

marking techniques; release; obtain and preserve blood, tissue, semen, ova, and other samples that are considered parts of a wolf and can be collected without a permit); translocate; transport between approved Mexican wolf captive management facilities in the United States and Mexico, to approved release sites, and to and from the Vermejo Park Ranch; purposeful lethal take (lethal control is limited to Mexican wolves within the MWEPA in Arizona and New Mexico); hazing via less-than-lethal projectiles; injurious harassment; research; and any other USFWS-approved husbandry practice or management action for Mexican wolves.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

In compliance with NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), we have made an initial determination that the proposed activities in these permits are categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement (516 DM 6 Appendix 1, 1.4C(1)).

Public Availability of Comments

All comments and materials we receive in response to this request will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the address listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority

We provide this notice under section 10 of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*)

Dated: January 8, 2015.

Joy E. Nicholopoulos,

Acting Regional Director, Southwest Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 2015-00551 Filed 1-14-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-HQ-R-2014-N231;
FXRS1265090000-145-FF09R20000]

RIN 1018-AZ89

Final Strategic Growth Policy for the National Wildlife Refuge System

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has finalized a policy to implement a strategic approach to the growth of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System, System). The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, requires that we “plan and direct the continued growth of the System in a manner that is best designed to accomplish the mission of the System.” This policy directs Refuge System employees to focus their protection measures on priority conservation features to ensure that our limited resources are used to make the greatest contribution to the conservation of species in a cost-effective and transparent manner. It ensures that the growth of the System reflects our vision toward managing functional landscapes, enhancing our scientific rigor, improving our effectiveness, and involving our partners and the American people. The Strategic Growth policy is found in “Refuge Planning,” chapter 5, part 602 in the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

DATES: The policy was effective September 4, 2014.

ADDRESSES: You may read the final policy online at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/602fw5.html>. You may obtain a summary of how we addressed comments we received on the draft policy at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/planning/StrategicGrowth.html>. You may also request a copy of the policy by U.S. mail from USFWS, Division of Natural Resources and Conservation Planning, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803 (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**). The policy is also available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brian Salem, at the address above, or by telephone: (703) 358-2397.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

The Service has established a final Strategic Growth policy, which is available at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/602fw5.html>. The policy is chapter 5, part 602, “Refuge Planning,” in the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual. The purpose of the policy is to implement a strategic approach to the growth of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Background

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act), which amended the Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-ee), states that the Refuge System mission is to “administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.” The Improvement Act requires us to “plan and direct the continued growth of the System in a manner that is best designed to accomplish the mission of the System,” “to fulfill the mission of the System, as well as the specific purposes for which [the] refuge was established,” and to “ensure timely and effective cooperation and collaboration with Federal agencies and State fish and wildlife agencies during the course of acquiring and managing refuges.” Because we are facing unparalleled challenges related to climate and non-climate stressors, we must provide consistent direction for adding lands and waters to the System in a science-based, cost-effective, and transparent manner. The Strategic Growth policy is a result of this need for strategic and consistent planning.

Final Policy

The policy prioritizes acquisitions within existing refuge boundaries, expansion of existing refuges, and establishment of new refuges. It focuses protection measures on priority conservation features so that we can make the most of our limited resources.

The policy is consistent with the biological planning and conservation design components of *Strategic Habitat Conservation*, the Service’s science-based adaptive management framework for determining where and how to deliver conservation efficiently to achieve specific biological outcomes. The policy identifies threatened and endangered species, migratory birds of conservation concern, and waterfowl, or the surrogate species that represent them, as priority conservation features.

The policy requires application of the best available science to incorporate

elements of conservation design to help us identify priority conservation areas that will contribute to achieving measurable conservation targets such as population objectives. The policy ensures that when employees propose new refuges or expansions to existing refuges, they analyze and describe: (1) The project's vulnerability to climate change and other non-climate stressors (e.g., habitat fragmentation, invasive species), (2) how we will mitigate stressors to ensure the project's resiliency, (3) how the project is arranged in a geographically efficient manner to safeguard ecological processes across the landscape, and (4) how the project complements the resiliency of other conservation areas.

