

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is preparing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) intends to gather information necessary for preparing the CCP and EA 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. The Service is furnishing this notice in compliance with Service planning policy, to (1) advise other Federal and State agencies and the public of our intention to conduct detailed planning on this refuge; and, (2) obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to include in the environmental document.

The Service will involve the public through open houses, informational and technical meetings, and written comments. Special mailings, newspaper articles, and announcements will provide information about opportunities for public involvement in the planning process.

DATES: We are now planning public scoping meetings for December 2005 in Warsaw, Port Royal and Richmond, Virginia. We will announce their locations, dates and times at least 2 weeks in advance, in special mailings and newspaper notices and through personal contacts.

ADDRESSES: Rappahannock River Valley NWR, 336 Wilna Road, P.O. Box 1030, Warsaw, Virginia 22572-1030, at 804-333-1470 (telephone); 804-333-3396 (FAX), Web site <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/va/rap.htm>.

To Obtain Further Information, Ask Questions, or Comment Contact: Nancy McGarigal, Refuge Planner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, Massachusetts 01035; 413-253-8562 (telephone); 413-253-8468 (FAX); northeastplanning@fws.gov (electronic mail).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under 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), the Service is to manage all lands in the National Wildlife Refuge System in accordance with an approved comprehensive conservation plan. The plan guides management decisions and identifies refuge goals, long-range objectives, and strategies for achieving refuge purposes over a 15-year period.

The planning process will cover many elements, including wildlife and habitat management, visitor and recreational activities, cultural resource protection, and facilities and infrastructure. Compatibility determinations will be completed for all applicable refuge uses. We will also conduct a wilderness review and a wild and scenic rivers evaluation to determine whether any areas on the refuge qualify for those Federal designations.

Public input into the planning process is essential. The comments we receive will help identify key issues and develop refuge goals and objectives for managing refuge resources and visitors. Additional opportunities for public participation will arise throughout the planning process, which we expect to complete in 2007. Data collection has already begun to compile up-to-date information on refuge resources and serve as a foundation for science-based resource decisions. We will prepare the environmental assessment in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality procedures for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4370d).

The 7,379-acre Rappahannock River Valley NWR was established in 1996 to conserve and protect fish and wildlife resources, including endangered and threatened species and wetlands. Its approved acquisition boundary includes parts of Lancaster, Middlesex, Richmond, Essex, Caroline, Westmoreland, and King George counties in Virginia. The Rappahannock River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, bisects that boundary. Refuge habitats include freshwater tidal marsh, forested swamp, upland deciduous forest, mixed pine forest, and managed grassland.

Refuge visitors engage in wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, hunting, and fishing. The refuge headquarters is located in Warsaw, Virginia.

Dated: October 5, 2005.

Richard O. Bennett,

Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hadley, Massachusetts.

[FR Doc. 05-21693 Filed 10-31-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Endangered and Threatened Species Permit Applications

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of application.

SUMMARY: The following applicant has applied for a permit to conduct certain activities with endangered species. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.*).

DATES: Written data or comments must be received on or before December 1, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Send written data or comments to the Regional Director (Attention: Peter Fasbender), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111-4056.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Peter Fasbender, (612) 713-5343.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Permit Number: TE113009.

Applicant: Steven Ahlstedt, Norris, Tennessee.

The applicant requests a permit amendment to take the white catpaw (*Epioblasma obliquata perobliqua*) and purple catpaw (*E. o. obliquata*) throughout Indiana and Ohio. The scientific research is aimed at enhancement of survival of the species in the wild.

Dated: October 12, 2005.

Wendi Weber,

Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 3, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

[FR Doc. 05-21694 Filed 10-31-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability, Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, on behalf of the Department of the Interior, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, as Natural Resource Trustees, announces the release for public review of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) for the Massachusetts Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program. The Draft PEA presents a restoration program featuring a mix of restoration approaches, including aquatic restoration, wildlife/terrestrial restoration, enhancement of recreational opportunities, and education/outreach

initiatives. A mix of restoration approaches will allow the greatest degree of flexibility in the project selection process and will ensure the greatest environmental and socioeconomic benefits. This Draft PEA compares the preferred, blended restoration alternative with alternatives that focus on a single restoration approach, as well as with a no-action alternative in which no restoration is implemented with natural resource damages (NRD) funds. This Draft PEA is part of the restoration planning and implementation phase of the General Electric/Housatonic River Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) case.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before December 1, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Requests for copies of the Draft PEA may be made to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attention: Veronica Varela, New England Field Office, 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300, Concord, New Hampshire 03301.

