

NEWS RELEASE

U. S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE - REGION 1

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE EXTENDS DEADLINE ON MARBLED MURRELET LISTING DECISION

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will extend for 6 months the deadline on its decision whether to list the marbled murrelet under the Endangered Species Act while the agency gathers and reviews additional information. A small, elusive seabird, the murrelet is currently proposed for threatened status in California, Oregon, and Washington.

Questions concerning which segments of the murrelet population, if any, should be subject to listing actions prompted the Service's decision to extend the deadline. Current estimates place the number of murrelets in California at about 2,000 birds, with an additional 2,000 in Oregon, and 5,000 in Washington.

Under the Endangered Species Act, a final listing decision is due within 1 year of proposing a species as endangered or threatened. However, if substantial disagreement exists regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of available information on a proposed species, the act provides for a 6-month extension to gather and review additional data. The Service proposed to list the murrelet as threatened in June 1991.

Information received during a public comment on the proposal varied on whether murrelets in California, Oregon, and Washington should be considered a separate population, more than one population, or part of a single, continuous population inhabiting the west coast from California north into Alaska. The Service will again solicit additional information on murrelet populations during a 60-day comment period.

Threats to the species include habitat loss and modification, especially from timber harvest in older coastal redwood and Douglas fir forests. Murrelets spend much of their lives on the ocean but nest inland in old-growth and mature forests of the coastal mountains.

The notice extending the deadline for the decision on the marbled murrelet will appear in the July 29, 1992, Federal Register, and comments will be accepted for 60 days following publication. Comments should be made to Portland Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2600 S.E. 98th Avenue, Suite 100, Portland, Oregon 97266.

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