

Dated: June 30, 2006.

Michael S. Moore,

Senior Permit Biologist, Branch of Permits,
Division of Management Authority.

[FR Doc. E6-11960 Filed 7-25-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Emergency Exemption: Issuance of Permit for Endangered Species

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of emergency issuance of permit for endangered species.

SUMMARY: The following permit was issued.

ADDRESSES: Documents and other information submitted for this application are available for review, subject to the requirements of the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act, by any party who submits a written request for a copy of such documents to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 700, Arlington, Virginia 22203, telephone 703/358-2104 or fax 703/358-2281.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Division of Management Authority, telephone 703/358-2104.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On July 19, 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) issued a permit (PRT-125946) to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS/Bronx Zoo), New York, New York, to import an orphaned male snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) from Pakistan for the purpose of enhancement of the survival of the species. Authorization of this action is under Section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The Service determined that an emergency affecting the health and life of the snow leopard existed, and that no reasonable alternative was available to the applicant for the following reasons.

The WCS requested a permit to import a male snow leopard from Pakistan. The animal, born in June 2005, was orphaned at approximately three weeks of age when a farmer killed his mother in self-defense. The animal was turned over to the Pakistani Northern Areas Forest Department. Prior to the earthquake in October 2005, the Government of Pakistan intended to keep the animal in Pakistan. However, after the earthquake, all available resources were dedicated to earthquake relief; the required resources needed to

house and care for the orphaned snow leopard were no longer available.

The Government of Pakistan, after determining that it could not care for the animal, requested assistance from the WCS, which has a presence in Pakistan. Since the animal was removed from the wild at such a young age, it is highly unlikely that it could ever be reintroduced to the wild. The snow leopard is currently being housed in a facility that is inadequate for the proper care of the animal. The WCS, through its facility, the Bronx Zoo, has extensive experience with both wild and captive snow leopards. The facilities at the Bronx Zoo have well-trained staff and the resources necessary to maintain this animal.

The WCS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Pakistan that outlined certain conditions and arrangements in regards to the import of this animal. In exchange for importing the animal, the WCS will provide technical support for and assist in raising funds for a wild foundling care facility in Northern Areas, Pakistan, that will have the particular focus on care and management of foundling snow leopards. In addition, the Government of Pakistan will retain ownership of the snow leopard and WCS agrees to return the animal to Pakistan when so requested.

Therefore, notice is hereby given that on the date above, as authorized by the provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the Fish and Wildlife Service issued the requested permit subject to certain conditions set forth therein. As required by the ESA, the application requesting this import was filed in good faith by the WCS. In granting authorization for this import, the Service has determined that it would not operate to the disadvantage of the endangered species since the animal had been removed from the wild for purposes other than importing it to the United States. Further, since the animal is currently housed in facilities that are inadequate for its long-term survival, housing it at the Bronx Zoo would ensure that this specimen of a highly endangered species will survive. Lastly, the granting of this permit is consistent with the purposes and policy set forth in section 2 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Dated: July 19, 2006.

Michael S. Moore,

Senior Permit Biologist, Branch of Permits,
Division of Management Authority.

[FR Doc. E6-11961 Filed 7-25-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan for the Douglas County Distinct Population Segment of the Columbian White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*)

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of the Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan for the Douglas County Distinct Population Segment of the Columbian White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*). The monitoring plan describes the methods that are being used to monitor the status of the Douglas County distinct population segment of the Columbian white-tailed deer and its habitat for a 5-year period, from 2003 (at the time of delisting) to 2008. The plan also provides a strategy for identifying and responding to unexpected population declines and habitat alteration, as well as disease outbreaks.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the post-delisting monitoring plan are available by request from the State Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office, 2600 SE. 98th Avenue, Suite 100, Portland, Oregon 97266 (telephone: 503-231-6179; fax: 503-231-6195). It is also available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/Species/ESA-Actions/CWTDPage.asp>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cat Brown, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at the above address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Columbian white-tailed deer is the westernmost representative of 30 subspecies of white-tailed deer in North and Central America (Halls 1978, p. 44; Baker 1984, p. 11). The subspecies was formerly distributed throughout the bottomlands and prairie woodlands of the lower Columbia, Willamette, and Umpqua River basins in Oregon and southern Washington (Bailey 1936, p. 90; Verts and Carraway 1998, p. 479). It currently exists in two distinct population segments (DPS), one in Douglas County, Oregon (Douglas County DPS), and the other along the lower Columbia River in Oregon and Washington (Columbia River DPS).

