

The applicant requests a permit to import a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sport-hunted from the Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population, Northwest Territories, Canada for personal use.

Applicant: Patrick B. Sands, Dallas, TX, PRT-025227

The applicant requests a permit to import a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sport-hunted from the Lancaster Sound polar bear population, Northwest Territories, Canada for personal use.

Written data or comments should be submitted to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 700, Arlington, Virginia 22203 and must be received by the Director within 30 days of the date of this publication.

Documents and other information submitted with these applications 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 the following office within 30 days of the date of publication of this notice: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 700, Arlington, Virginia 22203. Phone: (703/358-2104); FAX: (703/358-2281).

Dated: April 20, 2000.

Kristen Nelson,

Chief, Branch of Permit, Office of Management Authority.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Associated Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and associated Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Section 102(2) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces that the final Environmental Impact Statement and associated Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Final CCP/EIS) for

Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, Stevens County, Washington is available for public review. Five alternatives for management of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge (Little Pend Oreille NWR, Refuge), including a no-action alternative, were considered in the planning process.

DATES: Written comments must be received at the address below by May 25, 2000. The Service will take no action on this proposal for the thirty-day period of availability, in accordance with the Council of Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 CFR 1506.10(b)(2). After a minimum of 30 days following the filing of the Final EIS, a Record of Decision to implement the proposed action will be signed.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to: Refuge Manager, Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, 1310 Bear Creek Road, Colville, Washington 99114, phone (509) 684-8384. In addition, the Final CCP/EIS is available on the internet via the Fish and Wildlife Service Region 1 Planning Home Page at <http://www.r1.fws.gov/planning/plnhome.html>. Public reading copies of the Final CCP/EIS will be available at the Refuge Headquarters and at the following libraries: Chewelah Public Library, Colville Public Library, Deer Park Public Library, Kettle Falls Public Library, Newport Public Library, and Spokane Public Library.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lisa Langelier, Refuge Manager, Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, at the above address. Printed copies have been sent to agencies, organizations, officials, and selected individuals who participated in the scoping process. A planning update summarizing the CCP/EIS has also been mailed to all individuals and organizations on the CCP mailing list. Individuals wishing Compact Discs of this CCP/EIS for review should immediately contact the above individual.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began the process of developing a management plan for the 40,198 acre Little Pend Oreille NWR in 1995. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires that each national wildlife refuge be managed under a comprehensive conservation plan. The Service has prepared a final EIS, the proposed action being to develop and implement a Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Refuge that best achieves the Refuge's purpose, vision and goals; contributes to the Refuge System mission; addresses the significant issues and relevant mandates; and is consistent with

principles of sound fish and wildlife management.

Alternative E, identified as the Agency Preferred Alternative (modified from draft), places management emphasis on restoration of habitat components along with a mix of existing uses and priority recreation activities.

Public comment has been requested, considered, and incorporated throughout the planning process in numerous ways. Public outreach included open houses, public meetings, plan work group meetings, a camping evaluation, planning update mailings, and **Federal Register** notices. Five previous notices were published in the **Federal Register** concerning this CCP/EIS (61 FR 65591, Dec. 13, 1996; 63 FR 39884, July 24, 1998; 64 FR 24168, May 5, 1999; 64 FR 36712, July 7, 1999; 64 FR 46404, Aug. 25, 1999).

During the Draft CCP/EIS comment period that occurred from May 5 to August 31, 1999, the Service received a total of 300 communications (letters, faxes, postcards, email, visits, or telephone calls) representing 327 persons. The Service also received three petitions signed by a total of 318 people. All substantive issues raised in the comments to the Draft CCP/EIS have been addressed through revisions incorporated into the Final CCP/EIS text or responses contained in Appendix J of the Final CCP/EIS.

After the review period ends for the Final CCP/EIS, comments will be analyzed and considered by the Service in the Record of Decision. All comments received from individuals on Environmental Impact Statements become part of the official public record. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations [40 CFR 1506.6(f)], and other Service and Departmental policy and procedures. When requested, the Service generally will provide comment letters with the names and addresses of the individuals who wrote the comments. However, the telephone number of the commenting individual will not be provided in response to such requests to the extent permissible by law. Additionally, public comment letters are not required to contain the commentator's name, address, or other identifying information. Such comments may be submitted anonymously to the Service.

Dated: April 18, 2000.

