

effects of urban and agricultural development over the past 100 years, much of the remaining scrub-jay habitat is now relatively small and isolated. What remains is largely degraded due to the exclusion of fire which is needed to maintain xeric uplands in conditions suitable for scrub-jays.

Recent scrub-jay surveys in urban areas of southwest Florida documented that the subject residential parcel is part of the territory of one family of birds that is composed of seven individuals. A one-day survey undertaken by the Applicant supported these findings when two juvenile birds were documented within the subject residential parcel. The extent of the territory and its relative importance to the resident family of scrub-jays has not been determined. However, the residential parcel is composed of native xeric vegetation of sufficient quality to provide food resources and nesting and sheltering habitat for scrub-jays.

Scrub-jays using the subject residential lot and adjacent properties are part of a larger complex of scrub-jays located in urban settings in coastal areas of southern Sarasota County and western Charlotte County. Thirteen scrub-jay families are known to occupy urban areas within about three miles of the subject residential parcel. More than 100 scrub-jay families may still exist within the metapopulation of birds found in the matrix of urban and natural areas of coastal Sarasota and Charlotte counties. However, scrub-jays in urban areas are particularly vulnerable and typically do not successfully produce young that survive to adulthood. Persistent urban growth in this area will likely result in further reductions in the amount of suitable habitat for scrub-jays. Increasing urban pressures are also likely to result in the continued degradation of scrub-jay habitat as fire exclusion due to safety concerns slowly results in vegetative overgrowth. The continued survival of a large scrub-jay population in southwest Florida will be dependent on the protection and management of large preserves.

Construction of the Project's infrastructure and facilities will result in harm to scrub-jays, incidental to the carrying out of these otherwise lawful activities. Habitat alteration associated with the proposed residential construction will reduce the availability of feeding, nesting, and sheltering habitat of resident scrub-jays.

The Applicant proposes to minimize take of scrub-jays by reducing disturbance to occupied habitat. Approximately 25 percent (or 0.13 acres) of occupied habitat on the residential lot will not be disturbed

during land clearing and construction activities. In addition, the Applicant proposes to remove up to four pine trees on the residential lot. Removal of these trees will eliminate perch sites for predatory birds and may reduce the risk that raptors will kill scrub-jays.

As earlier stated, the Service has determined that the HCP qualifies as a Categorical-Excluded, "low-effect" HCP as defined by Service's Habitat Conservation Planning Handbook (November 1996). Low-effect HCPs are those involving: (1) minor or negligible effects on federally listed and candidate species and their habitats, and (2) minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources. The Applicant's HCP qualifies for the following reasons:

1. Approval of the HCP would result in minor or negligible effects on the Florida scrub-jay. The Service does not anticipate significant direct or cumulative effects on this species resulting from the construction of the Project.

2. Approval of the HCP would not have adverse effect on known geographic, historic or cultural sites, or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

3. Approval of the HCP would not result in any significant adverse effects on public health or safety.

4. The project does not require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, nor does it threaten to violate a Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

5. Approval of the HCP would not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

The Service has therefore determined that approval of the HCP qualifies as a categorical exclusion under NEPA, as provided by the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM 2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1). No further NEPA determination will therefore be prepared.

The Service will evaluate the HCP and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of Section 10(a) of the Act. If it is determined that those requirements are met, an ITP will be issued for the incidental take of one family of Florida scrub-jay. The Service will also evaluate whether the issuance of a Section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with Section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service Section 7 consultation.

The results of the consultation, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP.

Dated: September 25, 2000.

**H. Dale Hall,**

*Acting Regional Director.*

[FR Doc. 00-25145 Filed 9-29-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

#### Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for Road Improvement in Perry County, Mississippi

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

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Perry County Board of Supervisors (Applicant) has made an application for an incidental take permit (ITP) from the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), as amended. The proposed permit would allow take of the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), a federally listed threatened species, incidental to surfacing a 0.25-mile section of dirt road with gravel. The permit would authorize take of up to two gopher tortoises. As described in the Applicant's habitat conservation plan (HCP), impacts will be minimized and mitigated by relocating the tortoises from their burrows along the edge of the road to adjacent burrows within the tortoise colony. The habitat conservation plan is further described in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below. The Service has determined that the Applicant's proposal, including the proposed mitigation and minimization measures, will individually and cumulatively have a minor or negligible effect on the species covered in the HCP. Therefore, the ITP is a "low effect" project and would qualify as a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as provided by the Department of Interior Manual (516 DM2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1).