The policy establishes the process for sending project proposals to the Service Director and the potential outcomes of the Director's review. It also describes how designated representatives at the local level—Refuge Managers—must interact, coordinate, cooperate, and collaborate with State fish and wildlife agencies in the acquisition and management of refuges.

Summary of Comments and Changes to the Final Policy

On January 30, 2014, we announced the draft policy and requested public comment via a **Federal Register** notice (79 FR 4952). The comment period was open from January 30, 2014, through March 3, 2014. We received 35 detailed comment letters and many individual comments on the draft policy. In total, we received 236 individual comments, which were grouped into 71 comment categories. The comments were from nongovernmental organizations, individuals, States, and industry. Most of the comments expressed general support, and many addressed specific elements in the draft policy.

We considered all of the recommendations for improvement and clarification included in the comments and made appropriate changes to the draft policy. Many of the comments we received were outside the scope of this policy. We drafted this policy in a way that gives us flexibility as funding levels and resources change. The policy does not supersede any piece of legislation, regulation, or other policy.

Dated: December 11, 2014.

Dan Ashe,

Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 2015-00381 Filed 1-14-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

[AAK6006201 156A2100DD
AOR3030.999900]

Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Coquille Indian Tribe Fee-to-Trust and Casino Project, City of Medford, Jackson County, Oregon

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as lead agency intends to gather information necessary for preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in connection with the Coquille Indian Tribe's (Tribe) application for a proposed 2.4-acre fee-to-trust transfer and casino project to be located in the City of Medford, Jackson County, Oregon. This notice also announces the beginning of the public scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of the EIS must arrive by February 17, 2015. The date of a public scoping meeting will be announced at least 15 days in advance through a notice to be published in the local newspaper, the Mail Tribune, and posted at www.coquilleeis.com.

ADDRESSES: You may mail or hand-deliver written comments to Mr. Stanley Speaks, Northwest Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northwest Region, 911 Northeast 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97232-4165. Please include your name, return address, and "DEIS Scoping Comments, Coquille Indian Tribe Fee-to-Trust and Casino Project" on the first page of your written comments. The location of a public scoping meeting will be announced at least 15 days in advance through a notice to be published in the local newspaper, the Mail Tribune, and posted at www.coquilleeis.com.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. BJ Howerton, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northwest Regional Office, 911 Northeast 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97232; fax (503) 231-2275; phone (503) 231-6749.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Tribe has submitted an application to the BIA requesting that approximately 2.4 acres of land be transferred from fee to trust status (Proposed Action), upon which the Tribe would renovate an existing bowling alley to convert it into a gaming

facility. In order for the Department to fully consider and either grant or deny the Tribe's application, the Department must first comply with NEPA.

The proposed fee-to-trust property is located within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Medford, Oregon, adjacent to the northeastern boundary of Highway 99, between Charlotte Ann Lane and Lowry Lane. The Tribe's stated purpose of the Proposed Action is to improve the economic status of the Tribe so it can better provide housing, health care, education, cultural programs, and other services to its members. Adjacent fee land would be used for parking.

The Proposed Action encompasses the various federal approvals which may be required to implement the Tribe's proposed economic development project, including approval of the Tribe's fee-to-trust application. The EIS will identify and evaluate issues related to these approvals.

Areas of environmental concern identified for analysis in the EIS include land resources; water resources; air quality; noise; biological resources; cultural/historical/archaeological resources; resource use patterns; traffic and transportation; public health and safety; hazardous materials and hazardous wastes; public services and utilities; socioeconomic; environmental justice; visual resources/aesthetics; and cumulative, indirect, and growth-inducing effects. The range of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS may be expanded or reduced based on comments received in response to this notice and at the public scoping meeting. Additional information, including a map of the project site, is available by contacting the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this notice.

Public Comment Availability: Comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BIA address shown in the **ADDRESSES** section, during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask in your comment that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, the BIA cannot guarantee that this will occur.