



News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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Habitat Conservation Plan for Endangered Species on Lana‘i Available for Public Comment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today the availability for public review of a draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) relating to an application for an incidental take permit for the construction and operation of seven meteorological towers on Lana‘i, Hawai‘i submitted by Castle and Cooke Resorts, LLC.

An incidental take permit is required when nonfederal activities are likely to result in the “take” of a threatened or endangered species that is incidental to carrying out otherwise lawful activities. Castle and Cooke Resorts is requesting a permit because incidental take of four federally listed species may occur as a result of the construction and operation of the seven meteorological towers.

The species that may be affected are the endangered Hawaiian petrel (‘ua‘u), the endangered Hawaiian stilt (ae‘o), the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat (‘ope‘ape‘a), and the threatened Newell’s shearwater (‘a‘o).

Six of the seven meteorological towers have already been constructed on land owned by the Castle and Cooke Resorts, LLC. If approved, the permit would authorize take, incidental to otherwise lawful activities. “Take,” as defined by the federal Endangered Species Act, means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect, or attempt to engage in any such act. Harm may include significant habitat modification where it actually kills or injures a listed species by impairing essential behavior (e.g., nesting or reproduction).

The draft HCP describes how Castle and Cooke Resorts will – to the maximum extent practicable – minimize, mitigate, and monitor the take of protected species that may result from the construction and operation of its meteorological towers on Lana‘i. The permit would authorize the incidental take of the listed species, not the activities that result in the take.

Both the Federal and Hawai‘i Endangered Species Acts provide for the HCP process to allow development activities to proceed while promoting the conservation of listed species. The Service and the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources jointly process HCPs but issue separate incidental take permits and licenses, respectively.

The activities proposed to be covered by the permit include the construction of the seventh meteorological tower and the operation and maintenance of all seven towers. The meteorological towers will be used for a maximum of two years to collect data on wind patterns. The data collected will allow the applicant to assess if the site is suitable enough to sustain a wind-turbine facility for electrical energy production.

Each meteorological tower is 165 feet tall and rests on a steel base plate approximately 9 square feet in size. Each tower is supported by aircraft cable guy wires in four directions at each of the six guy

levels. The guy wire radius is 100-110 feet. The meteorological towers cover an area of approximately 13 acres.

No listed species are known to inhabit the area within the immediate vicinity of the towers. Thus the only incidental take expected to occur involves flying animals colliding with the towers and guy wires.

Castle and Cooke Resorts proposes to minimize, mitigate, and monitor the impacts of taking listed species by implementing the following measures:

- placing the towers as far from the island's Hawaiian petrel colony and Newell's shearwater nesting habitat as possible;
- marking towers and guy wires with bird diverters and flagging to increase visibility;
- monitoring towers for dead or injured birds and bats throughout the period they are operated;
- conducting predator control within the island's Hawaiian petrel colony, Newell's shearwater nesting habitat and hoary bat habitat;
- conducting predator control at the island's wastewater treatment plant where Hawaiian stilts nest; and
- removing invasive plants such as strawberry guava to facilitate the re-establishment of native vegetation within forest habitat adjacent to the Hawaiian petrel colony and within the Newell's shearwater and hoary bat habitat.

The environmental assessment considers the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed action of permit issuance, including the measures that would be implemented to minimize and mitigate such impacts. The environmental assessment contains an analysis of three alternatives: the no action alternative (no permit issuance and the towers would be removed); the proposed action alternative (issuance of the permit and implementation of the HCP); and the third alternative of using monopole meteorological towers. Monopole towers do not require the use of guy wires, but require a much larger foundation base.

The Service requests information, views, and opinions from the public on the proposed federal action of issuing a permit, including the identification of any aspects of the human environment not already analyzed in the draft environmental assessment. In addition, the Service specifically solicits information pertaining to the adequacy of the HCP relative to minimizing, mitigating, and monitoring the impacts of take to the covered listed species and relative adaptive management as evaluated against the permit issuance criteria.

All comments from interested parties must be received on or before August 7, 2008. Written comments should be submitted to: Patrick Leonard, Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96850. Comments may also be sent via facsimile to 808 792 9580.

The Service will evaluate the permit application, associated documents, and submitted comments to determine whether the application meets the requirements of NEPA regulations and section 10 (a) of the Endangered Species Act.

Documents are posted on the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>. Copies may also be obtained by calling Bill Standley, at 808-792-9400, or by writing to the address listed above.

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