Richard A. Coleman,

*Acting Regional Director, Acting Region 1,
Portland, Oregon.*

[FR Doc. 00-10240 Filed 4-24-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Receipt of a Safe Harbor Application To Enhance the Propagation and Survival of the Black-Capped Vireo and the Golden-Cheeked Warbler in the Hill Country of Texas

SUMMARY: Environmental Defense, Inc. (Applicant) has applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for an enhancement of survival permit pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended. The Applicant has been assigned permit number TE-024875-0. The requested permit, which is for a period of 30 years, would authorize the Applicant to issue certificates of inclusion under a Safe Harbor agreement to private landowners who voluntarily agree to carry out habitat improvements for the black-capped vireo (*Vireo atricapillus*) and/or the golden-cheeked warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) in various counties in central Texas Hill Country.

Habitat enhancement activities could occur in any or all of the following 25 counties: Bandera, Bell, Blanco, Bosque, Brown, Burnet, Comal, Comanche, Coryell, Edwards, Gillespie, Hays, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Lampasas, Llano, Mason, Medina, Real, San Saba, Somervell, Sutton, Uvalde, and Williamson. Habitat enhancement activities could include, but are not limited to, prescribed burning, selective Ashe juniper thinning, rotational grazing, cowbird trapping, and hardwood regeneration.

The Service has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the application. A determination of jeopardy to the species or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will not be made until at least 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. This notice is provided pursuant to Section 10(c) of the Act and National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

DATES: Written comments on the application should be received by the Service on or before May 25, 2000. The application, along with any supporting documentation, is available for public

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 within the comment period to the address specified below.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the application may obtain copies by written request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Service Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758 (512/490-0057). The application will also be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours (8:00 am to 4:30 pm) at the Service's Austin Ecological Services Field Office. During the 30-day public comment period, written comments or data should be submitted to the Field Supervisor at the above address. Please refer to the application for the Texas Hill Country and reference permit number TE-024875-0 when submitting comments. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become a part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Krishna Costello at the above Austin U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Field Office.

Background

The black-capped vireo (vireo) and the golden-cheeked warbler (warbler) were listed as endangered in November 1987 and May 1990, respectively. The vireo and warbler are migratory songbirds that occupy breeding habitat in Texas from about March 1-August 31. The vireo requires early successional stage, patchy-island habitat of wooded areas with shrubs up to about 6 feet tall surrounded by grasslands. Warbler habitat is mixed, closed-canopy woodland with mature Ashe juniper and oaks.

Approximately ninety-seven percent of the land in Texas is privately owned, and a large majority of existing and restorable vireo and warbler habitat falls into this category. Therefore, the participation of private landowners in the recovery of these two species is very important.

Landowners having currently unoccupied and/or unsuitable, but restorable, habitat and thus a zero baseline condition for the Safe Harbor, would be eligible for certificates of inclusion. Exceptions to the zero baseline may also be included for certificates under very limited circumstances with concurrence from the Service. Upon completion and maintenance of the habitat

improvements for at least four breeding seasons, the landowners would be permitted to conduct any otherwise lawful activity on their property, including activities that result in the partial or total elimination of the restored habitat and the incidental taking of either of these species as a result of such habitat elimination.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 9 of the Act prohibits the "taking" of endangered species, such as the black-capped vireo and golden-cheeked warbler. However, the Service, under limited circumstances, may issue permits to take endangered wildlife species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Regulations governing permits for endangered species are at 50 CFR 17.22.

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, through its permitting provisions (50 CFR parts 13 & 17).

Geoffrey L. Haskett,

*Regional Director, Region 2, Albuquerque,
New Mexico.*

[FR Doc. 00-9357 Filed 4-24-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Availability of an Environmental Action Statement and Receipt of an Application for a Permit to Enhance the Survival of Hawaiian Goose or Nene Through a Safe Harbor Agreement for Reintroduction of the Species to Puu O Hoku Ranch, Molokai

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: Puu O Hoku Ranch, Limited has applied to the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for an enhancement of a survival permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The permit application includes a Safe Harbor Agreement (Agreement) between the Ranch, the Service, and the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources. The proposed Agreement and permit application are available for public comment.

The proposed Agreement allows for reintroduction and management of the endangered Hawaiian goose or nene (*Branta sandvicensis*) onto private land owned and managed by the Ranch on the island of Molokai. Nene historically occurred on Molokai, but do not currently exist in the wild on the island.