

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of a Draft Recovery Plan for the Vernal Pools of Southern California for Review and Comment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces the availability for public review of a draft recovery plan for Vernal Pools of Southern California. This plan addresses the endangered *Eryngium aristulatum* var. *parishii* (San Diego button celery), *Orcuttia californica* (California Orcutt grass), *Pogogyne abramsii* (San Diego mesa mint), *Pogogyne nudiuscula* (Otay mesa mint), San Diego fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*) and Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus wootonii*), and the proposed threatened *Navarretia fossalis* (spreading navarretia). These five plant species and two shrimp species collectively occur on scattered and limited habitat on Federal and private lands remaining on the coastal terraces of Goleta and Isla Vista in Santa Barbara County, California to the Simi Hills of eastern Ventura County and the Santa Clarita region of Los Angeles County, east through Orange and western Riverside Counties, and the more extensive vernal pool complexes of San Diego County. The Service solicits review and comment from the public on this draft plan.

DATES: Comments on the draft recovery plan received by December 26, 1997 will be considered by the Service.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the draft recovery plan may obtain a copy by contacting the Carlsbad Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2730 Loker Avenue West, Carlsbad, California 92008. Telephone requests may be made by calling 760/431-9440.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ann Kreager at the above address and telephone number.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Restoring an endangered or threatened animal or plant to the point where it is again a secure, self-sustaining member of its ecosystem is a primary goal of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program. To help guide the recovery effort, the Service prepares recovery plans for most of the listed species native to the United States. Recovery

plans describe actions considered necessary for conservation of the species, establish criteria for the recovery levels necessary to reclassify them from endangered to threatened or remove them from the list, and estimate the time and cost for implementing the needed recovery measures.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) requires the development of recovery plans for listed species unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species. Section 4(f) of the Act, as amended in 1988, requires that public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment be provided during recovery plan development. The Service will consider all information presented during a public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised recovery plan. The Service and other Federal agencies will take these comments into account in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

Southern California vernal pools are habitat to at least 12 endemic plants and three endemic fairy shrimp species. Six of the endemic species are federally endangered: *Eryngium aristulatum* var. *parishii* (San Diego button celery), *Orcuttia californica* (California Orcutt grass), *Pogogyne abramsii* (San Diego mesa mint), *Pogogyne nudiuscula* (Otay mesa mint), San Diego fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*) and the Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus wootonii*); and one is proposed for threatened status: *Navarretia fossalis* (spreading navarretia).

Vernal pool habitat in southern California has suffered extensive loss and degradation. The objective of this plan is to stabilize and protect existing populations of *Eryngium aristulatum* var. *parishii*, *Pogogyne abramsii*, *Pogogyne nudiuscula*, *Orcuttia californica*, *Navarretia fossalis*, and San Diego and Riverside fairy shrimps. It is also the intent of this plan to establish new protected populations within their historic ranges, so that the listed species may be considered for reclassification to threatened status and the proposed rule for *Navarretia fossalis* may be withdrawn.

Public Comments Solicited

The Service solicits written comments on the recovery plan described herein. All comments received by the date specified above will be considered prior to approval of the plan.

Authority

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

Dated: September 17, 1997.

Michael J. Spear,

Regional Director, Region 1, Portland Oregon.
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[NM-932-4120-05; NMNM 99768]

Invitation To Participate; Exploration for Coal in New Mexico

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Members of the public are hereby invited to participate with San Juan Coal Company on a pro rata cost sharing basis, in a program for the exploration of coal deposits owned by the United States of America. The lands are located in San Juan County, New Mexico, and are described as follows:

T. 30 N., R. 14 W., NMPM

Sec. 17, All;

Sec. 18, All;

Sec. 19, All;

Sec. 20, All;

Sec. 29, All;

Sec. 30, All;

Sec. 31, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$;

Containing 4483.88 acres, more or less. Interested parties may obtain a complete description of the lands covered in the exploration license application by contacting San Juan Coal Company, at the address shown below, or the Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, Solid Minerals Adjudication, P.O. Box 27115, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-0115.

Any parties electing to participate in this exploration program shall notify in writing, both the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, P.O. Box 27115, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-0115, and the San Juan Coal Company, P.O. Box 561, Waterflow, NM 87421. Such written notice must include a justification for wanting to participate and any recommended changes in the exploration plan with specific reasons for such changes. The notice must be received no later than 30-calendar days after the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**.

This proposed exploration program is for the purpose of determining the quality and quantity of the coal in the area and will be conducted pursuant to an exploration plan to be approved by the Bureau of Land Management. A copy of the exploration plan as submitted by San Juan Coal Company may be examined at the Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office,