

solicit public involvement in the planning of a proposed cooperative program to stop the spread of rabies in the States of New York, Ohio, Texas, Vermont, and West Virginia. The notice also stated that a small portion of northeastern New Hampshire and the western counties in Pennsylvania that border Ohio could also be included in these control efforts, and discussed the possibility of APHIS-WS cooperating in smaller-scale ORV projects in the States of Florida, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, and Alabama. The March 2001 notice contained detailed information about the history of the problems with raccoon rabies in eastern States and with gray fox and coyote rabies in Texas, along with information about previous and ongoing efforts using ORV baits in programs to prevent the spread of the rabies variants or "strains" of concern.

Subsequently, on May 17, 2001, we published in the **Federal Register** (66 FR 27489, Docket No. 01-009-2) a notice in which we announced the availability, for public review and comment, of an environmental assessment (EA) that examined the potential environmental effects of the ORV programs described in our March 2001 notice. We solicited comments on the EA for 30 days ending on June 18, 2001. We received one comment by that date. The comment was from an animal protection organization and supported APHIS' efforts toward limiting or eradicating rabies in wildlife populations. The commenter did not, however, support the use of lethal monitoring methods or local depopulation as part of an ORV program.

Finally, on August 30, 2001, we published a notice in the **Federal Register** (66 FR 45835-45836, Docket No. 01-009-3) in which we advised the public of APHIS' decision and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) regarding the use of oral vaccination to control specific rabies virus strains in raccoons, gray foxes, and coyotes in the United States. That decision allows APHIS-WS to purchase and distribute ORV baits, monitor the effectiveness of ORV programs, and participate in implementing contingency plans that may involve the reduction of a limited number of local target species populations through lethal means (*i.e.*, the preferred alternative identified in the EA). The decision was based upon the final EA, which reflected our review and consideration of the comments received from the public in response to our March 2001 and May 2001 notices and information gathered during planning/scoping meetings with State

health departments, other State and local agencies, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Following the August 2001 publication of our original decision/FONSI, we determined there was a need to expand ORV programs to include the States of Kentucky and Tennessee in order to effectively stop the westward spread of raccoon rabies. Accordingly, we prepared a supplemental decision/FONSI to document the potential effects of expanding the programs. We published a notice announcing the availability of the supplemental decision/FONSI in the **Federal Register** on July 5, 2002 (67 FR 44797-44798, Docket No. 01-009-4).

Following the publication of the supplemental decision/FONSI in July 2002, we determined the need to further expand the ORV program to include the States of Georgia and Maine to effectively prevent the westward and northward spread of the rabies virus across the United States and into Canada. To facilitate planning, interagency coordination, and program management and to provide the public with our analysis of potential individual and cumulative impacts of the expanded ORV programs, we prepared a supplemental EA that addressed the inclusion of Georgia and Maine, as well as the 2002 inclusion of Kentucky and Tennessee, in the ORV program. In addition, we prepared a new decision/FONSI based on the supplemental EA that was published in the **Federal Register** on June 30, 2003 (68 FR 38669-38670, Docket No. 01-009-5).

Following the publication of the supplemental EA and decision/FONSI in June 2003, we determined the need to further expand the ORV program to portions of National Forest System lands, excluding Wilderness Areas, within several eastern States. APHIS-WS involvement was expanded to include National Forest System lands located within the States of Maine, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New Jersey. Numerous National Forest System lands are located within current and potential ORV barrier zones. To effectively combat this strain of the rabies virus, it became increasingly important to bait these large land masses. We prepared an EA, in cooperation with the USDA-Forest Service, which addressed the expansion of National Forest System lands in the ORV program. In addition, we prepared

a decision/FONSI based on the EA that was published in the **Federal Register** on February 20, 2004 (69 FR 7904-7905, Docket No. 01-009-6).

Recently, we have determined the need to further expand the ORV program to include 26 States and the District of Columbia to effectively prevent the westward and northward spread of the rabies virus across the United States and into Canada. The States where APHIS-WS involvement would be continued or expanded include: Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia. The programs' primary goals are to stop the spread of specific raccoon (eastern States), gray fox (Texas), and coyote (Texas) rabies variants or "strains" of the rabies virus.

The August 2001 EA and decision/FONSI, the July 2002 supplemental decision/FONSI, the June 2003 supplemental EA and decision/FONSI, the February 2004 EA and decision/FONSI, and this supplemental EA and decision/FONSI for expanded ORV program activities in 26 States and the District of Columbia that are the subject of this notice have been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 16th day of September 2004.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E4-2346 Filed 9-22-04; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket 04-095-1]

Big Cat Symposia; Animal Care

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of informational meetings.

SUMMARY: This is a notice to animal exhibitors, dealers, transporters, researchers, animal protection groups, industry groups, and other interested persons that we are holding a series of educational symposia to present current information on the care and maintenance of exotic big cats. This notice provides the agenda for the symposia and information on the location and dates of the final two symposia.

