We invite comments on: (1) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of collection of information on respondents, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.


Matt Hogan,
Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service

Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Conservation Banks

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are announcing availability of guidance for the establishment, use, and operation of conservation banks. Conservation banks are a tool to offset adverse impacts to species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The purpose of this guidance is to help Service personnel evaluate and approve conservation banks in the context of fulfilling the purposes of the Endangered Species Act.


SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: A conservation bank is a parcel of land containing natural resource values that are conserved and managed in perpetuity for listed species and used to offset impacts to the comparable resource values on non-bank lands occurring elsewhere. The bank is specifically managed and protected by the bank owner or designee for its natural resource values. The values of the natural resources are translated into quantified “credits.” The bank owner sells habitat “credits” to parties that need to compensate for the environmental impacts of their activities. A conservation bank is a free-market enterprise that offers landowners economic incentives to protect natural resources, saves developers time and money by providing them with certainty of pre-approved compensation lands, and provides long-term protection of habitat. Conservation banking creates a collaborative incentive based approach where habitat for listed species is treated as an asset rather than a liability.

The Service has already entered into several agreements with landowners to establish conservation banks, mainly in the southwest and the southeast areas of the country. We believe that guidance will help establish conservation banks in other parts of the country. Please refer to the ADDRESSES section of this notice for information on how to obtain a copy of the guidance.

Authority: The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).


Matt Hogan,
Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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