

## Procedural

All meetings are open to the public. Please note that the meeting may close early if all business is finished. At the Chair's discretion, members of the public may make oral presentations during the meetings. If you would like to make an oral presentation, please notify the Executive Director no later than August 7, 2003. Written material for distribution at a meeting should reach the Coast Guard no later than August 7, 2003. If you would like a copy of your material distributed to each member of the Council in advance of the meeting, please submit 25 copies to the Executive Director no later than August 1, 2003.

## Information on Services for Individuals With Disabilities

For information on facilities or services for individuals with disabilities or to request special assistance at the meetings, contact the Executive Director as soon as possible.

Dated: July 9, 2003.

T.H. Gilmour,

Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard, Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Environmental Protection.

[FR Doc. 03-18118 Filed 7-16-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-15-P

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

**Notice of Availability of an Agency Draft Recovery Plan for the Endangered Fat Threeridge (*Amblema neislerii*), Shinyrayed Pocketbook (*Lampsilis subangulata*), Gulf Moccasinshell (*Medionidus penicillatus*), Ochlockonee Moccasinshell (*Medionidus simpsonianus*), and Oval Pigtoe (*Pleurobema pyriforme*), and the Threatened Chipola Slabshell (*Elliptio chipolaensis*) and Purple Bankclimber (*Elliptoideus sloatianus*), for Review and Comment**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of document availability and public comment period.

**SUMMARY:** We, the Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the availability of the agency draft recovery plan for seven freshwater mussels—the endangered fat threeridge (*Amblema neislerii*), shinyrayed pocketbook (*Lampsilis subangulata*), Gulf moccasinshell (*Medionidus penicillatus*), Ochlockonee moccasinshell (*Medionidus simpsonianus*), and oval pigtoe (*Pleurobema pyriforme*), and the

threatened Chipola slabshell (*Elliptio chipolaensis*) and purple bankclimber (*Elliptoideus sloatianus*). These species are endemic to several river basins (Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint, Ochlockonee, Suwannee, and Econfinia Creek) in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia. Recent research has greatly increased our understanding of the ecology of these species. The agency draft recovery plan includes specific recovery objectives and criteria to be met in order to downlist these mussels to threatened status or delist them under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) as amended (Act). We solicit review and comment on this agency draft recovery plan from local, State, and Federal agencies and the public.

**DATES:** In order to be considered, we must receive comments on the draft recovery plan on or before August 18, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** If you wish to review this agency draft recovery plan, you may obtain a copy by contacting the Panama City Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1601 Balboa Avenue, Panama City, Florida 32405 (telephone 850/769-0552), or by visiting our recovery plan Web site at <http://www.endangered.fws.gov>. If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods:

1. You may submit written comments and materials to the Project Leader, at the above address.
2. You may hand-deliver written comments to our Panama City Field Office, at the above address, or fax your comments to 850/763-2177.
3. You may send comments by e-mail to [jerry\\_ziewitz@fws.gov](mailto:jerry_ziewitz@fws.gov). For directions on how to submit electronic filing of comments, see the "Public Comments Solicited" section.

Comments and materials received are available on request for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jerry Ziewitz at the above address (telephone 850/769-0552, ext. 223).

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Background

Pursuant to the Act, we listed these seven mussels, five as endangered and two as threatened species, on March 16, 1998 (63 FR 12664). The seven freshwater mussels are restricted to a few river basins (Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint, Ochlockonee, Suwannee, and Econfinia Creek) in

Alabama, Florida, and Georgia. They were once distributed across hundreds of stream miles in these basins and now survive in a few relatively small, isolated populations scattered throughout their former range.

Habitat alteration, including impoundments, channelization, gravel mining, contaminants, sedimentation, and stream-flow depletion, are likely the principal causes of these species' decline in range and abundance. Genetic factors associated with increasingly small and isolated populations and the introduction of alien species may present additional obstacles to their recovery.

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 endangered species program. To help guide the recovery effort, we are preparing recovery plans for most listed species native to the United States. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for conservation of the species, establish criteria for downlisting or delisting, and estimate time and cost for implementing recovery measures.

The Act 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 requires us to provide a public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment during recovery plan development. We will consider all information presented during a public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised recovery plan. We and other Federal agencies will take these comments into account in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

We developed a technical/agency draft of this recovery plan and released it for review by the professional community, interested agencies, and the public on September 16, 1999 (64 FR 50301). We incorporated received comments, where appropriate, into this subsequent agency draft recovery plan, which we are now making available for review by all interested agencies and parties, including the general public.

The objective of this draft plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of these seven species so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. As recovery criteria are met, the status of the species will be reviewed and they will be considered for removal from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

**Public Comments Solicited**

We solicit written comments on the recovery plan described. We will consider all comments received by the date specified above prior to final approval of the plan.