The Service announces the availability of the HCP for the incidental take application. Copies of the HCP may be obtained by making a request to the Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**). Requests must be in writing to be processed. This notice is provided pursuant to Section 10 of the

Endangered Species Act and NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

The Service specifically requests information, views, and opinions from the public via this Notice on the Federal action. Further, the Service specifically solicits information regarding the adequacy of the HCP as measured against the Service's Permit issuance criteria found in 50 CFR Parts 13 and 17.

We specifically request information, views, and opinions from the public via this Notice on the Federal action. Further, we specifically solicit information regarding the adequacy of the Plan as measured against the Service's Permit issuance criteria found in 50 CFR Parts 13 and 17.

If you wish to comment, you may submit comments by any one of several methods. Please reference permit number TE026748-0 in such comments. You may mail comments to the Service's Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**). You may also comment via the internet to "david\_dell@fws.gov". Please submit comments over the internet as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include your name and return address in your internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the Service that we have received your internet message, contact us directly at either telephone number listed below (see **FURTHER INFORMATION**). Finally, you may hand deliver comments to either Service office listed below (see **ADDRESSES**). Our practice is to make 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 address from the administrative record. We will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law. There may also be other circumstances in which we would withhold from the administrative record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. We will not; however, 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.

**DATES:** Written comments on the permit application and HCP should be sent to the Service's Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**) and should be received on or before November 1, 2000

**ADDRESSES:** Persons wishing to review the application, HCP, and supporting documentation may obtain a copy by writing the Service's Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia. Documents will also be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours at the Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta, Georgia 30345 (Attn: Endangered Species Permits), or Jackson Field Office, 6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Jackson, Mississippi, 39213 (Attn: Will McDearman). Written data or comments concerning the application, HCP, or supporting documents should be submitted to the Regional Office. Requests for the documentation must be in writing to be processed. Please reference permit number TE026748-0 in requests for the documents discussed herein.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. David Dell, Regional Permit Coordinator, (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone: 404/679-7313; or Mr. Will McDearman, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Jackson Field Office, (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone 601/321-1124.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The gopher tortoise was listed in 1987 as a threatened species in the western part of its geographic range, west of the Tombigbee and Mobile Rivers in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The gopher tortoise is a burrowing animal that historically inhabited fire-maintained longleaf pine communities on moderately well drained to xeric soils in the Coastal Plain. These longleaf pine communities consisted of relatively open forests, without a closed overstory, with a well developed herbaceous plant layer of grasses and forbs. About 80% of the original habitat for gopher tortoises was lost at the time the species was listed due to the conversion to urban and agricultural land use. On remaining forests, management practices converting longleaf pine to densely planted pine stands for pulpwood production, fire exclusion, and infrequently prescribed fire further reduced the open forest with grasses and forbs tortoises need for burrowing, nesting, and feeding. Over 22,000 gopher tortoises have been estimated to occur in the listed range. The tortoise, however, is a long-lived animal with low reproductive rates. Remaining populations, though relatively widespread, are individually small, fragmented, and usually in poor habitat without adequate reproduction for a self-sustaining viable population.

Under section 9 of the Act and its implementing regulations, "taking" of

endangered and threatened wildlife is prohibited. However, the Service, under limited circumstances, may issue permits to take such wildlife if the taking is incidental to and not the purpose of otherwise lawful activities. The Applicant has prepared an HCP as required for the incidental take permit application. The Applicant intends to open a dead-end road by extending it about 0.25 mile to another intersection. The extension is over an existing dirt road that will be surfaced with gravel. Two gopher tortoise burrows are located on the edge of the dirt road. Surveys by the Applicant and Service found that one of these burrows was inhabited by a tortoise. The operation of heavy equipment for surfacing the road can collapse these burrows, entombing and killing or injuring tortoises. The biological goal of the plan is to avoid such harm or injury to these tortoises and to retaining them within the existing the gopher tortoise colony. To avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts, the Applicant will capture and relocate up to two tortoises in these two burrows to adjacent unoccupied but suitable burrows located about 200 feet from the road. The tortoises at the edge of the road are part of a small colony of five tortoises inhabiting privately owned property adjoining the west side of the road. Thus, tortoises will be moved to other burrows within their existing colony and population. The permit will authorize incidental take associated with the capture and relocation of two tortoises. Upon relocation, the burrows on the road edge will be collapsed or blocked to prevent habitation from any tortoises. To monitor the biological effect of the HCP, the Applicant will track relocated tortoises using radio-telemetry until the over-wintering period of 2000.

