

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Western Washington Office
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News Release



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Federal Agencies Schedule Meetings Related to Wastewater Treatment and Endangered Species Act

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (Services) have scheduled meetings in King and Snohomish Counties of Washington to encourage public comment on the development of a National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Federal actions under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) related to treatment of wastewater and King County's Regional Wastewater Service Plan. The Federal actions involve potential approval of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) being developed by King County. The June meetings are part of a 60-day scoping period to explain the EIS process and to invite comments and suggestions. Scoping ensures that the full range of alternatives related to the anticipated request from King County are identified. A 60-day public comment period began today, June 10, 2003, and ends August 11, 2003.

The EIS will be part of the review process involving an expected request by the King County Wastewater Treatment Division (King County) for incidental take authorization under the ESA. The request from King County would come in the form of an application for an incidental take permit, and this application would include an HCP. If the Services approve the expected proposal, certain King County wastewater treatment-related activities potentially affecting aquatic and/or terrestrial species in King, Snohomish, and/or Pierce Counties would be covered with an incidental take permit. The ESA defines "take" as meaning to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect a Federally-listed species, or to attempt to engage in such conduct. The regulations implementing the ESA also includes prohibitions against significant

habitat modification or degradation which results in the death or injury of a protected species by significantly impairing behavioral patterns such as breeding, feeding, sheltering, spawning, or migrating.

Under the ESA, non-federal entities may submit a conservation plan (an HCP) and request ESA coverage to take Federally-protected species while conducting otherwise lawful activities. In exchange, the applicant commits to minimize impacts and provide conservation of elements of ecosystems important to species covered in the HCP. King County is seeking an ESA permit to accommodate potential effects of existing and future secondarily treated effluent as well as other operations and maintenance activities.

The meetings will begin with an open house for informal discussion and questions, followed by a presentation and a question/answer session. Meeting dates and locations are:

Date	Time	Location
June 17, 2003	3:00 p.m.	King Street Center, 201 S. Jackson Street, 8 th Floor Conference Center, Seattle, Washington
June 24, 2003	6:00 p.m.	Kohlwes Education Center, 300 SW 7 th Street, Renton, Washington
June 26, 2003	6:00 p.m.	Northshore Utility District, 6830 NE 185 th Street, Kenmore, Washington

Anyone interested in commenting on the scope of the EIS is not required to attend the public meetings, but may find the format helpful in developing their comments. Comments should be as specific as possible and can be mailed or faxed at any time during the comment period to:

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Please note that, to ensure accuracy, the Services cannot accept comments by e-mail.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is the principal steward of the nation's living marine resources. It protects marine and anadromous species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act. An Agency of the Commerce Department, NOAA Fisheries also regulates the nation's commercial and recreational fisheries. It manages species under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act (MSFCA) throughout federal waters, which extend 200 miles from the coastline. NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Region (NWR), administers programs off the coast of Oregon and Washington, and in the vast inland watershed habitats of Pacific salmon and steelhead in those two states and Idaho. The region's principal responsibility is implementing the Endangered Species Act for 25 populations of listed salmonids, covering more than 40 percent of the land base of three states. It also manages the West Coast groundfish fishery, a complex comprising more than 80 species.

The Washington Habitat Branch of the NOAA Fisheries NWR Habitat Conservation Division based in Lacey, Washington has the responsibility of managing NOAA Fisheries authorities on most habitat related activities within the boundaries of Washington state, including marine and freshwater habitats. The Branch office conducts conservation planning, recovery planning and consultations with Federal agencies under the ESA and MSFCA primarily regarding anadromous salmonids. There are two field offices of the Washington Habitat Branch, one located in Ellensburg, WA and the other within the NWR Seattle office at Sand Point.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The USFWS manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

The Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office of the USFWS is based in Lacey, Washington and

addresses Federal fish and wildlife issues from the crest of the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Canadian border to the Columbia River. The Office is responsible for the listing, recovery and consultation on species protected under the Endangered Species Act; the development of Conservation Plans; issues involving migratory birds and other species protected by Federal laws; environmental contaminants assessment and spill response; fish and wildlife habitat restoration; review of proposed Federal projects, including Clean Water Act activities, and technical assistance on fishery resource issues. The Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office is the lead USFWS point of contact for issues with Statewide implications.