

pintail (koloa māpu), Northern shoveler (koloa mohā), lesser scaup, Pacific golden-plover (kōlea) and ruddy turnstone (‘akekeke). A majority of the refuge is closed to general public access; however, trails, overlooks, and educational programs provide the public with opportunities to view some of Hawai‘i’s endangered and migratory wildlife.

Kakahai‘a NWR, located on the southeastern coast of the island of Moloka‘i, was established in 1976 to protect and provide habitat for endangered species. Habitats found on this refuge include freshwater marsh, grassland, dry forest, and coastal strand. The refuge has the potential to provide breeding, foraging, and resting areas for endangered waterbirds, a variety of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland birds. Some of the more common migrants are koloa māpu and kōlea. Kakahai‘a NWR is closed to the general public; however, nongovernmental organizations occasionally conduct wetland education programs.

During the CCP planning process, many elements were considered, including wildlife management and habitat protection, compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, on- and off-site environmental educational opportunities, and coordination with State and Federal agencies and other interested groups.

The draft CCPs and EAs identified and evaluated three alternatives for managing each refuge. These were available for a 30-day public review and comment period, which included two open house public meetings. The Service incorporated or responded to the comments on the Keālia Pond NWR draft CCP and Kakahai‘a NWR draft CCP in the final CCPs.

#### Selected Alternative for Each Refuge

All actions in the selected alternative for each refuge are subject to funding and any other compliance requirements. After considering the comments we received, we have selected each refuge’s Alternative C for implementation. Implementing Alternative C for the CCPs will encompass the following key actions:

##### *Keālia Pond NWR*

The Service will remove the most aggressive invasive plants and control pickleweed on the flats. Planned projects include constructing a water control structure, developing new wells to deliver water to target areas, and recontouring topography to maintain water on the flats. We expect an increased capability to dewater and

flood the Main Pond will enhance our dust, midge, and tilapia control efforts. New vegetated blinds will provide better wildlife viewing opportunities, and public interpretation and environmental education programs will be expanded. Internships will be provided for up to five students. Wildlife monitoring on the proposed Molokini Unit will include up to six visits during the period running March through November, and we will initiate a native plant restoration plan.

##### *Kakahai‘a NWR*

If funded, we will restore the 15-acre Old Pond and 5.5 acres of New Pond by removing California bulrush and other aggressive nonnative species, dredging accumulated sediment, recontouring topography, removing radial levees, reconstructing perimeter levees, replacing the water control structure, and replacing the pump between the two ponds. A well, pump, water distribution line, and control outlet for New Pond will be constructed, and levees will be rebuilt. All monitoring activities will resume as part of the wetland restoration. A predator-proof fence will be installed to protect wetland habitat and species. The coastal strand will be restored and protected from further erosion to provide a protective barrier to the refuge wetlands and highway. A cultural resources survey will be completed for the entire refuge. Opportunities for visitors to engage in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation may expand with new staffing. At a minimum, a kiosk will be constructed along the refuge entrance road and volunteer groups will be developed to assist refuge staff with restoration and maintenance activities.

Dated: November 9, 2011.

**Robyn Thorson,**

*Regional Director, Pacific Region, Portland, Oregon.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

**[FWS–R6–R–2011–N212; FF06R06000–FXRS1265066CCP0S2–123]**

#### Establishment of Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area, Kansas

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has established the Flint Hills

Legacy Conservation Area, the 555th unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Service established the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area on September 28, 2011, with the donation of a conservation easement in Chautauqua County, Kansas.

**ADDRESSES:** A map depicting the approved Refuge boundary and other information regarding the Refuge is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Amy Thornburg, Planning Team Leader, USFWS, Division of Refuge Planning, P.O. Box 25486, DFC, Denver, CO 80225.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Service established the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area, which covers all or part of 21 counties in eastern Kansas. Today, less than 4 percent of the once-vast tallgrass prairie remains, most (80 percent) of which lies within the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma. The Service will work to conserve tallgrass prairie and the wildlife resources in the conservation area primarily through the purchase of perpetual easements from willing sellers in Kansas. These conservation easements will protect native grassland birds, as well as over 80 species of native fish, and native mollusks that depend on the pristine streams that are found in the Flint Hills region.

The Service recognizes the importance of protecting and fostering traditional cultural values, including ranching lifestyles and economies, in concert with habitat conservation interests. Ranching has historically played a major role in preserving the tallgrass ecoregion—and by extension, conserving valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Based on anticipated levels of landowner participation, objectives for the conservation area are to protect up to 1.1 million acres of tallgrass prairie habitat. The conservation area is a landscape-scale effort to conserve populations of native grassland birds, which are among the most consistently declining species in the United States. Therefore, it is important to incorporate the elements of strategic habitat conservation (SHC) to ensure effective conservation. SHC entails strategic biological planning and conservation design, and integrated conservation delivery, monitoring, and research at ecoregional scales.

