

32216, or make an appointment to visit during normal business hours. If you wish to comment, you may mail or hand deliver comments to the Jacksonville Field Office, or you may e-mail comments to [paula\\_sisson@fws.gov](mailto:paula_sisson@fws.gov). For more information on reviewing documents and public comments and submitting comments, see

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Paula Sisson, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Jacksonville Field Office (see **ADDRESSES**); telephone: 904/232-2580, ext. 126.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Public Availability of Comments**

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment including your personal identifying information may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Please reference permit number TE137074-0 for Founders Ridge, LLC in all requests or comments. Please include your name and return address in your e-mail message. If you do not receive a confirmation from us that we have received your e-mail message, contact us directly at the telephone number listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

**Background**

*Florida Scrub-Jay*

The Florida scrub-jay (scrub-jay) is found exclusively in peninsular Florida and is restricted to xeric upland communities (predominately in oak-dominated scrub with open canopies) of the interior and Atlantic coast sand ridges. Increasing urban and agricultural development has resulted in habitat loss and fragmentation, which have adversely affected the distribution and numbers of scrub-jays. Remaining habitat is largely degraded due to the exclusion of fire, which is needed to maintain xeric uplands in conditions suitable for scrub-jays. The total estimated population is between 7,000 and 11,000 individuals.

*Sand Skink*

The sand skink is a small fossorial lizard that occurs on the sandy ridges of interior central Florida from Marion County south to Highlands County. Biological information regarding the sand skink is limited due to the

secretive nature of the species. Based on the reduction in quality and acreage and the rapid development of xeric upland communities, the sand skink appears to be declining throughout most of its range. By some estimates, as much as 90 percent of the scrub ecosystem has been lost to residential development and conversion to agriculture, primarily citrus groves.

**Applicant's Proposal**

The applicant is requesting take of approximately 32.18 acres of occupied Florida scrub-jay habitat and 1.85 acres of occupied sand skink habitat incidental to the construction of a residential community in Lake County, Florida (Parcel # 05-22-26-000200001200 and Parcel # 06-22-26-0001-00009000). The project encompasses about 335.4 acres and currently includes 723 single-family units and 240 multi-family townhomes, a 40-acre community park, various recreational facilities, infrastructure and landscaping. The applicant proposes to mitigate for the take of the Florida scrub-jay at a ratio of 2:1 based on Service Mitigation Guidelines. The applicant will contribute a total of \$427,242.00 to the USDA Forest Service to be utilized for scrub-jay conservation pursuant to an MOU between the Service and the Forest Service. Furthermore, to mitigate for impacts to the sand skink, the applicant has proposed to restore, manage and preserve a 4.50-acre area of occupied habitat within the boundaries of the project site. As minimization for impacts to the species, clearing activities during project construction will occur outside the scrub-jay nesting season (March 1-July 15) and the sand skink breeding season (March 1-May 15) to reduce the potential for mortality.

We have determined that the applicant's proposal, including the proposed mitigation and minimization measures, would have minor or negligible effects on the species covered in the HCP. Therefore, the ITP is a "low-effect" project and qualifies for categorical exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as provided by the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM 2 Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6 Appendix 1). This preliminary information may be revised based on our review of public comments that we receive in response to this notice. A low-effect HCP is one involving (1) minor or negligible effects on federally listed or candidate species and their habitats, and (2) minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources.

We will evaluate the HCP and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). If we determine that the application meets those requirements, we will issue the ITP for incidental take of the scrub-jay and the sand skink. We will also evaluate whether issuance of the section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service section 7 consultation. We will use the results of this consultation, in combination with the above findings, in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP.

**Authority:** We provide this notice under Section 10 of the Act and NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

Dated: October 9, 2007.

**David L. Hankla,**

*Field Supervisor, Jacksonville Field Office.*

[FR Doc. E7-20479 Filed 10-16-07; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4310-55-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge, Pike and Gibson Counties, IN**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability: Draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and draft environmental assessment (EA) for Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) for public review and comment. In this draft CCP/EA, we describe how we propose to manage the refuge for the next 15 years.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by November 30, 2007. An open house style meeting will be held during the comment period to receive comments and provide information on the draft plan. Special mailings, newspaper articles, internet postings, and other media announcements will inform people of the meetings and opportunities for written comments.

