

of their ecosystems is a primary goal of the 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 the recovery levels for downlisting or delisting species, 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 take these comments into account in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

The Florida salt marsh vole inhabits one known coastal marsh site in Levy County, Florida. The vole is limited by two factors, an extremely restricted range encompassing only one known population, and the threat of losing this population to a storm event or population fluctuations.

The immediate goal of this recovery plan is to prevent extinction of the salt marsh vole by protecting the existing population. The actions needed to recover this species are: (1) Protect existing population, (2) conduct surveys to locate additional populations, and (3) conduct life history studies.

Public Comments Solicited

The Service solicits written comments on the recovery plan. All comments received by the date specified above will be considered prior to the approval of the plans.

Authority

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

David Hankla,
Field Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 97-4094 Filed 2-19-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for Obyan Beach Resort Associates, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (Commonwealth)

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that Obyan Beach Resort Associates has applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an incidental take permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The application has been assigned permit number PRT-824821. The proposed permit would authorize the incidental take of nightingale reed-warblers (*Acrocephalus luscini*), federally listed as endangered, and/or nightingale reed-warbler habitat during the construction of a proposed 36-hole golf course and resort. The Micronesian megapode (*Megapodius laperouse*) also occurs on site but is not expected to be impacted by this project. Green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) may nest at a beach near the project site, but outside of the project boundaries, and are not expected to be impacted by this project. The permit would be in effect for 50 years.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also announces the availability of an Environmental Assessment for the incidental take permit application, which includes the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan fully describing the proposed project and mitigation, and the accompanying Implementing Agreement. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). All comments, including names and addresses, received will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

DATES: Written comments on the permit application, Environmental Assessment and Implementing Agreement should be received on or before March 24, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments regarding the application or adequacy of the Environmental Assessment and Implementing Agreement should be addressed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Office, 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 3108, P.O. Box 50088, Honolulu, HI 96850. Please refer to permit number PRT-824821 when submitting comments. Individuals wishing to obtain review copies of the application, Environmental Assessment,

or Implementing Agreement should immediately contact the above office. Documents also will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Brooks Harper, Ms. Karen Evans or Dr. Annie Marshall, Pacific Islands Office, 808-541-3441.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act prohibits the "taking" of a species listed as threatened or endangered. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, under limited circumstances, may issue permits to take listed species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Regulations governing permits for threatened species are promulgated in 50 CFR 17.32; regulations governing permits for endangered species are promulgated in 50 CFR 17.22.

Background

Obyan Beach Resort Associates propose to construct a 36-hole golf course and resort on the southeastern part of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Obyan Beach Resort Associates seeks coverage for impacts to 814 acres that contain nightingale reed-warbler habitat. To compensate for project impacts, Obyan Beach Resort Associates will: (1) Minimize on-site impacts and maintain habitat on site for 10 pairs of nightingale reed-warblers, and (2) work with the local Commonwealth government to establish the Saipan Wildlife Mitigation Bank, that will consist of 3 conservation sites located north of the project site. The mitigation sites provide suitable habitat for nightingale reed-warbler (tangantangan forest and mixed tangantangan/grassland mosaic). Obyan Beach Resort Associates will work with the Commonwealth government to ensure that the mitigation bank is secure through the promulgation of regulations and will provide funding for long-term management of the mitigation sites. Other measures are specified in the Habitat Conservation Plan to minimize potential for take during construction activities.

The Environmental Assessment considers the environmental consequences of three alternatives. Alternative 3, the proposed action, consists of the issuance of an incidental take permit and implementation of the Habitat Conservation Plan and its Implementing Agreement. This alternative is preferred because: (1) It satisfies the purpose and needs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and

Obyan Beach Resort Associates; (2) impacts are minimized during construction, and (3) incidental take is mitigated by the establishment of a wildlife mitigation bank and other measures specified in the Habitat Conservation Plan. This mitigation bank would be established in perpetuity for the protection of the endangered nightingale reed-warbler and other wildlife species. Alternative 2 entails developing the project as originally permitted by the local government. The impacts to nightingale reed-warblers on site would be greater under this alternative and a wildlife mitigation bank would not be established. Under Alternative 1, the no action alternative, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would not issue an incidental take permit. The area leased would then be likely to revert back to the Commonwealth government. None of the existing nightingale reed-warblers would be lost, at least immediately. After the land reverted back to the Commonwealth, it would then be available for other uses. These uses could have greater impacts to nightingale reed-warblers as a result of subdivision and the subsequent habitat fragmentation. Under the no action alternative, the mitigation sites would not be preserved as a wildlife mitigation bank.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will evaluate the application, associated documents, and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act regulations and section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act. If it is determined that the requirements are met, a permit will be issued for the incidental take of the listed species. The final permit decision will be made no sooner than 30 days from the date of this notice.