This conservation area allows the Service to purchase perpetual conservation easements, using the acquisition authority of the Fish and

Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a–j). The Federal money used to acquire conservation easements is primarily from the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601–4 through 11) (derived primarily from oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf, motorboat fuel taxes, and the sale of surplus Federal property). Additional funding to acquire lands, water, or interests for fish and wildlife conservation purposes could be identified by Congress or donated by nonprofit organizations. The purchase of easements from willing sellers will be subject to available money.

The Service has involved the public, agencies, partners, and legislators throughout the planning process for the easement program. At the beginning of the planning process, the Service initiated public involvement for the proposal to protect habitats primarily through acquisition of conservation easements for management as part of the Refuge System. The Service spent time discussing the proposed project with landowners; conservation organizations; Federal, State and county governments; tribes; and other interested groups and individuals. For initial public scoping, the Service held three open-house meetings, on November 30, December 1, and December 2, 2009, in Alma, Wichita, and Cottonwood Falls, Kansas, respectively. These open houses were announced in local media.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Service prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that evaluated two alternatives and their potential impacts on the project area. The Service released the draft EA and land protection plan (LPP), on April 14, 2010, for a 30-day public review period. The draft documents were made available to Federal elected officials and agencies, State elected officials and agencies, Native American tribes with aboriginal or tribal interests, and other members of the public that were identified during the scoping process. The Service held three additional open-house public meetings to discuss the draft EA and land protection plan LPP, on April 21, 22, and 23, 2010—at El Dorado, Cottonwood Falls, and Alma, Kansas, respectively. These meetings were announced in advance in local media. Approximately 148 landowners, citizens, and elected representatives attended the meetings. The Service received 7 letters from agencies, organizations, and other entities, and 24 general public comments. After all comments were received, they were reviewed and incorporated into the EA and administrative record.

Based on the documentation contained in the EA, a Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on July 30, 2010, for the establishment of the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area.

Dated: December 23, 2011.

**Noreen E. Walsh,**

*Deputy Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

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#### Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Restoration Design Energy Project and Land Use Plan Amendments

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Availability.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA); the Council on Environmental Quality and the Department of the Interior regulations implementing NEPA; and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Arizona State Office has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Restoration Design Energy Project (RDEP) to evaluate proposed amendments to several Resource Management Plans (RMPs) to identify lands across Arizona that may be suitable for developing renewable solar and wind energy, and to establish a baseline set of environmental protection measures for such projects. By this notice, the BLM is announcing the beginning of a 90-day public review and comment period on the Draft EIS.

**DATES:** To ensure comments will be considered, the BLM must receive written comments on the RDEP Draft EIS within 90 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. The BLM will announce future meetings or hearings and any other public involvement activities at least 15 days in advance through local media, newspapers, mailings, and the BLM Web site at: <http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en.html>.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on the RDEP Draft EIS by any of the following methods.

- *Email:* [az\\_arra\\_rdep@blm.gov](mailto:az_arra_rdep@blm.gov).

- *Fax:* Attn: Lane Cowger, (602) 417–9454; and

- *Mail or other delivery service:* BLM–Arizona State Office, Attn: Restoration Design Energy Project, One North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, AZ 85004–4427.

Please be sure to include your name, any organization you represent, and return address with your comment.

Copies of the Draft EIS are available at the BLM–Arizona State Office, One North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, Arizona 85004, or it can be downloaded from the project Web site: [http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/energy/arra\\_solar.htm](http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/energy/arra_solar.htm).

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kathy Pedrick, BLM Project Manager; Telephone: 602–417–9235; Mail: One North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, Arizona 85004–4427; or email: [az\\_arra\\_rdep@blm.gov](mailto:az_arra_rdep@blm.gov). Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The RDEP supports the Secretary of the Interior's goals to build America's new energy future and to protect and restore treasured landscapes. The purpose of the RDEP is to conduct statewide planning that fosters environmentally responsible production of solar and wind energy and allows the permitting of future solar and wind energy development projects to proceed in a more efficient and standardized manner. The RDEP would amend BLM land use plans to identify geographic areas in Arizona best suited for solar and wind energy development, including solar and wind technologies, and to establish a baseline set of environmental protection measures for such projects.

The BLM is proposing to identify Renewable Energy Development Areas (REDAs), BLM-administered lands that may be suitable for the development of solar and wind facilities, and a Solar Energy Zone (SEZ) with a priority for utility-scale (greater than 20 megawatts) solar development. These areas include disturbed sites and lands with low resource sensitivity and few environmental conflicts. Through scoping and outreach activities, disturbed sites have been identified throughout Arizona, including former landfills, brownfields, mines, isolated BLM parcels, and Central Arizona