

within waters of the State be under the direction of State-licensed pilots, accountable to the State.

Dated: July 19 2000.

Joseph J. Angelo,

Acting Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-AF20

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Notice of Public Informational Meetings and Public Hearings for the Proposal To Reclassify and Remove the Gray Wolf from the List of Endangered and Threatened Species and To Establish Three Special Regulations for Threatened Gray Wolves

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of public informational meetings and public hearings.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the locations and times of public informational meetings that have been scheduled to provide information on the proposal to reclassify and delist the gray wolf and establish special regulations for threatened gray wolves. We are also announcing the locations and times of public hearings scheduled to receive verbal public comments on the proposal.

DATES: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

ADDRESSES: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Direct all questions or requests for additional information to us by using the Gray Wolf Phone Line: 612-713-7337, facsimile: 612-713-5292, electronic mail: GRAYWOLFMAIL@FWS.GOV; the World Wide Web: HTTP://MIDWEST.FSW.GOV/WOLF; or write to: Gray Wolf Questions, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111-4056.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: We will hold public informational meetings at the following locations in the Midwest. All meetings will use an open house format, including a slide presentation beginning every half hour.

St. Paul, Minnesota, on August 7, 2000, from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Upper Lobby of the Earl Brown Center, 1890 Buford Avenue, on the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus.

Grand Rapids, Minnesota, on August 8, 2000, from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Sawmill Inn, 2301 S. Pokegama (State Route 169).

Black River Falls, Wisconsin, on August 15, 2000, from 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Lunda Theater in the Black River Falls Middle School (behind Black River Falls High School), 1202 Pierce Street.

Madison, Wisconsin, on August 16, 2000, from 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Mitby auditorium in the Madison Area Technical College (near Madison Airport), 3550 Anderson Street.

Ashland, Wisconsin, on August 17, 2000, from 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Northern Great Lakes Center, 29270 County Highway G (three miles west of Ashland).

Watersmeet, Michigan, on August 28, 2000, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. at the Ottawa National Forest Visitor Center, U.S. 2 and Highway 45.

Escanaba, Michigan, on August 29, 2000, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. at Bay de Noc Community College, Learning Resources Center, 2001 N. Lincoln Road.

Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on August 30, 2000, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. at the Cislser Student and Conference Center, Lake Superior State University, 650 W. Easterday Avenue.

East Lansing, Michigan, on August 31, 2000, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. at the Jack Breslin Student Events Center, Michigan State University, 1 Birch Road.

We will hold public informational meetings at the following locations in the Western states. All meetings will be held from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Spokane, Washington, on August 15, 2000, at the West Coast Grand Hotel (formerly Cavanaugh's Inn at the Park), 303 West North River Drive.

Everett, Washington, on August 17, 2000, at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center, 101 128th Street SE.

Idaho Falls, Idaho, on August 22, 2000, at the West Coast Idaho Falls Hotel (formerly Cavanaugh's on the Falls), 475 River Parkway.

Boise, Idaho, on August 24, 2000, at the Grove Hotel, 245 South Capitol Blvd.

Portland, Oregon, on August 29, 2000, at the Shilo Inn Portland Airport, 11707 NE Airport Way.

LaGrande, Oregon, on August 31, 2000, at the Blue Mountain Conference Center, 404 12th Street.

We will hold public hearings at the following locations in the Midwest.

Madison, Wisconsin, on October 10, 2000, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Mitby Auditorium in the Madison Area Technical College (near Madison Airport), 3550 Anderson Street.

Duluth, Minnesota, on October 18, 2000, from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm in room 175 of the Life Sciences Building, Oakland Avenue, on the University of Minnesota Duluth Campus.

East Lansing, Michigan, on October 16, 2000, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Communication Arts and Sciences Building, Room 147, (on the corner of) Red Cedar Road and Wilson Road, Michigan State University.

Marquette, Michigan, on October 17, 2000, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, 1951 U.S. 41 West.

We will hold public hearings at the following locations in the Western states. All hearings will be held from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Spokane, Washington, on October 17, 2000, at the West Coast Grand Hotel (formerly Cavanaugh's Inn at the Park), 303 West North River Drive.

Everett, Washington, on October 19, 2000, at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center, 101 128th Street SE.

Portland, Oregon, on October 24, 2000, at the Shilo Inn Portland Airport, 11707 NE Airport Way.

LaGrande, Oregon, on October 26, 2000, at the Blue Mountain Conference Center, 404 12th Street.

Boise, Idaho, on October 31, 2000, at the Grove Hotel, 245 South Capitol Blvd.

Idaho Falls, Idaho, on November 2, 2000, at the West Coast Idaho Falls Hotel (formerly Cavanaugh's on the Falls), 475 River Parkway.

We will hold a combined public informational meeting and public hearing at the following location in the New England states. The public informational meeting will be held from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and the public hearing will be held from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Orono, Maine, on October 12, 2000, at the Best Western Black Bear Inn and Conference Center, 4 Godfrey Boulevard.

Background

On July 13, 2000, we published a proposed regulation (65 FR 43450) to reclassify and remove the gray wolf from the list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. The proposal also includes three special regulations for those distinct population segments of gray wolves that would become threatened. This proposal would affect all of the conterminous 48 states except Minnesota. Due to the complexity and wide geographic scope

of the proposal, we are scheduling public informational meetings and public hearings at a number of locations. If we schedule additional public informational meetings or public hearings, we will publicize their times and locations in subsequent notices.

