

Dated: April 21, 2004.

Paul Henson,

*Acting Manager, California/Nevada
Operations Office, Region 1, U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Intent To Prepare a Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Associated Environmental Assessment for Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in Cameron and Willacy Counties, TX

AGENCY: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) intends to gather information necessary to prepare a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and environmental documents pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations, for Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) headquartered near Rio Hondo, Texas. The Refuge is located in Cameron and Willacy Counties and includes the Bahia Grande and South Padre Island Units.

The Service is issuing this Notice in compliance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668dd *et seq.*):

(1) To advise other agencies, organizations and the public of our intentions, and

(2) To obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to be considered in the planning process.

DATES: Special mailings, newspaper articles, postings, and media announcements will inform people of opportunities for written input throughout the CCP planning process. Refuge fact sheets will be made available at local libraries in the surrounding communities. This notice of intent/public scoping process will continue until October 18, 2004. Written comments submitted by mail or e-mail should be postmarked by that date to ensure consideration. Comments mailed after that date will be considered to the extent practical. Inquire at the following address for future dates of planning activity and due dates for comments.

ADDRESSES: Address comments and requests for more information to: John

Wallace, Refuge Manager, Laguna Atascosa NWR, CCP-Project, P.O. Box 450, Rio Hondo, TX 78583, phone: (956) 748-3607, fax: (956) 748-3609.

Information concerning this Refuge may be also found at the following Web site: <http://southwest.fws.gov>.

Comments submitted via e-mail should be addressed to Chris Perez at Chris_Perez@fws.gov or John Wallace at John_Wallace@fws.gov. Additionally, you may hand-deliver comments to Mr. Wallace at the Refuge, 16 miles east on Highway 106 from Rio Hondo, Texas. Our practice is to make comments, including names and addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the rulemaking record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chris Perez, Division of Planning, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires that all lands within the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) be managed in accordance with an approved CCP. The CCP guides management decisions and identifies refuge goals, long-range objectives and strategies for achieving refuge purposes. Each Refuge in the NWRS has specific purposes for which it was established. Those purposes are used to develop and prioritize management goals and objectives within the National Wildlife Refuge System mission and to guide which public uses will occur on a given refuge.

The planning process will consider many elements, including habitat and wildlife management, habitat protection and acquisition, wilderness preservation, public recreational opportunities, industrial use and cultural resources. Public input into this planning process is essential. The planning process is a way for the Service and the public to evaluate refuge management goals and objectives for the best possible conservation efforts of this important wildlife habitat. Concurrently, this process is also providing for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that are compatible with each Refuges establishing purposes and the mission of the NWRS.

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge is located in Cameron and Willacy counties, Texas and encompasses 86,905 acres of coastal prairie, lomas (clay ridges), resacas (oxbow lakes), native thornbrush, tidal

saltflat, barrier island habitats and salt and freshwater marshes. The CCP will provide other agencies and the public with a clear understanding of the desired conditions for the Refuge and how the Service will implement management strategies for the conservation and development of these natural resources.

The Service, through this notice of intent, formally begins the comprehensive conservation planning process for Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. The Service requests input on any and all issues concerning management or public recreation. Comments regarding the protection of threatened and/or endangered species, migratory birds, native species and their habitats are encouraged. The Service is equally interested in receiving public input in the following areas:

- What makes this Refuge special for you?
- What Refuge projects or activities interest you most?
- What problems or issues do you see affecting management or public use of the Refuge?
- What improvements do you recommend for the Refuge?
- What changes, if any, would you like to see in the management of the Refuge?

The Service has provided the above questions for optional use only. The Planning Team developed these questions to facilitate issues and ideas. Comments received will be used as part of the planning process. Individual comments will not be referenced in our reports or directly responded to.

The Service will continue to solicit information from the public and other agencies via open houses, meetings, and written comments. Special mailings, newspaper releases, and announcements will continue to inform people of the time and place of opportunities for further input to the CCP.

Review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), NEPA Regulations (40 CFR parts 1500-1508) found at (<http://www.legal.gsa.gov>), other appropriate Federal laws, and Service policies and procedures for compliance with those regulations.

The Service will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with procedures for implementing NEPA found in the Department of the Interior Manual (DM Part 516, Chap 6). The decision to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement instead of an EA is contingent

upon the complexity of issues following the scoping phase of the CCP process.

