

910, Ilwaco, WA 98624-9707, (360) 484-3482.

**WRITTEN COMMENTS:** Written comments should be addressed to James A. Hidy (see address provided above) and should be received by January 21, 1997. Written comments will also be accepted at the scoping meetings.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** James A. Hidy is the primary author of this document. The Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, proposes to implement a long-term, integrated pest management (IPM) program at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge to control and reverse the invasion of the non-native grass, *Spartina alterniflora* (*Spartina*) on the Refuge and the surrounding tidelands of Willapa Bay.

*Spartina* is a perennial, deep-rooted saltmarsh species native to the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of North America. It was introduced to the West Coast during the 1890s, and is currently found from British Columbia to northern California. However, the infestation is increasing most rapidly in Washington, particularly Willapa Bay. In 1991, there were approximately 2,500 acres of *Spartina* in Willapa Bay. The grass is expected to cover over 30,000 acres within 45 years.

*Spartina* is spreading rapidly over tidelands of the Refuge and surrounding tidelands. It is degrading and displacing habitat that supports a diverse community of marine organisms including aquatic migratory birds, anadromous fish, and invertebrate and plant communities that support them. Widespread colonization by *Spartina* induces major modifications of physical, hydrological, chemical, and biological estuarine functions. *Spartina* displaces eelgrass (*Zostera spp.*) on mudflats and native vegetation in saltmarshes. Benthic invertebrate species composition in the intertidal zone changes substantially as *Spartina* occupies the tidelands. As *Spartina* becomes dominant in the tideland, mudflats are raised and channels are deepened. This eliminates the gently sloping, bare, intertidal zone that lies between the saltmarsh and the tidal channels.

Refuge objectives are to protect habitats for wintering and migrating aquatic birds including ducks, geese, swans, and shorebirds. The continued spread of *Spartina* constitutes a significant threat to those habitats. The proposed action is intended to stop habitat loss and degradation, and prevent future *Spartina* recolonization.

Important habitats for meeting Refuge objectives lie within the Lewis, Porter

Point, and Riekkola Units (collectively known as the southern units), where the Service has fee-simple title to over 2,900 acres of tidelands supporting saltmarsh and mudflat habitats. Other Refuge-associated tidelands include about 1,600 acres of State-owned use deed lands adjacent to Long Island. Waterbird habitat value is being rapidly lost in both areas by *Spartina* invasions. The proposed action supports Refuge objectives by protecting and restoring aquatic bird habitats on Refuge tidelands of the southern units. Refuge objectives would be further supported through cooperative efforts with other public and private tideland owners directed at bay-wide *Spartina* management.

Four alternatives are being considered in the document.

**No Action:** Under this alternative, the Service would not participate in *Spartina* control on Willapa Bay.

**Long-term Integrated Pest Management (Proposed Action):** This is a dynamic approach to pest management which utilizes a full knowledge of a pest problem through an understanding of the ecology of the pest and related organisms. Programs are carefully designed under IPM using a combination of compatible techniques to limit damage caused by the pest to a tolerable level. In many cases, IPM will utilize combinations of mechanical, cultural, biological and chemical control techniques to meet objectives. At this time, biological and cultural techniques are not available for *Spartina* control, but they would be considered in the future.

**Physical/Mechanical Controls Only:** Physical and mechanical methods of controlling *Spartina* are those that physically manipulate the grass itself, or some aspect of the habitat on which the grass depends in order to kill the grass or control its spread.

**Chemical Controls Only:** This alternative would rely exclusively on application of herbicide (currently, only the chemical glyphosate is approved for use in the estuary) to *Spartina* using ground, water-borne, and/or aerial delivery systems.

Significant issues associated with these alternatives include potential effects on:

**The Physical Environment:** Soils and Topography, Hydrology, Water Quality, Ambient Sound.

**The Biological Environment:** Vegetation, Wildlife, Fish, Microbes and Marine Invertebrates, Biodiversity.

**Social Environment:** Human Health, Perceptions/Concerns, Recreation.

**Economic Environment:** Tourism, Mariculture and Fisheries.

The environmental review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.), NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), other Federal regulations, and FWS policies and procedures.

We estimate the NEPA document for this proposal will be made available to the public in Spring, 1997.

Dated: December 17, 1996.

Michael J. Spear,

Acting Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.

[FR Doc. 96-32640 Filed 12-23-96; 8:45 am]

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### Service Migratory Bird Regulations Committee Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Fish and Wildlife Service will conduct an open meeting on January 23, 1997, to identify and discuss preliminary issues concerning the 1997-98 migratory bird hunting regulations.

**DATES:** January 23, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** The Service Regulations Committee will meet at the Patuxent National Wildlife Visitor Center, 10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop, Laurel, Maryland.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Paul R. Schmidt, Chief, Office of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, ms 634-ARLSQ, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240 (703) 358-1714.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Migratory Bird Regulations Committee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including the Flyway Council Consultants, will meet on January 23, 1997, at 9:00 a.m. to identify preliminary issues concerning the 1979-98 migratory bird hunting regulations for discussion and review by the Flyway Councils at their March meetings. The Service believes that, by opening this meeting to the public, a dialogue between the Flyway Councils and the Service can begin earlier in the regulations-development process.

In accordance with Departmental policy regarding meetings of the Service Regulations Committee attended by any person outside the Department, these meetings are open to public observation. Members of the public may submit written comments on the matters discussed to the Director.

Dated: December 6, 1996.  
John G. Rogers,  
*Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
Service.*  
[FR Doc. 96-32682 Filed 12-23-96; 8:45 am]  
BILLING CODE 4310-55-M

## Bureau of Indian Affairs

### National Environmental Policy Act: Implementing Procedures (516 DM 6, Appendix 4)

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Indian Affairs,  
Interior.

