

gnatcatcher and 11 other identified federally listed animal species through issuance of an ESA incidental take permit. The NCCP/HCP, coupled with an Implementation Agreement, could also form the basis for issuing an incidental take permit for identified non-listed animal species, should these identified species be listed during the term of the permit. Although take of plant species is not prohibited under the ESA, section 9, identified plant species, both listed and unlisted, would be included on the permit in recognition of the conservation benefit provided for the species if the Service finds these species are adequately covered under the NCCP/HCP.

On March 25, 1993, the Service issued a Final Rule declaring the California gnatcatcher to be a threatened species (50 FR 16742). The Final Rule was followed by a Special Rule on December 10, 1993 (50 FR 65088) to allow take of the California gnatcatcher pursuant to section 4(d) of the ESA. The Special Rule defined the conditions under which take of the coastal California gnatcatcher resulting from specified land use activities regulated by state and local government, would not violate section 9 of the ESA. In the Special Rule the Service recognized the significant efforts undertaken by the State of California through the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act of 1991 and encouraged holistic management of listed species, like the coastal California gnatcatcher, and other sensitive species. The Service declared its intent to permit incidental take of the California gnatcatcher associated with land use activities covered by an approved subregional NCCP prepared under the NCCP Program, provided the Service determines that the subregional NCCP meets the issuance criteria of an incidental take permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA and 50 CFR 17.32(b)(2). The Authority currently intends to obtain the Service's approval of the NCCP/HCP through a section 10(a)(1)(B) permit.

#### Proposed Action

The Service will prepare a joint EIR/EIS with the Authority, lead agency for the NCCP/HCP. The Authority will prepare an EIR in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act. The Authority will publish a separate Notice of Preparation for the EIR.

The purpose of this subregional NCCP/HCP is to establish a long-term plan for the conservation of covered species and the habitats associated with Authority activities. The proposed NCCP/HCP will give the Authority increased regulatory certainty, and give

the Service and the CDFG increased certainty that lands will be conserved to provide regional habitat resource protection. The Authority proposes to approach project design, implementation, and maintenance in a systematic, ecologically sensitive manner which focuses on the avoidance and minimization of impacts to sensitive species and habitats that may be affected by Authority activities. Authority activities subject to the NCCP/HCP are anticipated to include certain specific development projects (such as expansion of existing reservoirs, relocation of pipelines, and construction of new pipelines and support facilities) and operation and maintenance activities necessary to ensure the proper functioning of existing and future Authority facilities.

#### Preliminary Alternatives

The EIR/EIS for the San Diego County Water Authority Subregional NCCP/HCP will assist the Service during its decision making process by enabling us to analyze the environmental consequences of the proposed action and a full array of alternatives identified during preparation of the NCCP/HCP. Although specific programmatic alternatives for the proposed action have not been prepared for public discussion, the range of alternatives preliminarily identified for consideration include:

##### *Alternative 1, No Action/Project-by-Project Authorization*

The Authority would continue to seek permits for activities that could affect listed species through continuing project-by-project review and permitting pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and sections 7 and 10 of the ESA and in accordance with existing habitat management efforts. The Authority would not participate in an existing NCCP/HCP nor prepare their own plan.

##### *Alternative 2, Participation in an Existing NCCP/HCP*

The Authority would participate in one or more of the existing land-use-based subregional NCCP/HCPs in the region, such as the Multiple Species Conservation Program in the southern and central portions of San Diego County, the draft Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Program in the northwestern portion of San Diego County, and/or the draft Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan in southwestern Riverside County.

#### Service Scoping

We invite comments from all interested parties to ensure that the full range of issues related to the permit request are addressed and that all significant issues are identified. We will conduct environmental review of the permit application in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA of 1969 as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), its implementing regulations (40 CFR parts 1500 through 1508), and with other appropriate Federal laws and regulations, policies, and procedures of the Service for compliance with those regulations. We expect a draft EIR/EIS for the San Diego County Water Authority NCCP/HCP to be available for public review during Summer 2004.

Dated: November 20, 2003.

#### D. Kenneth McDermond,

*Deputy Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office, Sacramento, California.*

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#### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

#### Bureau of Land Management

[WO-320-1990-FA-24 1A]

#### OMB Approval Number 1004-0114; Information Collection Submitted to the Office of Management and Budget Under the Paperwork Reduction Act

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has sent a request to extend the current information collection to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*). On January 15, 2003, the BLM published a notice in the **Federal Register** (68 FR 2071) requesting comment on this information collection. The comment period ended on March 17, 2003. BLM received no comments. You may obtain copies of the collection of information and related forms and explanatory material by contacting the BLM Information Collection Clearance Officer at the telephone number listed below.