We estimate that the draft environmental documents will be available in fall 2004 for public review and comment.

Dated: May 3, 2004.

David Yazzie,

Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[OR-027-1020-PI-020H; G-04-0224]

Notice to Cancel a Public Meeting, Steens Mountain Advisory Council

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Interior.

ACTION: Cancellation Notice of Public Meeting for the Steens Mountain Advisory Council.

SUMMARY: The August 9 and 10, 2004, Steens Mountain Advisory Council Meeting, previously scheduled to be held at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738, has been cancelled. The original **Federal Register** notice announcing the meeting was published Tuesday, December 2, 2003, page number 67468.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Additional information concerning the SMAC may be obtained from Rhonda Karges, Management Support Specialist, Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon, 97738, (541) 573-4400 or Rhonda_Karges@or.blm.gov or from the following Web site: <http://www.or.blm.gov/Steens>.

Dated: July 12, 2004.

Dana R. Shuford,

Burns District Manager.

[FR Doc. 04-16346 Filed 7-16-04; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CA-190-04-1610-DS]

Notice of Availability of a Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Clear Creek Management Area; Correction to April 2003 Notice of Intent (68 FR 22733)

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of a Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft RMP/Draft EIS) for the Clear Creek Management Area, Hollister Field Office, in the southern portion of San Benito County and western Fresno County, California; Correction to April 2003 Notice of Intent (68 FR 22733).

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, a Draft RMP/Draft EIS has been prepared for the Clear Creek Management Area. The Draft RMP/Draft EIS considers designations of areas and trails for off-road vehicles (ORV) in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 8342, and the delineation of boundaries of the expansion of the San Benito Mountain Research Natural Area. This notice and the Draft RMP/Draft EIS also fulfill the planning requirements in 43 CFR 1610. The Draft RMP/Draft EIS is tiered to the Clear Creek Management Area RMP Amendment/EIS (1995).

This notice will also correct the Notice of Intent (NOI) of April 29, 2003 (68 FR 22733): BLM will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement instead of an Environmental Assessment as previously anticipated.

DATES: The comment period will end 90 days after the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability is published in the **Federal Register** announcing the availability of this Draft RMP/Draft EIS. Comments on the Draft RMP/Draft EIS must be submitted on or before the end of the comment period at the address listed below. Public meetings will be held during the comment period. Public meetings and any other public involvement activities will be announced at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media news releases, newsletter mailings, and the BLM Web site: <http://www.ca.blm.gov>.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to CCMA RMP Team, Bureau of Land Management, Hollister Field Office, 20 Hamilton Court, Hollister, CA 95023. Comments may also be sent by e-mail to Lesly_Smith@ca.blm.gov. Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the Hollister Field Office. Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Hollister Field Office during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the RMP/EIS. Responses to the comments will be published as part of

the Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment/Final Environmental Impact Statement. Individuals may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this promptly at the beginning of your comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. BLM will not consider anonymous comments. All submissions from organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Copies of the Draft RMP/Draft EIS have been sent to affected Federal, Tribal, State and local Government agencies, and to interested publics and are available at the Hollister Field Office. The planning documents and direct supporting record for the analysis for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS will be available for inspection at the Hollister Field Office during normal business hours (7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Monday through Friday, except holidays). The Draft RMP/Draft EIS and other associated documents may be viewed and downloaded in PDF format at the BLM Web site at <http://www.ca.blm.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

George E. Hill, Assistant Field Manager, at the above address, telephone number (831) 630-5036, or e-mail: George_Hill@ca.blm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) is managed for Off-Highway Vehicle recreation and natural values. CCMA consists of approximately 75,000 acres of public lands and resources in the southern portion of San Benito County and western Fresno County, California. Approximately 30,000 acres are within the Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The serpentine soils within the ACEC contain high concentrations of naturally occurring asbestos, and comprise an environment with a unique assemblage of plant and animal species.

The CCMA is currently managed under a Record of Decision (ROD) approved in 1999. The ROD designated the CCMA a Limited Use Area for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use and also provided for a subsequent land use planning effort to further analyze and designate specific areas and trails for OHV use. BLM initiated the more subsequent planning in 2003 with publication of a NOI and preparation of an EA. After considering scoping comments from the public requesting that an EIS be prepared, and further analysis of impacts of possible area and route designations in the management