

News Release

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New Categorical Exclusion Improves Listing Process for Injurious Wildlife

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published a new categorical exclusion aimed at streamlining the regulatory process for listing species as “injurious wildlife” under the Lacey Act. The new categorical exclusion allows the Service the option to simplify the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which is one part of the listing process.

Injurious species can cause substantial harm to native wildlife and the environment, as well as to agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and other interests of value to the nation. Asian carps, zebra mussels and snakeheads are examples of a wide range of injurious species that collectively cost the United States billions of dollars each year.

The Service may list wild mammals, wild birds, fish, mollusks, crustaceans, amphibians and reptiles under the injurious wildlife provisions of the Lacey Act. In general, species listed as injurious are from other continents. An injurious wildlife listing helps limit the spread of such species by prohibiting them from being imported into the United States or transported over state lines. The longer it takes to list a harmful species as injurious wildlife, the more likely it is to spread, become irreversibly established, and to cause harm. The new categorical exclusion will help reduce the listing time and thereby the risk of introduction and spread of potentially invasive and harmful species.

“Invasive species have driven native species toward extinction and continue to do incalculable damage to our wildlife and their habitats. The best and most cost effective way to address the harm they cause is to prevent their introduction to begin with,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “The new categorical exclusion will streamline this process and help to protect the wildlife and precious resources that are most vulnerable.”

The Service solicited public input on the proposed categorical exclusion and received more than 5,000 public comments. A summary of these comments is provided in the final notice that published in the *Federal Register* today under the Department of Interior’s notices. The Service has also coordinated each step of the approval process with the Council on Environmental Quality, which oversees NEPA and must approve any new categorical exclusion.

The new categorical exclusion does not relieve the Service from the requirement to review each proposed listing under NEPA. The injurious evaluation, which is the primary document that the Service prepares for each rule, will still be prepared. The Service will also examine each

situation for “extraordinary circumstances” that would mean the categorical exclusion may not be used and an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement must be prepared. If no such circumstances are found, the Service may forego preparing an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Under other laws and Executive Orders not related to NEPA, the Service will continue to provide required analyses on the economic effects of listing a species, including effects on small businesses if appropriate, and any other required determinations.

To learn more about the categorical exclusion visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/injuriouswildlife/catex.html>. To learn more about injurious wildlife visit: <http://www.fws.gov/injuriouswildlife/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

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