council will be held on February 14, 1997. The meeting will convene at 9:00 a.m., at the Red Lion Inn, N. 322 Spokane Falls Ct., Spokane, Washington, 99201. The meeting will adjourn at approximately 4:00 p.m. or upon completion of business. At an appropriate time, the meeting will recess for approximately one hour for lunch. Public comments will be heard from 10:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. If necessary to accommodate all wishing to make public comments, a time limit may be placed upon each speaker. The purposes of the meeting are to discuss the status of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project and the status of Standards for Rangeland Health and Livestock Grazing Guidelines.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard Hubbard, Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District Office, 1103 N. Fancher Road, Spokane, Washington, 99212-1275; or call 509-536-1200.

Dated: January 7, 1997.

Joseph K. Buesing,
District Manager.

[FR Doc. 97-723 Filed 1-10-97; 8:45 am]

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[CA-350-1610-00]

Notice of Resource Advisory Council Meeting

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Susanville Resource Advisory Council, Susanville, California.

ACTION: Notice of Meeting.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management's Susanville Resource Advisory Council will hold a business meeting Friday, February 14, 1997, at the Bureau of Land Management's Eagle Lake Resource Area office, 2950 Riverside Drive, Susanville, California. The meeting begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. Public comments will be taken at 1 p.m. Depending on the number of persons wishing to speak, a time limit may be imposed. Items on the agenda include an update on development of