



Finding of No Significant Impact

Management of Double-crested Cormorants Under 50 CFR 21.47 and 21.48

In 2003, we published a Final Environmental Impact Statement and made changes to the regulations governing the take of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*; DCCO). The final rule, published in the Federal Register in November 2003, established a Public Resource Depredation Order (PRDO; 50 CFR 21.48) and made changes to the 1998 Aquaculture Depredation Order (AQDO; 50 CFR 21.47). The final rule for the depredation orders is available at <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/CurrentBirdIssues/Management/cormorant/FinalRule/fed1regdccofinalrule.pdf>.

In 2009, we extended the depredation orders an additional five years.

We have now completed an Environmental Assessment to determine whether the depredation orders should be continued, and if doing so would likely have a significant effect on the environment.

Alternatives Considered

We considered the following three alternatives:

1. allowing the depredation orders to expire in 2014 – the “no action” alternative;
2. a five-year extension of the regulations (our preferred alternative); and
3. eliminating the expiration dates on the depredation orders.

We analyzed the effects of the three alternatives on: DCCOs, fish, wildlife and their habitats (co-nesting birds), plants and their habitats (vegetation), threatened and endangered species, the economic environment, and existence and aesthetic values. We have concluded that extending the depredation orders for five years will not adversely affect populations of DCCOs or other birds that nest or roost with them; would not adversely affect threatened and endangered species; would benefit resources that are negatively impacted by DCCOs (fish, co-nesting birds, and vegetation); would minimize negative economic impacts on aquaculture businesses and recreational, fishing-dependent economies; would have no effect on existence values; and would have varying effects on aesthetic values.

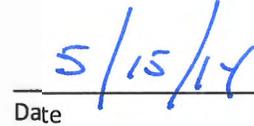
With the limits on DCCO depredation management actions in the regulations, review of impacts of the current program, and the expectation that future actions are likely to be similar in magnitude and nature to those which have occurred, population monitoring, and our review of annual reports and proposed DCCO depredation management activities, I am confident that continued operations under the depredation orders will not threaten the long-term conservation of DCCO populations.

Based on our review, I find that implementing the preferred alternative will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment in accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA. I have concluded that this Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate. An Environmental Impact Statement is not required



Acting

Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Date