

approved CCP. The CCP will guide management decisions for the next 15 years and identify refuge goals, long-range objectives, and management strategies for achieving these objectives. The planning process will consider many elements, including habitat and wildlife management, habitat protection, recreational use, and environmental effects. Public input into this planning process is very important. The CCP will provide other agencies and the public with a clear understanding of the desired conditions for the refuges and how the Service will implement management strategies.

The Service is soliciting information from the public via written comments. The Service will send out planning updates to people who are interested in the CCP process. These mailings will provide information on how to participate in the CCP process. Comments received will be used to develop goals, key issues evaluated in the NEPA document, and habitat management strategies. Additional opportunities for public participation will occur throughout the process. The CCP is expected to be completed in December 2000.

Background

The refuge is located 11 miles northeast of the City of Monterey at the confluence of the Salinas River and Monterey Bay. The 366 acre refuge was established in 1973 because of its "particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program". It was acquired by the Service through a transfer of surplus military land from the U.S. Army and the U.S. Coast Guard. From 1974 through 1991 the area was operated as a Wildlife Management Area under a cooperative agreement with the California Department of Fish and Game. By the mid-1980s, the growing importance of the refuge to sensitive species prompted the need for more active management and protection of its natural resources. In 1991, the Service began managing the area as a refuge under the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act and the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962. Management on the refuge emphasizes threatened and endangered species and sensitive migratory birds.

The primary purpose of the refuge is to provide habitat for endangered, threatened, and candidate species by providing secure habitat (e.g., nesting, feeding and roosting areas) for them. Endangered species on the refuge include Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*), California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*),

and sand gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*); threatened species include western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), and southern sea otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis*). The endangered Menzies wallflower (*Erysimum menziesii*) and threatened Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens* var. *pungens*) may occur on the refuge.

It is expected that a draft CCP and NEPA document will be available for public review and comment in fall 2000.

Dated: May 17, 2000.

Wayne S. White,

California/Nevada Operations Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento, California.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment/Habitat Conservation Plan and Receipt of an Application for a Permit for the Incidental Take of the Houston Toad (*Bufo houstonensis*) During Construction of One Single Family Residence on up to 0.5 Acres of the 0.5-Acre Lot 6, Section 8, in the Circle D Country Acres Subdivision, Bastrop County, TX.

SUMMARY: William and Johnna Cantrell (Applicants) have applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for an incidental take permit pursuant to Section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act (Act). The Applicants have been assigned permit number TE-025654-0. The requested permit, which is for a period of 5 years, would authorize the incidental take of the endangered Houston toad (*Bufo houstonensis*). The proposed take would occur as a result of the construction and occupation of a single family residence on up to 0.5 acres of the 0.5-acre Lot 6, Section 8, in the Circle D Country Acres Subdivision in Bastrop County, Texas.

The Service has prepared the Environmental Assessment/Habitat Conservation Plan (EA/HCP) for the incidental take application. A determination of jeopardy to the species or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will not be made until at least 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. This notice is provided pursuant to Section 10(c) of the Act and National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

DATES: Written comments on the application and EA/HCP should be received on or before June 22, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the application may obtain a copy by writing to the Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103. Persons wishing to review the EA/HCP may obtain a copy by contacting Tannika Englehard, Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758 (512/490-0063). Documents will be available for public inspection by written request, by appointment only, during normal business hours (8:00 to 4:30) at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin, Texas. Written data or comments concerning the application and EA/HCP should be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Ecological Services Field Office, Austin, Texas, at the above address. Please refer to permit number TE-025654-0 when submitting comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tannika Englehard at the above Austin Ecological Services Field Office.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 9 of the Act prohibits the "taking" of endangered species such as the Houston toad. However, the Service, under limited circumstances, may issue permits to take endangered wildlife species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Regulations governing permits for endangered species are at 50 CFR 17.22.

Applicants: William and Johnna Cantrell plan to construct a single family residence on up to 0.5 acres of the 0.5-acre Lot 6, Section 8, in the Circle D Country Acres Subdivision in Bastrop County, Texas. This action will eliminate less than 1 acre of habitat and result in indirect impacts within the lot. The applicants propose to compensate for this incidental take of the Houston toad by providing \$1,500 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the specific purpose of land acquisition and management within Houston toad habitat, as identified by the Service.

Geoffrey L. Haskett,

Regional Director, Region 2, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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