As earlier stated, the Service has determined that the HCP qualifies as a Categorically-Excluded, "low-effect" HCP as defined by the Service's Habitat Conservation Planning Handbook. Low-effect HCPs are those involving: (1) Minor or negligible effects on federally listed and candidate species and their habitats, and (2) minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources. The Applicant's HCP qualifies for the following reasons:

1. Approval of the HCP would result in minor or negligible effects on the gopher tortoise and its habitat. We do not anticipate significant direct or cumulative effects on this species as a result of this project.

2. Approval of the HCP would not have adverse effects on known geographic, historic or cultural sites, or

involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

3. Approval of the HCP would not result in any significant adverse effects on public health or safety.

4. The project does not require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, nor does it threaten to violate a Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for protection of the environment.

5. Approval of the HCP would not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

The Service has therefore determined that approval of the HCP qualifies as a categorical exclusion under NEPA, as provided by the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM 2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1). No further NEPA determination will therefore be prepared.

The Service will evaluate the HCP and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of Section 10(a) of the Act. If it is determined that those requirements are met, an ITP will be issued for the incidental take of one family of Florida scrub-jay. The Service will also evaluate whether the issuance of a Section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with Section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service Section 7 consultation. The results of the consultation, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP.

Dated: September 25, 2000.

**H. Dale Hall,**

*Acting Regional Director.*

[FR Doc. 00-25146 Filed 9-29-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

#### Notice of Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. I), this notice announces a meeting of the Klamath Fishery Management Council, established under the authority of the Klamath River Basin Fishery Resources Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 460ss *et seq.*). The Klamath

Fishery Management Council makes recommendations to agencies that regulate harvest of anadromous fish in the Klamath River Basin. The objective of this meeting is to review the progress of the 2000 Klamath chinook salmon fishing season and plan for fishery management in 2001. The meeting is open to the public.

**DATES:** The Klamath Fishery Management Council will meet from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 25, 2000; from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 26, 2000; and from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Friday, October 27, 2000.

**Place:** The meeting will be held at the Yreka Fish and Wildlife Office, 1829 South Oregon Street, Yreka, California.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Ronald A. Iverson, Project Leader, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1829 South Oregon Street, Yreka, California 96097, telephone (530) 842-5763.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** For background information on the Klamath Council, please refer to the notice of their initial meeting that appeared in the **Federal Register** on July 8, 1987 (52 FR 25639).

Dated: September 25, 2000.

**Elizabeth H. Stevens.**

*California/Nevada Operations Manager, California/Nevada Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

[FR Doc. 00-25147 Filed 9-29-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Geological Survey

#### Request for Public Comments on Information Collection Submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for Review Under the Paperwork Reduction Act

A request extending the information collection described has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for approval under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35). Copies of the proposed collection instrument may be obtained by contacting the USGS clearance officer at the phone number listed below. OMB has up to 60 days to approve or disapprove the information collection, but may respond after 30 days; therefore, public comments should be submitted to OMB within 30 days in order to assure their maximum consideration. Comments and suggestions on the proposal should be made directly to the Desk Officer for the Interior Department, Office of

Regulatory Affairs, OMB, Washington, DC 20503 and to the USGS Clearance Officer, U.S. Geological Survey, 807 National Center, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, Virginia, 20192. Telephone 703-648-7313.

Specific public comments are requested as to:

1. Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions on the USGS, including whether the information will have practical utility;
2. The accuracy of the USGS estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;
3. The quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
4. How to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other forms of information technology.

**Title:** National Atlas of the United States of America.

**Current OMB approval number:** 1028-0057.

**Abstract:** Potential customers of electronic national atlas products will be asked questions that provide (1) potential uses of these products; (2) type of personal computer used; (3) current method of acquiring atlas-type information; (4) demographic information; and (5) personal expectations from the products. Survey questionnaires will be distributed by mail in a return postage-paid format and via the World Wide Web. Focus groups will be held at various locations across the United States and could include prototype product testing. Software usability studies will be conducted at various locations and will result in the development of products that are easier to use. Customer information gathered from the questionnaires, focus groups, and usability studies will be used to evaluate the National Atlas of the United States products and to make development adjustments based on customer responses. The proposed collection is limited in scope to the National Atlas products and the capability of the products to meet customer needs. The USGS intends to develop a cooperative research and development agreement with private industry to assist in product development and to provide an additional avenue for product distribution.

**Bureau form number:** None.

**Frequency:** An estimated 2-3 surveys, and 2-5 focus groups studies per year to evaluate potential customer segments and reactions.