

The 5-year review is an assessment of the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of the review that has become available since the species' original listing or its most recent status or 5-year review.

On July 7, 2005, we announced in a **Federal Register** notice (70 FR 39327) that we are commencing a 5-year review of the 31 species listed in Table 1 of this notice. The public comment period for the July 7, 2005, notice ended September 6, 2005.

The 5-year reviews for these species will assess: (a) Whether new information suggests that the species' populations are increasing, declining, or stable; (b) whether existing threats are increasing, the same, reduced, or eliminated; (c) if there are any new threats; and (d) if new information or analysis calls into question any of the conclusions in the original listing determinations as to the species' status. The review will also apply this new information to consideration of the appropriate application of the Policy Regarding the Recognition of Distinct Vertebrate Population Segments (61 FR 4722) to the listed entity, if applicable.

If there is no new information concerning the species in Table 1, no changes will be made to their classifications. However, if we find that there is new information indicating a change in classification is warranted for any of these species, we may propose a new rule that could either: (a) Reclassify the species from endangered to threatened; (b) reclassify the species from threatened to endangered or (c) remove the species from the List.

Public Solicitation of New Information

We are publishing this second request for any new information relating to the current status of the species listed in Table 1 that has become available since their original listings. In particular, we are seeking information such as:

A. Species biology including, but not limited to, population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics, and genetics;

B. Habitat conditions including, but not limited to, amount, distribution, and suitability;

C. Conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species;

D. Threat status and trends; and

E. Other new information, data, or corrections including, but not limited to, taxonomic or nomenclatural changes, or improved analytical methods.

Information submitted should be supported by documentation such as maps, bibliographic references, methods used to gather and analyze the data,

and/or copies of any pertinent publications, reports, or letters by knowledgeable sources. Information submitted between the close of the first comment period on September 6, 2005, and today's date shall be considered in the reviews, along with information submitted within the timeframes established by the July 7, 2005, notice and this notice.

Authority: This document is published under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: October 27, 2005.

Paul Henson,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

AGENCY: Notice of availability of the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge in Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana.

SUMMARY: The Fish and Wildlife Service announces that a Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge is available for distribution. The plan was prepared pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and describes how the refuge will be managed for the next 15 years. The compatibility determinations for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation, all-terrain vehicle use, trapping of selected furbearers, cooperative farming, forest management, and resource research studies, are also available within the plan.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the plan may be obtained by writing to the Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge, 401 Island Road, Marksville, Louisiana 71351. The plan may also be accessed and downloaded from the Service's Web site <http://southeast.fws.gov/planning/>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge is located in north Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana, about 15 miles northeast of the city of Marksville and 30 miles southeast of the city of Alexandria. The refuge covers a total of 17,525 acres

within the 38,000-acre acquisition boundary and lies approximately 8 miles northwest of where the Red River empties into the Atchafalaya River. This region is part of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. The refuge consists of a complex of forested wetlands, shrub wetland habitats, recently reforested areas, agricultural lands, moist-soil areas, open waters, and dirt access roads and trails. Annually, more than 10,000 visitors participate in refuge activities.

The availability of the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for a 45-day public review and comment period was announced in the **Federal Register** on April 5, 2005, volume 70, number 64. The plan and environmental assessment identified and evaluated four alternatives for managing the refuge over the next 15 years. Alternative 1, the "no action" alternative, would have continued current management of the refuge and all lands within the approved 38,000-acre acquisition boundary would be purchased. Under Alternative 2, the "preferred alternative," 38,000 acres of refuge lands would be protected, maintained, and enhanced by adding more staff, equipment, and facilities in order to restore and manage the refuge's forest, wetland, and moist-soil habitats, and hydrology in support of wildlife, especially waterfowl, neotropical migratory birds, and Louisiana black bears. Alternative 3 would add more staff, equipment, and facilities in order to maximize bottomland hardwood forest restoration in support of migratory birds and other wildlife.

Under this alternative, 17,525 acres of refuge lands would be protected, maintained, restored, and enhanced for resident wildlife, waterfowl, neotropical migratory birds, and threatened and endangered species. Additionally, the acquisition boundary would be expanded (77,000 acres) to create forested linkages with the State of Louisiana's Spring Bayou and Grassy Lake wildlife management areas. Alternative 4 would add more staff, equipment, and facilities in order to restore the refuge's wetland hydrology in support of migratory birds, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds.

