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15,048.

Status: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Authority: Section 3507 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. 35, as amended.

Dated: March 29, 2004.

Wayne Eddins,

*Departmental Reports Management Officer,
Office of the Chief Information Officer.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of a Technical Agency Draft Recovery Plan for the Threatened Guajón (*Eleutherodactylus cooki*) for Review and Comment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability and public comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the availability of the technical agency draft recovery plan for the guajón (also referred to as the Puerto Rican demon). The guajón is one of sixteen species of frogs from the genus *Eleutherodactylus*, commonly known as "coquíes" that inhabit the island of Puerto Rico, and is also the second largest species found on the island. The guajón is extremely limited in its geographic distribution. The species inhabits localities in the "Sierra de Panduras" mountain range, and the municipalities of Yabucoa, San Lorenzo, Humacao, Las Piedras, and west to Patillas-San Lorenzo. The guajón, named after the habitat it occupies, occurs at low and intermediate elevations, from 18 to 1,183 feet (5.5 to 360.6 meters) above sea level, where it inhabits caves formed by large boulders of granite rock known as "guajonales" or streams with patches of rock without cave systems. The technical agency draft recovery plan includes specific recovery objectives and criteria to be met in order to delist the guajón under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). We solicit review and comment on this technical agency draft recovery plan from local, State, and Federal agencies, and the public.

DATES: In order to be considered, we must receive comments on the technical agency draft recovery plan on or before June 1, 2004.

ADDRESSES: If you wish to review this technical agency draft recovery plan,

you may obtain a copy by contacting the Boquerón Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 491, Boquerón, Puerto Rico 00622 (telephone (787) 851-7297), or by visiting our recovery plan Web site at <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html#plans>. If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods:

1. You may submit written comments and materials to the Field Supervisor, at the above address.

2. You may hand-deliver written comments to our Boquerón Field Office, at the above address, or fax your comments to (787) 851-7440.

3. You may send comments by e-mail to Jorge_Saliva@fws.gov. For directions on how to submit electronic filing of comments, see the "Public Comments Solicited" section.

Comments and materials received are available for public inspection on request, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jorge Saliva at the above address (telephone (787) 851-7297, ext. 24).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

We listed the guajón as threatened on June 11, 1997 under the Act (62 FR 31757). The guajón may be the only species of *Eleutherodactylus* in Puerto Rico that exhibits differences between sexes in color. Females have solid brown coloration, with a uniformly white undersurface. They have white-rimmed eyes, and large, truncate disks on their feet. Males have yellow coloration extending from the vocal sac to the abdomen and flanks. Females are larger than males, with a mean size (snout-vent length) of 2.01 inches (5.11 cm) for females and 1.71 inches (4.34 cm) for males. The voice of the guajón is low and melodious.

For this species, deforestation and earth movement for agricultural, urban and rural development, and highway construction are likely the principal causes for decline. In addition, the guajón is threatened by the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers in adjacent areas, illegal garbage dumping, and the effects of catastrophic natural events such as droughts and hurricanes. Additional research is planned to look at these and other potential causes for decline.

Restoring an endangered or threatened animal or plant to the point where it is again a secure, self-sustaining member of its ecosystem is a primary goal of the endangered species

program. To help guide the recovery effort, we are preparing recovery plans for most listed species. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for conservation of the species, establish criteria for downlisting or delisting, and estimate time and cost for implementing recovery measures.

The Act requires the development of recovery plans for listed species, unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species. Section 4(f) of the Act requires us to provide a public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment during recovery plan development. We will consider all information presented during a public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised recovery plan. We and other Federal agencies will take these comments into account in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

The objective of this technical agency draft plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of the guajón so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. As recovery criteria are met, the status of the species will be reviewed and they will be considered for removal from the *Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants* (50 CFR part 17).

Public Comments Solicited

We solicit written comments on the recovery plan described. We will consider all comments received by the date specified above prior to final approval of the draft recovery plan.

Please submit electronic comments as an ASCII file format and avoid the use of special characters and encryption. Please also include your name and return address in your e-mail message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your e-mail message, contact us directly by calling our Boquerón Field Office (see **ADDRESSES** section).

Our practice is to make all comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home addresses from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. In some circumstances, we would withhold also from the rulemaking record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish for us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from

individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Authority

The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533 (f).

Dated: February 19, 2004.

