

high dunes can serve as refugia during devastating hurricanes that overwash, flood, and destroy or alter secondary and frontal dunes. Alabama beach mouse tracking surveys on the Applicant's property reveal habitat occupied by Alabama beach mice. The Applicant's property contains designated critical habitat for the Alabama beach mouse. Construction of the project may result in the death of, or injury to, Alabama beach mice. Habitat alterations due to house construction and subsequent human habitation of the project may reduce available habitat for food, shelter, and reproduction.

The EA considers the environmental consequences of alternatives for each project. One action proposed for each project is the issuance of the ITP based upon submittal of the HCP as proposed. This alternative provides for restrictions that include placing no habitable structures seaward of the designated Alabama beach mouse critical habitat, establishment of walkover structures across designated critical habitat, a prohibition against housing or keeping pet cats, Alabama beach mouse competitor control and monitoring measures, scavenger-proof garbage containers, and the minimization and control of outdoor lighting. The HCP provides adequate funding for these mitigation measures. Another alternative is no-action, or deny the request for authorization to incidentally take the Alabama beach mouse.

As stated above, the Service has made a preliminary determination that the issuance of this ITP is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. This preliminary information may be revised due to public comment received in response to this notice and is based on information contained in the EA and HCP. An appropriate excerpt from the FONSI reflecting the Service's finding on the application is provided below:

Based on the analysis conducted by the Service, it has been determined that:

1. Issuance of an ITP would not have significant effects on the human environment in the project area.
2. The proposed take is incidental to an otherwise lawful activity.
3. The Applicant has ensured that adequate funding will be provided to implement the measures proposed in the submitted HCPs.
4. Other than impacts to endangered and threatened species as outlined in the documentation of this decision, the indirect impacts which may result from issuance of the ITPs are addressed by

other regulations and statutes under the jurisdiction of other government entities. The validity of the Service's ITP is contingent upon the Applicant's compliance with the terms of his permit and all other laws and regulations under the control of State, local, and other Federal governmental entities.

The Service will also evaluate whether the issuance of the Section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with Section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service Section 7 consultation. The results of the biological opinion, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP.

Dated: November 15, 1996.

Jerome M. Butler,

Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 96-30097 Filed 11-25-96; 8:45 am]

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Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Receipt of an Application Submitted by the On Top of the World, Incorporated for an Incidental Take Permit for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in Association With Land Development Activities on Their Property in Marion County, FL

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: On Top of the World, Incorporated (Applicant) has applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for an incidental take permit (ITP) pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended. The proposed ITP would authorize the incidental take of a federally endangered species, the red-cockaded woodpecker *Picoides borealis* (RCW) known to occur on property owned by the Applicant in Marion County, Florida. The Applicant is requesting an ITP in order to conduct land development activities for economic reasons. The Applicant's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) was submitted for a portion of the 5,690 acres owned by the Applicant called the Central Site. The Applicant's project, known as Ocala Sandhills, is located in approximately 9 miles west of Ocala just north of State Road 200, Marion County, Florida. The proposed ITP would authorize incidental take of a four RCW groups (currently consisting of 8 breeding adults, 1 female helper, and 6 fledglings) in exchange for mitigation elsewhere as described further in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** Section below.

The Service also announces the availability of an environmental assessment (EA) and HCP for the incidental take application. Copies of the EA and/or HCP may be obtained by making a request to the Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**). This notice also advises the public that the Service has made a preliminary determination that issuing the ITP is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, (NEPA) as amended. The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on information contained in the EA and HCP. The final determination will be made no sooner than 30 days from the date of this notice. This notice is provided pursuant to Section 10 of the Act and National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). **DATES:** Written comments on the permit application, EA and HCP should be sent to the Service's Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**) and should be received on or before December 26, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the application, HCP, and EA 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 at Jacksonville, Florida, Field Office, 6620 Southpoint Drive, South, Suite 310, Jacksonville, Florida 32216-0912. Written data or comments concerning the application, EA, or HCP should be submitted to the Regional Office. Comments must be submitted in writing to be processed. Please reference permit under PRT-822026 in such comments, or in requests of the documents discussed herein.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Rick G. Gooch, Regional Permit Coordinator, (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone: 404/679-7110; or Dr. L. Karolee Owns, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Jacksonville Field Office, (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone: 904/232/2580.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The RCW is a territorial, non-migratory cooperative breeding bird species. RCWs live in social units called groups which generally consist of a breeding pair, the current year's offspring, and one or more helpers (normally adult male offspring of the breeding pair from previous years). Groups maintain year-round territories near their roost and

nest trees. The RCW is unique among the North American woodpeckers in that it is the only woodpecker that excavates its roost and nest cavities in living pine trees. Each group member has its own cavity, although there may be multiple cavities in a single pine tree. The aggregate of cavity trees is called a cluster. RCWs forage almost exclusively on pine trees and they generally prefer pines greater than 10 inches diameter at breast height. Foraging habitat is contiguous with the cluster. The number of acres required to supply adequate foraging habitat depends on the quantity and quality of the pine stems available.