Based on the environmental assessment and the comments received, the Service adopted Alternative 2 as its preferred alternative. This alternative was considered to be the most effective for meeting the purposes of the refuge by conserving wetlands and reducing forest fragmentation by identifying lands of conservation priority and working with partners to contribute to the 100,000-acre forest block objective

for the Red River/Three Rivers Source Population Objective Area. Alternative 2 best achieves national, ecosystem, and refuge-specific goals and objectives and positively addresses significant issues and concerns expressed by the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tina Chouinard, Natural Resource Planner, Central Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex, telephone: (318) 253-4238; fax: (318) 253-7139; e-mail: tina_chouinard@fws.gov; or by writing to the Natural Resource Planner at the address in the **ADDRESSES** section.

Authority: This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105-57.

Dated: July 18, 2005.

Cynthia K. Dohner,
Acting Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Adams and Wilkinson Counties, Mississippi.

SUMMARY: This notice announces that a Draft Comprehensive conservation Plan and environmental Assessment for St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge is available for review and comment. The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, requires the Service to develop a comprehensive conservation plan for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose in developing a comprehensive conservation plan is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, the plan identifies wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife

photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

DATES: A meeting will be held to present the plan to the public. Mailings, newspaper articles, and posters will be the avenues to inform the public of the date and time for the meeting. Individuals wishing to comment on the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge should do so within 45 days following the date of this notice.

ADDRESSES: Requests for copies of the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment should be addressed to St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge, 76 Pintail Lane, Natchez, Mississippi 39120; Telephone 601/442-6696. The plan and environmental assessment may also be accessed and downloaded from the Service's Internet Web site <http://southeast.fws.gov/planning/>. Comments on the draft plan may be submitted to the above address or via electronic mail to mike_dawson@fws.gov. Please include your name and return address in your Internet message. 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 addresses from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. Anonymous comments will not be considered.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Significant issues addressed in the draft plan include: Threatened and endangered species; waterfowl management; neotropical migratory birds; bottomland hardwood restoration; agriculture; visitor services (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation); funding and staffing; cultural resources; and land acquisition.

The Service developed four alternatives for managing the refuge and chose Alternative D as the preferred alternative.

Alternatives

The Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment evaluates the four alternatives for managing the refuge over the next 15 years. These alternatives are briefly described as follows:

Alternative A. Existing refuge management and public outreach practices would be favored under this alternative. All refuge management actions would be directed towards

achieving the primary purposes including (1) preserving wintering waterfowl habitat (e.g., croplands, moist-soil management units, green-tree reservoirs, and permanent water); (2) providing production habitat for wood ducks; and (3) meeting the habitat conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, all the while contributing to other national, regional, and state goals to protect and restore habitat for shorebirds, wading birds, neotropical breeding birds, woodcock, and threatened and endangered species. Refuge management programs would continue to be developed and implemented with little baseline biological information. Active habitat management would continue to be implemented through water level manipulations, moist-soil and cropland management, and forest management designed to provide a diverse complex of habitats that meet the foraging, resting, and breeding requirements for a variety of species. A summary of the current acreages by habitat type can be found in Table 2, Chapter II, of the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Refuge staff would continue to manage existing bottomland hardwood and upland hardwood forested and reforested areas, open water and impoundments, croplands, and moist-soil units.

Land would be acquired from willing sellers within the current acquisition boundary. The refuge would continue to emphasize land exchanges of isolated refuge tracts for inholdings within the acquisition boundary.

Hunting and fishing would continue to be the major focuses of the refuge public use program, with no expansion of current opportunities. Current restrictions or prohibitions would remain. While no new trails would be developed, refuge staff would continue to maintain existing trails. Environmental education, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography would be accommodated on a case-by-case basis. Plans would continue to request funding for the construction of a refuge headquarters office/visitor contact area on the Sibley Unit and for the rehabilitation of existing facilities.

Alternative B. Under this alternative, the emphasis would be on improving refuge resources for wildlife, while still maintaining those public use opportunities that presently exist. Primary management efforts would focus on restoring and enhancing habitats and associated plant communities for the benefit of migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and other federal trust species.