

during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at the Service's Austin office. Written data or comments concerning the application and draft EA/HCP should be submitted to the Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758. Please refer to permit number TE-125388-0 when submitting comments. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become a part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Scott Rowin at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Austin office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758 (512) 490-0057 or by e-mail, Scott_Rowin@fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Applicant has applied to the Service for a section 10(a)(1)(B) incidental take permit for a period of five years in order to authorize incidental take of the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo.

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.

We provide this notice under section 10(c) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.22), and the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

As identified in the draft EA/HCP, two alternate alignments (A and B) exist along Sevenmile Mountain for a distance of approximately two miles. It is unknown at this time which alignment will be selected for the transmission line. However, the Applicant requests the issuance of the permit to authorize incidental take of the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo for either alignment. Regardless of which alignment is selected, the level of mitigation proposed in this permit is based on the maximum acreage of impacts that would result from the installation of the proposed transmission line. The proposed transmission line would be installed in response to increased demands for such services resulting from a growing population within the Applicant's service area.

The addition of this transmission line would provide the capacity and flexibility needed to continue to provide

reliable service to the Killeen—Copperas Cove loads.

The action authorized under this permit, if issued, would include the installation of a 138 kV transmission line for a distance of approximately 16 miles between the existing TXU Electric Delivery Copperas Cove Substation and the Brazos Electric Power Cooperative Ding Dong Substation. The proposed right-of-way width of the Proposed Alternative would vary between 16 feet and 70 feet. The proposed area to be permitted encompasses 1,365 acres and would encompass all areas of direct and indirect impact.

The alternative was selected by the Applicant and the Service as the preferred action as it would allow the development of the project while the HCP would minimize and offset the potential impact to the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo by providing for offsite conservation measures, which would be utilized to better manage the recovery of the species.

Applicant: TXU Electric Delivery has developed an HCP which has been included as part of the preferred alternative that would substantially avoid impacts to the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. Impacts that cannot be avoided would be minimized and mitigated to the maximum extent practicable. Mitigation efforts under the proposed HCP would include, contributing \$1,690,000 to establish a non-wasting endowment for the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo management on the 4,500-acre Parrie Haynes Ranch (Ranch). Based on negotiations between TXU Electric Delivery, the Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and the Parrie Haynes Trust/Texas Youth Commission (landowner), which were initiated on November 15, 2005, this funding will be used for the establishment of the Ranch as an endangered species management site as mitigation for the affected golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo habitat. Even though no endangered species management currently occurs on the Ranch, golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos currently utilize significant amounts of habitat within the property, thus providing an ideal location for mitigation and enhanced species management. Additionally, the property is located adjacent to Fort Hood, creating an even larger block of actively managed habitat for both species.

The mitigation funding proposal consists of the creation of a non-wasting endowment fund to be maintained by

the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, a non-profit organization. As determined by Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, to maintain the endowment and management of the site in perpetuity, approximately three to four percent of the interest will be rolled back into the account each year for inflation. The remaining interest will be used for endangered species restoration/enhancement activities and to fund a TPWD Wildlife Biologist/Technician position for endangered species management of the site. Once the endowment is established, TPWD will be responsible for on-going operations, management, and reporting.

The mitigation proposal will enable the Service and TPWD to actively manage significantly more golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo habitat as opposed to acquiring habitat elsewhere. The proposal will assist the Service and TPWD in developing sound land management plans and practices, including but not limited to, assessing habitat conditions, developing land and wildlife/endangered species management plans, endangered species monitoring, vegetation management/manipulation, cowbird management, livestock management, exotic species control, public education, and fencing and other access provisions.

Richard McDonald,

*Acting Regional Director, Region 2,
Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for Mingo, Pilot Knob, and Ozark Cavefish National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs), Wayne and Stoddard Counties, MO

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces that the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) is available for Mingo, Pilot Knob, and Ozark Cavefish NWRs, Missouri.

The CCP was prepared pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Goals and objectives in the CCP

describe how the agency intends to manage the refuge over the next 15 years.

DATES: Comments on the Draft CCP/EA must be received on or before July 10, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Draft CCP are available on compact disk or hard copy; you may obtain a copy by writing to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Conservation Planning, Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111 or you may access and download a copy via the planning Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/mingo/index.html>.

All comments should be addressed to Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Attention: CCP Comment, 24279 State Highway 51, Puxico, MO 63960, or direct e-mail to r3planning@fws.gov. Comments may also be submitted through the Service's regional Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kathleen Burchett at (573) 222-3589.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Established in 1944 under authority of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the 21,592-acre Mingo NWR serves as a resting and wintering area for migratory waterfowl. A shallow basin, the Refuge lies in an abandoned channel of the Mississippi River bordered on the west by the Ozark Plateau and on the east by Crowley's Ridge. The Refuge contains approximately 15,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, 5,000 acres of marsh and water, 1,100 acres of cropland and moist soil units, and nearly 500 acres of grassy openings. During fall and spring migration, the Refuge wetlands support thousands of waterfowl.

The EA evaluates four different approaches, or alternatives, to the future management of Mingo NWR, and two alternatives for Pilot Knob and Ozark Cavefish NWRs. The plan also identifies wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public.

The preferred alternative for Mingo includes increased opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation. It would continue with improvements to the drainage system, slightly increase the amount of bottomland forest, and maintain a variety of open habitats.

The preferred alternative for Pilot Knob includes increased community outreach to improve communication with local residents, guided public access to the summit of Pilot Knob, and increased law enforcement.

The preferred alternative for Ozark Cavefish includes opening the Refuge to compatible wildlife dependent public uses, working with surrounding land owners to improve water quality, and developing a formal agreement with the Missouri Department of Conservation for the cooperative management of this remote site and their adjacent property.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee *et seq.*), requires the Service to develop a CCP for each National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose in developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction for conserving wildlife and their habitats, the CCP identifies wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update these CCPs at least every 15 years in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4370d).

Dated: April 5, 2006.

Charles M. Wooley,

Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Record of Decision for the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of record of decision.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces the decision and availability of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in accordance with 40 CFR 1506.6(b). A thorough analysis of the environmental, social, and economic considerations was completed and included in the Final CCP/EIS. The Final CCP/EIS was released to the public and a Notice of Availability was published in the **Federal Register**, 71 FR 5874, February 3, 2006. The ROD documents the selection of Alternative C, the Preferred Alternative in the Final CCP/EIS. The ROD was signed by the Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Midwest Region, on April 18, 2006.

ADDRESSES: The ROD and Final CCP/EIS may be viewed at Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters. You may obtain a copy of the ROD at the planning Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/DriftlessArea> or by writing to the following address: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Conservation Planning, Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cathy Henry at (563) 873-3423.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The CCP/EIS for the Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge will provide management guidance for conservation of Refuge resources and public use activities during the next 15 years. Three alternatives and their consequences were described in detail in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Under all alternatives recovery plans for the Iowa Pleistocene snail and the Northern monkshood would be updated, cultural resources would be protected, and the Refuge's Fire Management Plan would guide prescribed fire and wildfire suppression.

Alternative A—No Action. Present management practices would continue under this Alternative. The No Action alternative is a status quo alternative where current conditions and trends continue. The alternative served as the baseline to compare and contrast with the other alternatives.

Acquisition efforts would not occur under this alternative because there would be no approved expanded acquisition boundary.

Alternative B—Habitat Protection Emphasis. Under this alternative the primary focus of Refuge activities would be on the permanent protection of endangered species habitat through land acquisition and minimal physical disturbance of endangered species habitat. The expanded acquisition area