Written comments or materials regarding the Draft PEA should be sent to the same address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Veronica Varela, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New England Field Office, 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300, Concord, New Hampshire 03301. Interested parties may also call 603-223-2541 or e-mail Veronica_Varela@fws.gov for further information.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: During the period between the late 1930s and the late 1970s, the General Electric Company (GE) facility in Pittsfield, Massachusetts released polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), via the wastewater and storm systems associated with the facility, to the Housatonic River and Silver Lake in Pittsfield. In addition, a number of former oxbows were straightened and filled to alleviate flooding, and subsequently have been found to contain PCB-contaminated soils and fill. The release of PCBs adversely affected natural resources including fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and their habitats, and impacted natural resource-based recreational uses.

On October 7, 1999, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Department of Justice; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs; the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and the Office of the Attorney General; the U.S. Department of the Interior; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration; the City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts; the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority; and GE reached a comprehensive agreement concerning the cleanup of GE's Pittsfield facility, certain off-site properties, and the Housatonic River, and concerning compensation for NRD. The comprehensive agreement was lodged with the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts, Springfield, Massachusetts, and approved on October 27, 2000. Under this agreement, GE provided \$15.5 million for compensatory restoration activities. Of this amount, \$7.75 million (plus interest) will be managed to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of injured natural resources and/or the services they provide to compensate for natural resources adversely affected by PCBs in the Massachusetts watershed of the Housatonic River. The other \$7.75 million will be managed under a separate program for compensatory restoration in the Connecticut watershed of the Housatonic River. This Draft PEA examines alternatives for implementing a compensatory restoration program in the Massachusetts portion of the Housatonic River watershed; implementation alternatives in the Connecticut portion will be examined in a later document.

The proposed Preferred Alternative in the Draft PEA is a restoration program featuring a mix of restoration approaches, including aquatic restoration, wildlife/terrestrial restoration, enhancement of recreational opportunities, and education/outreach initiatives. A mix of restoration approaches will allow the greatest degree of flexibility in the project selection process and will ensure the greatest environmental and socioeconomic benefits. This Draft PEA compares the preferred, blended restoration alternative with alternatives that focus on a single restoration approach, as well as with a no-action alternative in which no restoration is implemented with NRD funds.

Interested members of the public are invited to review and comment on the Draft PEA. Copies of the Draft PEA are available for review at public libraries in the towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, Sheffield, and Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Additionally, the Draft PEA will be available for review at the following Web site: <http://www.mahousatonicrestoration.org>. Written comments will be considered and addressed in the Final PEA as part of the restoration planning process.

Author: The primary author of this notice is Veronica Varela, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New England Field Office, 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300, Concord, New Hampshire 03301.

Authority: The authorities for this action are the NRDAR provisions under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 9601 *et seq.*) and the Clean Water Act (CWA, 33 U.S.C. 1251-1376), which allow natural resource trustees to bring claims against responsible parties to recover monies and take action to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of natural resources that have been injured by hazardous substances; the CERCLA NRDA regulations (43 CFR Part 11) that guide the allocation and expenditure of NRD recoveries for restoration activities; and the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347).

Dated: October 18, 2005.

Richard O. Bennett,

Acting Regional Director, Region 5, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, DOI Authorized Official.

[FR Doc. 05-21692 Filed 10-31-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WO-310-06-1310-GEOT]

Implementation of the Geothermal Sections of the Energy Policy Act of 2005; Public Meeting

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Public Meeting.

SUMMARY: A public meeting is being held by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service to solicit suggestions from the public and industry on how to best implement the geothermal provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

DATES: The meeting date is scheduled as follows: November 17, 2005; 1-4 p.m., local time.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the following location: Reno Hilton Hotel, 2500 East 2nd Street, Reno, Nevada 89595.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Bebout, National Geothermal Program Lead for the BLM at (202) 557-3375 or Bob Fujimoto, Geothermal Lead for the U.S. Forest Service at (503) 808-2430.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting will begin with an overview of the geothermal provisions of the Energy Policy Act. Participants who request to speak will be given a set amount of time to provide suggestions that address