The purpose of the public informational meetings is to provide additional opportunities for the public to gain information and ask questions about the proposal. These informational sessions should assist interested parties in preparing substantive comments on the proposal.

The public hearings will be the only method for comments and data to be presented verbally for entry into the public record of this rulemaking and for our consideration during our final decision. Comments and data can also be submitted in writing or electronically, as described in the July 13, 2000, proposal, and at <http://midwest.fws.gov/wolf>.

Author

The author of this notice is Ronald L. Refsnider, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

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

Dated: July 19, 2000.

Charles M. Wooley,

Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 3, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.
[FR Doc. 00-18912 Filed 7-25-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 20

RIN 1018-AG22

Migratory Bird Hunting; Approval of Tungsten-Matrix Shot as Nontoxic for Hunting Waterfowl and Coots

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service or we) proposes to grant final approval of tungsten-matrix shot as nontoxic for hunting waterfowl and coots. Acute toxicity studies reveal no adverse effects over a 30-day period on mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) dosed with tungsten-matrix shot. Reproductive/chronic toxicity testing over a 150-day period indicated that tungsten-matrix administered to adult mallards did not adversely affect them or the offspring they produced. We also

propose to remove 50 CFR Subpart M (Part 20—Migratory Bird Hunting)—Criteria and Schedule for Implementing Nontoxic Shot Zones for the 1987–88 and Subsequent Waterfowl Hunting Season because implementation of nontoxic shot zones in the United States was completed in 1991.

DATES: You should submit comments on the proposed rule no later than August 25, 2000.

ADDRESSES: You should send comments to the Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management (DMBM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1849 C Street, NW., ms 634—ARLSQ, Washington, DC 20240. You may inspect comments during normal business hours in Room 634, Arlington Square Building, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Virginia.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jon Andrew, Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management, (703) 358-1714.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (Act) (16 U.S.C. 703–712 and 16 U.S.C. 742 a–j) implements migratory bird treaties between the United States and Great Britain for Canada (1916 and 1996 as amended), Mexico (1936 and 1972 as amended), Japan (1972 and 1974 as amended), and Russia (then the Soviet Union, 1978). These treaties protect certain migratory birds from take, except as permitted under the Act. The Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to regulate take of migratory birds in the United States. Under this authority, the Fish and Wildlife Service controls the hunting of migratory game birds through regulations in 50 CFR part 20.

The purpose of this proposed rule is to allow the hunting public to use tungsten-matrix shot for hunting migratory birds. Accordingly, we propose to amend 50 CFR 20.21, which describes illegal hunting methods for migratory birds. Paragraph (j) of § 20.21 pertains to prohibited types of shot. In accordance with § 20.21(j)(2), tungsten-matrix shot (95.9 parts tungsten: 4.1 parts polymer with <1 percent residual lead) is legal as nontoxic shot for waterfowl and coot hunting for the 1999–2000 hunting season only. We propose to amend § 20.21(j) to allow permanent use of tungsten-matrix shot in the formulation described above.

Since the mid-1970s, we have sought to identify shot that does not pose a significant toxic hazard to migratory birds or other wildlife. Currently, only steel, bismuth-tin, tungsten-iron, and tungsten-polymer shot are approved as nontoxic. We previously granted temporary approval for tungsten-matrix shot during the 1998–99 (December 8, 1998; 63 FR 67619) and 1999–2000

(August 19, 1999; 64 FR 45400) migratory bird hunting seasons. Compliance with the use of nontoxic shot has increased over the last few years. We believe that compliance will continue to increase with the approval and availability of other nontoxic shot types.

Kent Cartridge Company has requested that we permanently approve tungsten-matrix shot as nontoxic for hunting waterfowl and coots. Kent's candidate shot is fabricated from what is described in their application as a mixture of powdered metals in a plastic polymer matrix whose density is comparable to that of lead. All component metals are present in their elemental form, not as compounds. The shot material being considered has a density of 10.8 grams/cm³ and is composed of approximately 95.9 percent tungsten and 4.1 percent plastic polymers.

Kent's application for tungsten-matrix includes a description of the shot, a toxicological report (Thomas 1997), results of a 30-day toxicity study (Wildlife International, Ltd. 1998), and results of a 150-day reproductive/chronic toxicity study (Gallagher *et al.* 2000). The toxicological report incorporates toxicity information (a synopsis of acute and chronic toxicity data for mammals and birds, potential for environmental concern, and toxicity to aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, amphibians, and reptiles) and information on environmental fate and transport (shot alteration, environmental half-life, and environmental concentration).

Toxicity Information

The toxicity of the plastic polymers in tungsten-matrix is negligible due to their insolubility. There is considerable difference between the toxicity of soluble and insoluble compounds of tungsten. Elemental tungsten, as found in tungsten-matrix shot, is virtually insoluble and is expected to be relatively nontoxic. Even though most toxicity tests reviewed were based on soluble tungsten compounds rather than elemental tungsten, there appears to be no basis for concern of toxicity to wildlife for tungsten-matrix shot via ingestion by fish or mammals (Bursian *et al.* 1996a, Bursian *et al.* 1996b; Bursian *et al.* 1999; Gigiema 1983; Karantassis 1924; Patty 1982; Industrial Medicine 1946).

Environmental Fate and Transport

Elemental tungsten is insoluble in water and, therefore, does not weather and degrade in the environment. Tungsten is very stable with acids and