The OMB must respond to this request within 60 days but may respond after 30 days. For maximum consideration your comments and suggestions on the requirement should be directed within 30 days to the Office of Management and Budget, Interior Department Desk Officer (1004-0114), at OMB-OIRA via facsimile to (202) 395-6566 or e-mail to *Oira.Docket@omb.eop.gov*. Please provide a copy of your comments to the Bureau Information Collection Clearance Officer

(WO-630), Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States Office, 7450 Boston Blvd., Springfield, Virginia 22153.

Nature of Comments: We specifically request your comments on the following:

1. Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper functioning of the BLM including whether the information will have practical utility;
2. The accuracy of our estimates of the information collection burden, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions we use;
3. Ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information we collect; and
4. Ways to minimize the information collection burden on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other forms of information technology.

*Title:* Recreation of Location Notices and Annual Filings for Mining Claims, Mill Sites, and Tunnel Sites; Payment of Location and Maintenance Fees and Service Charges. (43 CFR parts 3730, 3810, 3820, 3830, and 3850).

*OMB Approval Number:* 1004-0114.

*Bureau Form Number:* 3830-2 and 3830-3.

*Abstract:* The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) collects an dudes the information to determine whether or not mining claimants have met statutory requirements. Mining claimants must record location notices of certificates of mining claims, mill sites, and tunnel sites with BLM within 90 days of their location. Claimants who do not pay the maintenance fee must make an annual filing by December 30. The mining claim or site is forfeited by operation of law if claimants fail to record the mining claim or site or to submit an annual filing when required.

*Frequency:* Once for notices and certificates of location, notice of intent to locate mining claims, and payment of location fees. Once each year for annual filing, payment of maintenance fees, or filing of waivers. As needed for recording of amendments to a previously recorded notice or certificate of location or transfer of interest.

*Description of Respondents:* Individuals, groups, or corporations.

*Estimated Completion Time:* Eight minutes for each document or payment (one hour for a Deferment Petition)

*Annual Responses:* 236,852.

*Application Fee Per Response:* We charge \$10 for each new claims, \$5 each for all other mining claims documents, and \$25 for each notice of intent to

locate mining claims and petitions for deferment of assessment work.

*Annual Burden Hours:* 31,585.

*Bureau Clearance Officer:* Michael Schwartz, (202) 452-5033.

Dated: September 5, 2003.

**Michael H. Schwartz,**

*Bureau of Land Management, Information Collection Clearance Officer.*

[FR Doc. 03-29580 Filed 11-25-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4310-84-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Notice of Availability

**AGENCY:** National Park Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332; 40 CFR 1503.1) the National Park Service announces the availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study. The document describes ways that the National Park Service can assist in preserving Gullah culture (more commonly known as Geechee in Georgia and Florida) by outlining four management alternatives for consideration by Congress, including a no-action alternative. The DEIS analyzes the environmental impacts of those alternatives considered for the future protection, interpretation, and management of Gullah cultural resources. The study area stretches along the southeastern United States coast roughly from the Cape Fear River in North Carolina to the St. John's River in Florida and approximately 30 miles inland.

**DATES:** There will be a 60-day comment period beginning with the Environmental Protection Agency's publication of its notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the DEIS are available by contacting Cynthia Porcher, Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, 1214 Middle Street, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, 29482. An electronic copy of the DEIS is available on the Internet at [http://www.nps.gov/sero/ggsrs/gg\\_res.htm](http://www.nps.gov/sero/ggsrs/gg_res.htm).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The National Park Service held community and stakeholder meetings to gather advice and feedback on desired outcomes of the study. The meetings assisted the National Park Service in developing alternatives for managing

associated cultural and natural resources and creating interpretive and educational programs. The alternatives were presented at community forums in October and November 2002. Responses from the meetings were incorporated into the four alternatives described in the study. Under Alternative A, three coastal centers would be established through partnerships with government agencies and nonprofit organizations. The centers would be dispersed along the southeastern U.S. coast where host and neighboring communities could provide support. The centers would interpret the history and evolving culture of the Gullah people from colonial times to the 21st Century and would provide learning opportunities for the casual visitor as well as residents of communities. Under Alternative B, existing national park units would collaborate with state and local park sites located in the project area to administer multi-partner interpretive and educational programs. Cooperative agreements among agencies would identify and delegate administrative, operational, and program functions for each partner. Under Alternative C, a National Heritage Area would be established to connect and associate Gullah resources. The National Park Service would provide startup and related administrative assistance for the heritage area. Overall management of the heritage partnership would eventually be administered by one or more local entities that would guide and oversee the goals and objectives of the heritage area. Under Alternative D, Alternatives A and C would be combined into a single alternative.

It is the practice of the National Park Service to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Anonymous comments will not be considered. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. However, individual respondents may request that we withhold their names and addresses from the public record, and we will honor such requests to the extent allowed by law. If you wish to withhold your name and/or address, you must state that request prominently at the beginning of your comment.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Cynthia Porcher, (803) 881-5516 or John Barrett, 404-562-3124, extension 637.