**ACTION:** Final notice of revised  
procedures.

**SUMMARY:** This notice announces  
revisions to Appendix 4 of the  
Departmental Manual (516 DM 6) for  
implementing the National  
Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)  
procedures within the Bureau of Indian  
Affairs (BIA), which were published in  
the Federal Register on March 31, 1988  
(53 FR 10439).

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** December 24, 1996.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr.  
Willie R. Taylor, Director, Office of  
Environmental Policy and Compliance,  
at (202) 208-3891. For the BIA, contact  
Donald Sutherland at (202) 208-4791.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This  
notice is published in exercise of  
authority delegated by the Secretary of  
the Interior to the Assistant Secretary—  
Indian Affairs by 209 DM 8.

#### Background

On July 7, 1995, the BIA published a  
notice in the Federal Register (60 FR  
35417) proposing revisions to 516 DM 6,  
Appendix 4. These provided more  
specific NEPA compliance guidance to  
the BIA by updating the BIA's  
organizational responsibilities for  
compliance, updating guidance to  
applicants, adding to the list of actions  
normally requiring an environmental  
impact statement (EIS), and updating,  
revising and adding to the list of actions  
categorically excluded from the NEPA  
process. The notice afforded the public  
30 days to review and comment on the  
proposed revisions. Certain changes in  
this final version of the revisions are in  
response to those comments.

#### Discussion of Comments and Changes

The BIA received 14 comment letters  
on the proposed revisions to Appendix  
4. Nine of these were from four federal  
agencies. Of these nine, one was from a  
central office and eight were from field  
offices. Three Indian tribes, an  
environmental organization and a

private individual submitted the  
remaining five letters.

Seven changes were made to the  
proposed revisions as a result of the  
comments received. Two of the changes  
are deletions; section 4.2.C.24 because it  
was contradicted by section 4.2.B., and  
section 4.4.G.4 because it was  
inconsistent with the case law (*Connor  
v. Burford*). The other five changes are  
clarifications in wording. These are in  
sections 4.3.A.3, 4.4.C, 4.4.H.2, 4.4.J and  
4.4.L.2.

One further change was made as a  
result of internal BIA review, and three  
as a result of Council on Environmental  
Quality (CEQ) review of the proposed  
revisions. The BIA change is the  
addition at section 4.4.M.5 of the  
categorical exclusion for the issuance of  
permits under the Archaeological  
Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C.  
470aa-11) in cases where the permitted  
work is connected with an action for  
which an environmental analysis has  
been, or is being prepared. In such  
cases, a separate environmental process  
for the archaeological permit would be  
redundant.

One of the changes resulting from the  
CEQ review is the deletion of section  
4.4.M.3., and the subsequent re-  
numbering within 4.4.M. The deleted  
item would have categorically excluded  
actions where the BIA had concurrence  
or co-approval with another agency and  
the action was a categorical exclusion  
for that agency. To be used, an  
exclusion must be listed by the BIA, as  
well. The other two changes are  
clarifications in the wording of sections  
4.3.B and 4.4.H.1.

Of the comments that did not result  
in changes, several recommended  
adding details that are covered in 30  
BIAM Supplement 1. As noted under  
the supplemental information for the  
proposed revisions, Appendix 4 is  
intended to be used along with  
Supplement 1, as well as with  
Departmental procedures and the  
Council on Environmental Quality's  
regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). A  
number of other comments were  
editorial suggestions that offered no  
measurable improvement in the text.  
Yet others, while worthy of  
consideration in another context, were  
beyond the scope of this Appendix.  
One, for example, argued that BIA  
environmental guidance should be in  
the Code of Federal Regulations, not the  
Departmental Manual. Responses, by  
section, to comments that did not fall  
into one of the above three categories  
are as follows:

#### Section 4.3.A.1

**Comment:** Recommendation that all  
mining development applications be  
analyzed to determine if an EIS is  
required, rather than categorically  
excluding applications according to  
production and acreage criteria.

**Response:** The numbers provided in  
this section are intended as general  
guidance. The BIA understands that  
there will be exceptions to this  
categorical exclusion, and has a  
procedure to determine when such  
might be the case.

#### Section 4.4

**Comment:** Recommendation that  
program by program regulations for  
NEPA compliance for a number of parts  
under 25 CFR be promulgated.

**Response:** This would not be  
consistent with the Government's  
current policy of regulatory reduction.

**Comment:** Numerous suggestions for  
new categorical exclusions to be added  
to the list.

**Response:** The exclusions contained  
in this rule are flexible enough to cover  
the suggested exclusions. For example,  
most of the suggested additions fall  
within the broader exclusion for  
operation and maintenance (4.4.A.).

#### Section 4.4.I

**Comment:** Recommendation that a  
categorical exclusion be added for  
federally funded housing projects  
wherein the Department of Housing and  
Urban Development (HUD) will be  
complying with NEPA for the housing  
and the only BIA action would be to  
acquire the land in trust.

**Response:** The categorical exclusion  
was not included because such  
situations are covered under lead/  
cooperating agency arrangements in  
HUD's environmental documents.

**Comment:** Question as to whether the  
categorical exclusion of land  
conveyances where no change in land  
use is planned might still allow for  
some degree of planned development or  
physical alteration of the land without  
triggering NEPA review.

**Response:** It is unrealistic to expect  
land to be conveyed with no plan  
whatsoever for its future use. Whether  
or not the conveyance may be  
categorically excluded is a matter of  
judgement by the BIA official  
responsible for NEPA compliance as to  
how well the plan is established. The  
categorical exclusion does not, however,  
allow for any development or physical  
alteration to actually take place.

**Comment:** Recommendation that all  
land transfers be categorically excluded,  
regardless of plans for future