**ADDRESSES:** Send your comments or requests for more information by any of the following methods. You may also drop off comments in person at Patoka River NWR.

- *Agency Web site:* View or download a copy of the document and comment at

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

- *E-mail:* [r3planning@fws.gov](mailto:r3planning@fws.gov). Include "Patoka River Draft CCP/EA" in the subject line of the message.

- *Fax:* 812-749-3059.

- *Mail:* Refuge Manager, Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge, 510½ West Morton St., Oakland City, IN 47660.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bill McCoy, 812-749-3199.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **Introduction**

With this notice, we continue the CCP process for Patoka River NWR, which was started with the notice of intent published in 68 FR 62472 (November 4, 2003). For more about the initial process and the history of this refuge, see that notice. Patoka River NWR, located in southwestern Indiana, includes wetlands and bottomland forest along the Patoka River that provide a variety of habitat for migrant and resident wildlife. The Refuge contains some of the best wood duck production habitat in the State and is used by endangered and threatened species, including the Bald Eagle. The Refuge also includes the Cane Ridge Unit, a 464-acre satellite 24 miles west of the main Refuge that contains nesting habitat for the endangered Interior Least Tern, and the 219-acre White River Bottoms Unit nine miles north of the Refuge.

##### **The CCP Process**

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), requires us to develop a comprehensive conservation plan 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 our policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, plans identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

##### **CCP Alternatives and Our Preferred Alternative**

###### *Priority Issues*

During the public scoping process, we, other governmental partners, and

the public identified several priority issues, which include: Habitat management; water quality within the Patoka River and its tributaries; demand for additional visitor services; land acquisition within the approved Refuge boundary; and declining fish productivity within oxbow lakes. To address these issues, we developed and evaluated the following alternatives during the planning process.

###### *Alternative 1, Current Management*

Under Alternative 1, Current Management, the amount of bottomland forest and managed wetlands would increase and the amount of farmland would decrease; work would continue on improving the water quality within the Patoka River and its tributaries with the long term goal of removal of the streams from the list of impaired waters; there would be some improvements for welcoming and orienting refuge visitors; hunting and fishing opportunities would continue at present levels; wildlife observation opportunities would increase with new or improved facilities at three locations; there would be increased capacity to provide environmental education materials; land acquisition would continue both solely and in conjunction with partners; and there would be no active restoration of oxbow lakes or stream channels.

###### *Alternative 2, Passive Management and Reactive Visitor Services*

Under Alternative 2, bottomland farmland would be allowed to naturally succeed to bottomland forest; work would continue on improving the water quality within the Patoka River and its tributaries with the long term goal of removal of the streams from the list of impaired waters; there would be some improvements for welcoming and orienting refuge visitors; hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation opportunities would continue at present levels but there would be no new facilities for wildlife observation; environmental education would remain at present levels; land acquisition would continue both solely and in conjunction with partners; and there would be no active restoration of oxbow lakes or stream channels.

###### *Alternative 3 (Preferred Alternative)*

Under Alternative 3, the amount of bottomland forest and managed wetlands would increase and the amount of farmland would decrease but some would be retained as stopover habitat for migratory waterbirds; work would continue on improving the water quality within the Patoka River and its tributaries with the long term goal of

removal of the streams from the list of impaired waters; there would be some improvements for welcoming and orienting refuge visitors; hunting opportunities would continue at present levels but there would be additional facilities to enhance fishing opportunities; wildlife observation opportunities would increase with new or improved facilities at three locations with the possibility of additional improvements; there would be increased capacity to provide environmental education materials; land acquisition would continue both solely and in conjunction with partners; and information would be collected to help evaluate stream channel and oxbow lake restoration options.

##### **Public Meeting**

We will give the public an opportunity to provide comments at a public meeting. You may obtain the schedule from the addresses listed in this notice (see **ADDRESSES**). You may also submit comments anytime during the comment period.

##### **Public Availability of Comments**

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should know that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Dated: June 4, 2007.

**Charles M. Wooley,**

*Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.*

**Editorial Note:** This document was received at the Office of the Federal Register on October 12, 2007.

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## **DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

### **Bureau of Land Management**

[AA-6678-L; AK-962-1410-HY-P]

### **Alaska Native Claims Selection**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of decision approving lands for conveyance.

**SUMMARY:** As required by 43 CFR 2650.7(d), notice is hereby given that an appealable decision approving lands for