The Douglas County DPS was removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants on July 24, 2003 (68 FR

43647). The DPS was determined to be recovered and no longer in need of the protections of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) due to robust population growth and amelioration of threats to its survival (see July 24, 2003, 68 FR 43647). The Columbia River DPS remains listed as endangered.

Section 4(g)(1) of the ESA requires the Service to implement a system, in cooperation with the States, to monitor effectively for not less than 5 years the status of all species which have been removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants due to recovery. The purpose of post-delisting monitoring is to verify that a species delisted due to recovery remains secure from risk of extinction after it has been removed from the protections of the ESA.

To fulfill the requirement of section 4(g)(1) of the ESA, we developed a post-delisting monitoring plan for the Douglas County DPS of the Columbian white-tailed deer in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management. The monitoring plan describes the methods that are being used to monitor the status of the Douglas County DPS of the Columbian white-tailed deer and its habitat for a 5-year period, from 2003 (at the time of delisting) to 2008. The monitoring plan also provides a strategy for identifying and responding to unexpected population declines and habitat alteration, as well as disease outbreaks.

A draft of this post-delisting monitoring plan was peer reviewed by two scientific experts familiar with the biology of the Columbian white-tailed deer and was made available for public comment from November 23, 2005, through December 23, 2005 (70 FR 70876). Information submitted during the comment period has been considered in the preparation of the final post-delisting monitoring plan and is summarized in Appendix 2 of the plan.

A combined annual report for the first 3 years of post-delisting monitoring (2003, 2004, and 2005) is currently available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/Species/ESA-Actions/CWTDPage.asp>. Annual reports will continue to be compiled by the Service, in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management, until the end of the 5-year monitoring period in 2008, and will be made available at the above Internet address.

References Cited

A complete list of all references cited herein is available, upon request, from the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office (see **ADDRESSES**).

Author

The primary author of this document is Cat Brown, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office (see **ADDRESSES**).

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: July 3, 2006.

David J. Wesley,

Acting Regional Director, Region 1, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. E6-11922 Filed 7-25-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Dodge and Fond du Lac Counties, Wisconsin and Fox River NWR in Marquette County, Wisconsin

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that a Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) is available for Horicon and Fox River NWRs, Wisconsin.

The CCP was prepared 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. Goals and objectives in the CCP describe how the agency intends to manage the refuge over the next 15 years.

DATES: Comments on the Draft CCP/EA must be received on or before August 28, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Draft CCP/EA are available on compact disk or hard copy. You may obtain a copy by writing to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Conservation Planning, BHW Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111-4056, or you may access and download a copy via the planning Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/horicon>.

All comments should be addressed to Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, Attention: CCP Comment, W4279 Headquarters Road, Mayville, Wisconsin 53050, or by e-mail to r3planning@fws.gov. Comments may also be submitted through the Service's regional Web site at

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Patti Meyers, (920) 387-2658.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The EA evaluates three different approaches, or alternatives, to the future management of Horicon NWR, and two alternatives for Fox River NWR. The plan also identifies wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public.

The preferred alternative for Horicon includes increased opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation. Landscape and watershed involvement by staff and partners would be increased to reduce sedimentation rate and improve water quality in the Horicon Marsh. Habitat management efforts would seek to re-establish a braided river system flowing into the north end of the Horicon Marsh. Refuge uplands would continue to be restored and maintained as open grasslands and oak savanna, which is typical of habitat types prior to European settlement and represents a declining and rare habitat type.

The preferred alternative for Fox River would include an increased deer harvest, the initiation of a fishing program, new wildlife observation and photography opportunities, and the beginning of an environmental education and interpretation program. Habitat restoration and management would continue to perpetuate a variety of native plant and wildlife species, especially those of priority to the Service.

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 *et seq.*), requires the Service to develop a CCP for each National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose in developing a CCP 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 for conserving wildlife and their habitats, the CCP identifies wildlife-dependent recreational