J. Mitch King,

*Deputy Regional Director, Southeast Region,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Draft Karst Survey Guidance and Scientific Permit Requirements for Conducting Presence/Absence Surveys for Endangered Karst Invertebrates in Central Texas

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is making available for public comment its draft survey guidance for karst species and section 10(a)(1)(A) scientific permit requirements for conducting presence/absence surveys for endangered karst invertebrates in central Texas.

This document outlines methods to be used, information to be included in final reports, and minimum qualifications for personnel conducting presence/absence surveys for federally-listed endangered, terrestrial, karst invertebrate species (herein referred to as "karst invertebrates") in Travis, Williamson, and Bexar counties, Texas, under a section 10(a)(1)(A) permit pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended. This document also outlines the Service's recommendations for detecting karst features that may contain suitable habitat for endangered karst invertebrates, as a first step in determining presence/absence. The objective of this document is to identify survey methods that will produce sound scientific information upon which to base decisions and actions for the conservation of these endangered species. Using consistent survey methodology will also allow for greater comparison and analysis of results, and thereby increase our understanding of these species and their habitat requirements.

DATES: To ensure consideration, written comments must be received on or before June 1, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and information should be submitted to Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758; facsimile (512) 490-0974.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758 or (512) 490-0057.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sixteen endangered karst invertebrates are known to occur in Travis, Williamson, and Bexar counties, Texas. These karst invertebrates are only capable of surviving in caves or karstic rock. Karst ecosystems receive nutrients from the surface community in the form of leaf litter and other organic debris that are washed in or fall into the cave, from tree and other vascular plant roots, and/or through the feces, eggs, or dead bodies of animals. In addition to providing nutrients to the karst ecosystem, the plant community also filters contaminants and buffers against changes in temperature and humidity. The major threats to karst invertebrates include the loss of habitat due to urbanization, contamination, predation by and competition with non-native fire ants, and vandalism.

On February 27, 2003 we provided a notice (68 FR 9094-9095) of our intention to do the following:

(1) With respect to survey guidance for use in determining the presence of karst features that may contain potential habitat for endangered karst invertebrates in central Texas, we committed to work with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and other partners to update, as needed, the existing TCEQ guidance on karst feature surveys.

(2) With respect to survey guidance for endangered karst invertebrates, we committed to request a panel of experts to review all new information regarding how to survey for karst invertebrates. We also committed to using the panel's recommendations to modify the section 10(a)(1)(A) permitting requirements and to develop karst invertebrate survey guidance.

This guidance was initially intended to be made available for public review and comment through a Notice of Availability to be published in the **Federal Register** by December 30, 2003.

On January 16, 2004, we provided notice (69 FR 2617) of our intention to publish this draft guidance for public review by March 31, 2004.

We submitted both the draft karst feature and karst invertebrate survey guidance documents (May 23, 2002, versions) to a panel of 48 individuals with expertise in karst geology and/or biology and/or experience conducting karst feature and karst invertebrate surveys for review and comment. In addition to providing written comments, members of the panel met with us on September 8, 2003, and provided their individual feedback on both survey guidance documents and the suitability of TCEQ's guidance for surveying for karst features that may contain suitable habitat for endangered karst invertebrates.

Based on individual panel member's comments and recommendations, the Service has merged the two draft karst survey guidance documents into a single document and intends to use this document to modify the section 10(a)(1)(A) permitting requirements for conducting presence/absence surveys for endangered karst invertebrates in central Texas. This revised document, USFWS Section 10(a)(1)(A) Scientific Permit Requirements for Conducting Presence/Absence Surveys for Endangered Karst Invertebrates in Central Texas (February 18, 2004), outlines (1) Methods to be used to conduct surveys for endangered karst invertebrates, (2) information to be included in final reports, and (3) the minimum qualifications for personnel conducting presence/absence surveys for endangered karst invertebrates under a section 10(a)(1)(A) permit. Since one of the first steps in determining presence/absence of endangered karst invertebrates is to locate karst features that may have suitable habitat, this document also outlines the Service's recommendations for conducting surveys for karst features that may contain suitable habitat for endangered karst invertebrates. TCEQ's Instructions to Geologists for Geologic Assessments (GA) as revised May 1, 2002, are recommended to conduct initial karst feature surveys.

This revised document was submitted to panel members for additional review and comment and panel member's comments and recommendations were incorporated into the current version of the document, which is available for public comment.

Authority: We provide this notice pursuant to section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act and pursuant to implementing