

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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THREE MEETINGS SCHEDULED, COMMENT PERIOD EXTENDED ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO ENDANGERED SPECIES TREATY

The public will have additional opportunities to take part in this country's preparations for an international meeting in March on the Endangered Species Treaty, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced in a series of notices in the January 16, 1979, Federal Register.

The March 19-30 meeting in Costa Rica will be the second formal conference of the 47 countries that are party to the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The Service has responsibility for implementing the treaty in this country and for negotiating any changes in the text or the appendices, where protected species are listed. At Costa Rica, the party countries will consider more than 200 proposed amendments to the appendices as well as other implementation issues.

The public is invited to participate through written comment or at several meetings on all these issues. The public also will be able to contribute to the U.S. position papers, now being developed, that will form the basis for international negotiation by the U.S. delegation at the Costa Rica meeting. The delegation will be headed by Dr. Robert S. Cook, Deputy Director of the Service, and will include several representatives from the public.

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Among the Federal Register notices published by the Service is an extension of the comment period to February 14 on a proposed rulemaking on U.S. procedures for considering amendments to the appendices. Comments had been received from only eight individuals and organizations when the previous comment period expired on May 23, 1978.

The procedures proposed in the March 24, 1978, Federal Register are being used in the Service's survey of the status of native species listed by the Convention. The survey was conducted to determine if U.S. species are properly listed in Appendix I and II, categories that are similar to endangered and threatened status. Based on this review, the Service has submitted provisional proposals to the Convention Secretariat to change the status of 18 native birds and mammals.

Public comment on the provisional native species proposals is being accepted through January 15 and the Service plans to publish notice of the final determination on or about January 25 in the Federal Register. In addition, a public meeting will be held on January 31 in conjunction with this determination. Another meeting on the following day will be devoted to other issues and items on the agenda for the Costa Rica conference.

A third meeting on March 8 will be held to consider the final U.S. position on all issues prior to the departure of the delegation to the Costa Rica conference. At this final meeting, the U.S. position on foreign country proposals to amend the appendices will also be discussed. These 213 proposed amendments cover a wide range of changes and affect many species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and plants and several invertebrates. Written comments will be accepted through February 19, 1979.

All three meetings will be held in Room 5160, Department of the Interior Building, 18th & C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C., at 10 a.m. to 12 noon and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Comments and requests for additional information should be submitted to Joan Caton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (WPO), Washington, D.C. 20240, 703/235-2418.

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