DATES: The next symposium will be held in Bridgeton, MO, on Wednesday, October 27, 2004. The following symposium will be held in Riverdale, MD, on Wednesday, December 8, 2004. Each symposium will be held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Registration information is provided in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this notice.

ADDRESSES: The symposia will be held at the following locations:

1. Bridgeton, MO: Crowne Plaza St. Louis Airport Hotel, 11228 Lone Eagle Drive, Bridgeton, MO 63044, (314) 291-6700.

2. Riverdale, MD: USDA Center at Riverside, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737, (301) 734-7833.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information on the agenda of the symposia, contact Dr. Barbara Kohn, Senior Staff Veterinarian, Animal Care, 4700 River Road Unit 84, Riverdale, MD 20737-1234; (301) 734-7833.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Animal Care, has been hosting a series of educational symposia on the care and maintenance of exotic big cats. The symposia are designed to provide a forum for information dissemination on various topics that are key to the successful management and handling of exotic big cats. These symposia have been held in locations across the country to facilitate attendance by most of our regulated parties that maintain these animals.

The first of these meetings was held on March 26, 2003, in Fort Worth, TX. On April 30, 2003, the second meeting was held in Las Vegas, NV. The third meeting was held November 19, 2003, in Columbus, OH, and the fourth on January 7, 2004, in Sarasota, FL. The final two symposia of this series will be held at the Crowne Plaza St. Louis Airport Hotel, 11228 Lone Eagle Drive, Bridgeton, MO, on October 27, 2004, and at the USDA Center at Riverside, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD, on December 8, 2004.

The symposia have been developed to provide current information and ideas on a variety of topics. Each symposium will, with the exception of possible

minor modifications, follow the same agenda. The symposia will start with general session, followed by breakout sessions allowing more interaction between speakers and attendees. The agenda for these symposia is:

7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.—Registration.
8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.—General Session:
Welcome.
Nutrition.
Veterinary Care and Tranquilization.
Transportation.
New Training Methods.
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.—Lunch (on own).
1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.—Concurrent Breakout Session #1:
Explaining APHIS Regulations.
Nutrition.
Training.
2:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.—Concurrent Breakout Session #2:
Transportation/Good and Not so Good.
Veterinary Care Issues.
Heat Budgets and Shade (avoiding overheating and overcooling).
4:15 p.m. to 5 p.m.—Questions and Answers and Closing.

Notice of these symposia is being sent to current Animal Welfare Act licensees with exotic big cats and may be viewed on the Animal Care Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac>. Copies of the brochure prepared for the symposia can be requested by calling our headquarters at (301) 734-7833 or by e-mailing the request to ACE@aphis.usda.gov.

Please note that these symposia are being held to provide and disseminate information on the care and maintenance of big exotic cats under the Animal Welfare Act. There will be no opportunity at these symposia to submit formal comments on proposed rules or other regulatory initiatives.

Registration

As seating for each symposium is limited, we request that you preregister by calling (301) 734-7833 or by e-mailing Animal Care at ACE@aphis.usda.gov. Please identify the symposium you will be attending and provide your name, number of attendees, phone number, e-mail address, or other contact address. This information is needed so that we may inform registrants in a timely manner in the event of any changes to the meeting schedule. The deadline for preregistration is October 1, 2004, for the Bridgeton symposium, and December 1, 2004, for the Riverdale symposium. On-site registration will take place from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on the date of each symposium.

Travel and Lodging Information

All attendees are responsible for making their own travel and lodging

arrangements. No rooms have been reserved for attendees at symposium hotels or any other hotels.

Parking and Security Procedures for Riverdale Symposium

Please note that a fee of \$2.25 is required to enter the parking lot at the USDA Center at Riverside. The machine accepts \$1 bills or quarters.

Picture identification is required to be admitted into the building. Upon entering the building, visitors should inform security personnel that they are attending the Big Cat symposium.

Done in Washington, DC, this 17th day of September 2004.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

East Locust Creek Watershed, Putnam and Sullivan Counties, MO

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of the Environmental Policy Act of 1969; the Council on Environmental Quality Guidelines (40 CFR part 1500); and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Guidelines (7 CFR part 650); the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, North Central Missouri Regional Water Commission, the Locust Creek Watershed District, and the Sullivan County Soil and Water Conservation District give notice that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is being prepared for East Locust Creek Watershed, Putnam and Sullivan Counties, Missouri.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Roger A. Hansen, State Conservationist, or Harold L. Deckerd, Assistant State Conservationist, 601 Business Loop 70 West, Parkade Center, Suite #250, Columbia, MO 65203, (573) 876-0900.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The environmental assessment of this federally assisted action indicates that the project may cause significant local, regional, or national impacts on the environment. As a result of these findings, Roger Hansen, NRCS State Conservationist, has determined that the preparation and review of an