

Departments of State, Transportation, the Treasury and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Plan seeks to address invasive species in the areas of prevention, coordination, control, rapid response, monitoring, and information sharing.

DATES: All Comments must be received by close of business (6:00 p.m.—eastern time) on November 16, 2000.

ADDRESSES: National Invasive Species Council, 1951 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Suite 320, Washington, D.C. 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kelsey Passe, National Invasive Species Council Program Analyst; E-mail: Kelsey_Passe@ios.doi.gov; Phone: (202) 208-6336; Fax: (202) 208-1526.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Copies of the draft Plan can be obtained via the Council's website: www.invasivespecies.gov; by contacting the Council Staff at 202-208-6336 (phone); 202-208-1526 (Fax); or by e-mail at invasivespecies@ios.doi.gov. Comments can be submitted to the Council Staff at the fax, e-mail, or mailing address given above.

Dated: September 28, 2000.

Lori Williams,

Executive Director, National Invasive Species Council.

[FR Doc. 00-25338 Filed 9-29-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-RK-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of a Draft Recovery Plan for the Virginia Sneezeweed for Review and Comment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces the availability for public review of a draft Recovery Plan for the Virginia sneezeweed (*Helenium virginicum*).

The Virginia sneezeweed is a rare herb in the Asteraceae family found in the Shenandoah Valley of western Virginia, with a single possible disjunct population in southern Missouri. The species was listed as threatened in December 1998 due to its restricted range, small number of occurrences, and growing threats from loss and degradation of its sinkhole pond habitat. The objective of the proposed Recovery Plan is to protect *Helenium virginicum* populations and their habitat, thereby enabling the species' removal from the

Federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants. To accomplish this, the draft Plan recommends protection and management of extant populations, definitively establishing the distribution of the plant, and strategies for maintaining the genetic diversity of the species. If the Recovery Plan is successfully implemented, full recovery may be possible by 2020. The Service solicits review and comment from the public on this draft Plan.

DATES: Comments on the draft Recovery Plan must be received by November 16, 2000, to receive consideration by the Service.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the draft Recovery Plan can obtain a copy from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office, 177 Admiral Cochrane Drive, Annapolis, Maryland 21401, telephone 410/573-4537 and fax 410/269-0832. Comments should be sent to the same address, to the attention of G. Andrew Moser.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: G. Andrew Moser at 410/573-4537 (see **ADDRESSES**).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Restoring an endangered or threatened animal or plant to the point where it is again a secure, self-sustaining member of its ecosystem is a primary goal of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program. To help guide the recovery effort, the Service is working to prepare Recovery Plans for most of the listed species native to the United States. Recovery Plans describe actions considered necessary for conservation of the species, establish criteria for downlisting or delisting them, and estimate time and cost for implementing the recovery measures needed.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) requires the development of Recovery Plans for listed species unless such a Plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species. Section 4(f) of the Act, as amended in 1988, requires that public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment be provided during Recovery Plan development. The Service will consider all information presented during a public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised Recovery Plan. The Service and other Federal agencies will also take these comments into account in the course of implementing Recovery Plans.

The document submitted for review is the draft Virginia Sneezeweed (*Helenium virginicum*) Recovery Plan. The Virginia sneezeweed, a rare herb in the Asteraceae family, has been found in 30 sites in the Shenandoah Valley of western Virginia, although plants have not been seen at 4 of these sites for several years. Recent studies of a *Helenium* sp. from a sinkhole pond in southern Missouri suggest that it may represent a disjunct population of *H. virginicum*, but further research is needed to resolve this. The Virginia sneezeweed is limited to seasonally flooded sinkhole ponds, a restricted and threatened habitat type that is in some cases closely associated with agricultural and residential land uses. In addition, there is some indication that the species may have a self-incompatible breeding system, which could increase the threat of local extinctions in small populations. For these reasons, *H. virginicum* was listed as a threatened species in December 1998.

The objective of the draft Recovery Plan is to protect *Helenium virginicum* populations and their habitat, thereby enabling the species' removal from the Federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants. Delisting of *H. virginicum* may be considered when: (1) 20 self-sustaining populations and their habitats have received permanent protection across the species' Virginia range; (2) monitoring over 15 years indicates that populations in the 20 sites are viable; (3) life history and ecological requirements are understood sufficiently to allow for effective protection monitoring, and, as needed, management; (4) seeds representing the range of genetic diversity in *H. virginicum* are placed in long-term storage to provide a source of genetic material in the event of in situ extinction; and (5) if determined to be *H. virginicum*, the Missouri population and its habitat are permanently protected and seeds placed in long-term storage.

Recovery activities designed to achieve these objectives include protection, management, and monitoring of extant populations and their habitat; definitive identification of the range and distribution of the species; continuing investigations into the life history and ecology of *H. virginicum*; maintenance of seed sources for the species; and development of informational materials to create more awareness of *H. virginicum* and its status. Contingent on successful implementation of all recovery tasks, full recovery is anticipated by the year 2020.

The draft Recovery Plan is being submitted for technical and agency review. After consideration of comments received during the review period, the Plan will be submitted for final approval.

Public Comments Solicited

The Service solicits written comments on the Recovery Plan described. All comments received by the date specified above will be considered prior to approval of the Plan.

Authority: The authority for this action is Section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Dated: September 21, 2000.

J. Mitch King,

Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 00-25107 Filed 9-29-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for Construction of a Single-family Home in the Town of Venice, Sarasota County, Florida

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

Mr. Jack Grimes (Applicant) requests an incidental take permit (ITP) pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), as amended (Act). The Applicant anticipates taking about one-half acre of Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) habitat, incidental to land clearing in preparation for the construction of a single-family home and supporting infrastructure. Land clearing will take place within section 33, Township 39 South, Range 19 East, Venice, Sarasota County, Florida. The Applicant proposes to mitigate the taking of scrub-jays through contribution of \$1,000 to the Florida Scrub-jay Conservation Fund.

Land clearing and infrastructure installation will destroy about one-half acre of habitat known to be occupied by one family of scrub-jays. A more detailed description of the mitigation and minimization measures to address the effects of the Project to the scrub-jay are outlined in the Applicant's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and 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.

If you wish to comment, you may submit comments by any one of several methods. Please reference permit number TE033098-0 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 ITP 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, supporting documentation, and HCP 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 Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Post Office Box 2676, Vero Beach, Florida 32961-2676. Written data or comments concerning the application, or HCP should be submitted to the Regional Office. Please reference permit number TE033098-0 in requests for the documents discussed herein.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. David Dell, Regional HCP Coordinator, (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone: 404/679-7313, facsimile: 404/679-7081; or Mr. Mike Jennings, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, South Florida Ecosystem Office, Vero Beach, Florida (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone: 561/562-3909.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Florida scrub-jay (scrub-jay) is geographically isolated from other subspecies of scrub-jays found in Mexico and the western United States. The scrub-jay is found exclusively in peninsular Florida and is restricted to xeric uplands (predominately in oak-dominated scrub). Increasing urban and agricultural development have resulted in habitat loss and fragmentation which has adversely affected the distribution and numbers of scrub-jays. The total estimated population is between 7,000 and 11,000 individuals.

The decline in the number and distribution of scrub-jays in southwestern Florida has been exacerbated by tremendous urban growth in the past 50 years. Much of the historic commercial and residential development has occurred on the dry soils which previously supported scrub-jay habitat. Based on existing soils data, much of the historic and current scrub-jay habitat of coastal southwest Florida occurs proximal to the current shoreline and larger river basins. Much of this area of Florida was settled early because few wetlands restricted urban and agricultural development. Due to the