Please submit electronic comments as an ASCII file format and avoid the use of special characters and encryption. Please also include your name and return address in your e-mail message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your e-mail message, contact us directly by calling our Panama City Field Office (see **ADDRESSES** section).

Our practice is to make all 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 record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. In some circumstances, we would withhold also from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish for us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. However, we will not 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.

**Authority**

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

Dated: July 3, 2003.

**J. Mitch King,**

*Acting Regional Director, Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-18081 Filed 7-16-03; 8:45 am]

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****Minerals Management Service**

**Notice of Proposed Intent To Reduce Minimum Bid Requirements and Set Sliding-Scale Rentals for Proposed Beaufort Sea Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Lease Sale 186**

**AGENCY:** Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed intent to reduce minimum bid levels and set sliding-scale rentals for OCS sale 186.

**SUMMARY:** On February 20, 2003, the MMS published a Notice of Availability

(68 FR 8306) of the proposed Notice of Sale for Sale 186, which included lease terms and conditions providing for a minimum bid amount of \$62 per hectare and a rental rate of \$13 per hectare, consistent with past OCS sales in the Alaska Region. After further consideration, the MMS has tentatively determined that the minimum bid levels for Sale 186 should be reduced and rentals set on a sliding scale. The MMS is announcing this proposed action at this time to give potential bidders and other interested parties ample time to consider these changes in preparing for the lease sale. This proposed change in the financial terms and conditions of the proposed sale does not affect minimum royalty requirements, royalty suspension volumes, size, timing, location, or potential impacts of the sale. The final Notice of Sale will establish all terms and conditions for Sale 186 and will be issued at least 30 days before the sale is held. Anyone wishing to comment should send comments by August 1, 2003 to the Alaska OCS Region, 949 East 36th Avenue, 3rd Floor, Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302.

**DATES:** Beaufort Sea OCS Lease Sale 186 is scheduled for September 24, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** The proposed Notice of Sale and associated documents are available at: Alaska OCS Region, Information Resource Center, Minerals Management Service, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 330, Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302, Telephone: (907) 271-6438 or 1-800-764-2627.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The MMS proposes to apply the minimum bid amounts and rental rates in the table presented below for Sale 186. Refer to the February 2003 proposed Notice of Sale for descriptions of Zones A and B.

**TABLE OF MINIMUM BIDS AND RENTAL RATES**

| Terms (values per hectare) | Zone A  | Zone B  |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Minimum Bid .....          | \$37.50 | \$25.00 |
| Rental Rates:              |         |         |
| Year 1 .....               | \$7.50  | \$2.50  |
| Year 2 .....               | 7.50    | 3.75    |
| Year 3 .....               | 7.50    | 5.00    |
| Year 4 .....               | 7.50    | 6.25    |
| Year 5 .....               | 7.50    | 7.50    |
| Year 6 .....               | 12.00   | 10.00   |
| Year 7 .....               | 17.00   | 12.00   |
| Year 8 .....               | 22.00   | 15.00   |
| Year 9 .....               | 30.00   | 17.00   |
| Year 10 .....              | 30.00   | 20.00   |

The new bidding requirements outlined above are designed in part to provide potential bidders the incentive to acquire sufficient acreage to support

a timely seismic data acquisition program. The revised sliding-scale rental terms are intended to encourage expeditious exploration of domestic energy resources. In Zone A, which we believe holds the most promise for near term development and production of oil resources, the minimum bid and rentals are set slightly above those for Zone B. We set the terms in Zone B similar to those used by the State of Alaska for some leases in the northern portion of the state as well as to the terms used by the Bureau of Land Management for the leasing of less prospective acreage in the National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska. Hence, the revised terms presented here will allow the Federal offshore lease offering to be comparable to other sales in this area. We have determined that these new proposed terms will not increase the level or range of oil and gas development activities contemplated and addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement or the Coastal Zone Management Act consistency determination.

The MMS is required to assure that fair market value is received for all OCS lands leased and rights conveyed. Although we are proposing to change the minimum bid and rental requirements, all bids received in Sale 186 will undergo an extensive evaluation to determine if they represent fair market value. Thus, regardless of the minimum bid level, the high bid received for any block must satisfy the bid adequacy criteria established by the MMS for a lease to be awarded. Note that this change in terms is intended to apply only to Sale 186 and does not necessarily represent a general policy change for future Alaska or other OCS lease sales. In accordance with the 5-Year OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2002-2007, minimum bids and rental rates are considered on a sale-by-sale basis.

**Johnnie Burton,**

*Director, Minerals Management Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-18139 Filed 7-16-03; 8:45 am]

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****Minerals Management Service**

**Notice of Availability of the Proposed Notice of Sale for Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Lease Sale 189 in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico (GOM)**

**AGENCY:** Minerals Management Service, Interior.