The RCW is endemic to the pine forests of the Southeastern United States and was once widely distributed across 16 States. The species evolved in a mature fire-maintained ecosystem. The RCW has declined primarily due to the conversion of mature pine forests to young pine plantations, agricultural fields, and residential and commercial developments, and to hardwood encroachment in existing pine forests due to fire suppression. The species is still widely distributed (presently occurs in 13 Southeastern States), but remaining populations are highly fragmented and isolated. Presently, the largest known populations occur on federally owned lands such as military installations and national forests.

Based upon a range-wide assessment and estimate conducted in 1994, the State of Florida contains about 1,285 RCW groups; 1,063 occurring on Federal lands, 128 occurring on State lands, and an estimated 94 on private lands.

There has not been a complete inventory of RCWs in Florida so it is difficult to precisely assess the species' overall status in the State. However, the known populations on Federal properties are regularly monitored and generally considered stable. While several new active RCW clusters have been discovered on private lands over the past few years, many previously documented RCW clusters have been lost. It is expected that the RCW population on private lands in Florida will continue to decline, especially those from small tracts isolated from other RCW populations.

The RCW population on the Applicant's property currently consists of 15 birds (8 breeding adults, 1 female helper, and 6 fledglings). The nearest known RCW groups to the Ocala Sandhills population are found greater than 15 miles away; several single family/bird groups on private lands west and northwest; large populations on both the Goethe and Withlacoochee State Forests northwest and southwest,

respectively from the site; and a small population of about 7 groups on the Ocala National Forest east of the Applicant's property.

The Applicants propose to harvest the timber at Ocala Sandhills in association with land development and alteration activities associated with construction of a mixed use residential, commercial, and golf course community.

The EA considers the environmental consequences of three alternatives, including the proposed action. The proposed action alternative is issuance of the ITP and implementation of the HCP as submitted by the Applicant. The HCP provides for an off-site mitigation strategy focusing on enhancing clusters in designated recruitment stands in the Ocala National Forest over a 5-year period. During the first 5 years of the permit/HCP, the Applicant would conserve the habitat necessary to support/stabilize the existing RCW population. Juvenile RCWs produced by the Applicant's population will be translocated to these sites and monitored. At the completion of the translocation efforts for the juveniles, any remaining adults would also be moved to the Ocala National Forest. In addition, the Applicant will assist the Ocala National Forest by financially supporting selected hardwood control efforts at the recipient sites. The HCP will involve monitoring the mitigation clusters for a specified time period to determine success of the habitat enhancement efforts. The HCP provides a funding source for the above-mentioned mitigation measures.

As stated above, the Service has made a preliminary determination that the issuance of this ITP is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA and will result in the FONSI. This preliminary information may be revised due to public comment received in response to this notice and is based on information contained in the EA and HCP. An appropriate excerpt from the FONSI reflecting the Service's finding on the application is provided below:

Based on the analysis conducted by the Service, it has been determined that:

1. Issuance of an ITP would not have significant effects on the human environment in the project area.
2. The proposed take is incidental to an otherwise lawful activity.
3. The Applicants have ensured that adequate funding will be provided to implement the measures proposed in the submitted HCP.
4. Other than impacts to endangered and threatened species as outlined in the documentation of this decision, the

indirect impacts which may result from issuance of the ITPs are addressed by other regulations and statutes under the jurisdiction of other government entities. The validity of the Service's ITPs are contingent upon the Applicants' compliance with the terms of their permits and all other laws and regulations under the control of State, local, and other Federal governmental entities.

The Service will also evaluate whether the issuance of either Section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with Section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service Section 7 consultation. The results of the biological opinion, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue either ITP.

Dated: November 18, 1996.

Jerome M. Butler,

Acting Regional Director.

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Geological Survey

Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC): Notice Establishing the Closing Date for Submission of the Project Summary Under the FGDC Framework Demonstration Projects Program

AGENCY: U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice inviting organizations to submit project summaries for competitive cooperative agreements for fiscal year 1997.

SUMMARY: This is a notice of phase one of a two phase approach in connection with the Framework Demonstration Projects Program (FDPP). On behalf of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) plans to issue a program announcement to request proposals for the FDPP later this fiscal year. Organizations interested in the program have asked for the ability to provide project summaries to the FGDC for comment in advance of the program announcement. Therefore, the first phase of this two phase approach invites organizations interested in the program to provide a project summary to the FGDC for comment. Participation in phase one is voluntary. Organizations who submit a project summary in phase one are not obligated to apply for the program announcement. Organizations who do not submit a summary for phase one are eligible to request the program announcement in phase two. The FGDC