Dated: February 12, 1997.

Thomas J. Dwyer,

Acting Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.

[FR Doc. 97-4141 Filed 2-19-97; 8:45 am]

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Bureau of Land Management

[WY-985-0222-66]

Cave Gulch-Bullfrog-Waltman Natural Gas Development Project in Natrona County, Wyoming; Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability of the Cave Gulch-Bullfrog-Waltman Natural Gas Development Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) which analyzes the environmental consequences of the oil and gas operators proposal to continue to drill wells on their leased acreages within the Cave Gulch-Bullfrog-Waltman oil and gas project area. This development area is located in Natrona County and generally located within Townships 36 and 37 North; Ranges 86 and 87 West, 6th Principal Meridian. The area is accessed by U.S. Highway 20/26 west of Casper, Wyoming; and, north of Waltman, Wyoming via county road 104. Access to the interior of the Cave Gulch-Bullfrog-Waltman project area is provided by a road system developed to service prior and on-going drilling and production activities.

DATES: Comments on the DEIS will be accepted for 45 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes their Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. The EPA notice is expected on or about February 14, 1997. In addition, a public meeting will be held Tuesday, March 11, 1997. The meeting will be located at the University of Wyoming, Natrona County Cooperative Extension Building, 2011 Fairgrounds Road, Casper, Wyoming. The meeting will be in two parts beginning with an open house from 3 p.m.-5 p.m. followed by a public meeting from 7 p.m.-9 p.m. Comments on the DEIS will be entertained during the open house and the public meeting.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the DEIS should be sent to Ms. Kate Padilla, Team Leader for the Cave Gulch-Bullfrog-Waltman Natural Gas Development Project EIS, Bureau of Land Management, Casper District Office, 1701 East "E" Street, Casper, Wyoming 82601.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The DEIS analyzes a proposed action, two (2) development alternatives, and the no action alternative. The proposal presented by the operators is to continue to drill additional wells on their leased acreage within this natural gas development area. The current oil and gas operators are Chevron U.S.A., Barrett Resources Corporation, Prima

Oil & Gas Company, Goldmark Engineering, Inc., W.A. Moncrief, Jr., Marathon Oil Company, and John P. Lockridge, Inc. The land ownership pattern of the Cave Gulch-Bullfrog-Waltman project area is 66 percent Private, 29 percent Federal (BLM), and 5 percent State of Wyoming. The mineral ownership is as follows, 20 percent Private, 77 percent Federal (BLM), and 3 percent State of Wyoming.

Over the next 10 years, the operators propose to drill up to 160 additional wells where approximately 40 wells are currently active to obtain maximum recovery of natural gas from existing Federal, State, and private oil and gas leases. The area was divided into four segments by the operators to allow for better definition of the Proposed Action with regard to well spacing and density, based on BLM's February 1996, preliminary geologic report. The two development alternatives analyze wells based on areas defined in the BLM's June 1996, final geologic report.

The DEIS describes the physical, biological, cultural, historic, and socio-economic resources in and surrounding the project area. The focus of the impact analysis was based upon resource issues and concerns identified during public scoping. Potential impacts of concern from development were primarily concerned with raptor breeding and nesting, sensitive soils, and economics.

Dated: February 5, 1997.

Alan L. Kesterke,

Associate State Director.

[FR Doc. 97-4097 Filed 2-19-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-22-P

[UT-056-1430-01-24-1A]

Mountain Valley Management Framework Plan; Piute Co., UT

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to amend plan.

SUMMARY: This Notice of Intent is to advise the public that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) intends to consider a proposal which would require amending an existing planning document.

DATES: The comment period for this proposed plan amendment will commence with publication of this notice. Comments must be submitted within the thirty day period commencing with the publication of this notice.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dave Henderson, Sevier River Resource Area Manager, 150 East 900 North, Richfield, Utah 84701. Existing