U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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Public Given Additional Time to Comment on Proposal to Remove Hawaiian Hawk from Endangered Species List

Public hearings to be held on the Island of Hawai‘i

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today the reopening of the public comment period for the proposal to remove the Hawaiian hawk or ‘io from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife. Two public meetings were held in January to allow for public discussion and input on this proposal. Now, in addition, two public hearings will be conducted on the island of Hawai‘i to allow the public opportunities to provide testimony.

“Because of the high level of interest in this proposal, we feel it’s appropriate to reopen the comment period,” said Gina Shultz, acting field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Office in the Pacific Islands. “We encourage the public to take advantage of the upcoming hearings to voice their issues and concerns.”

Interested parties are invited to attend the public hearings, which will be held in Captain Cook and Hilo. The Hilo meeting will be held on June 30 at the Pu‘ueo Community Center, 145 Wainaku Street, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Captain Cook meeting will be held on July 1 at Yano Hall, 82-6156 Māmalahoa Highway from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The public comment period will be open for an additional 60 days and will end on August 4. The Service welcomes all comments regarding the proposed rule and the draft post delisting monitoring plan, but is especially interested in those pertaining to biological, commercial trade, or other relevant data concerning any threats to this species; additional information concerning the range, distribution, and population size of this species, including the locations of any additional populations; current or planned activities in the areas occupied by the species and possible impacts of these activities, as well as data on population trends.

Due to implementation of recovery actions and other conservation efforts, the ‘io is now found throughout the island of Hawai‘i and has maintained a stable population for at least 20 years. It is nesting and foraging successfully in both native and altered habitats and has benefitted from large areas of protected forest. The Hawaiian hawk appears not to be threatened by overutilization, disease, predation, contaminants, lack of adequate regulatory mechanisms, or other factors, and therefore is believed to no longer meet the definition of a threatened or endangered species throughout its range. Researchers estimate the total population of Hawaiian hawk to be about 3,000 birds.

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The proposed rule, if made final, would remove the ‘io from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife thereby removing all protections provided under the ESA. The ‘io would remain protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a federal law that prohibits "taking" – killing, selling or otherwise harming migratory birds, their nests or eggs.

The Service will consider comments and materials from all interested parties received by August 4. Comments regarding the proposed delisting submitted during previous public comment periods, as well as those provided during two public meetings on the island of Hawai‘i in January, will be given full consideration and need not be resubmitted. Comments and materials concerning this proposed delisting should be sent to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: http://www.regulations.gov. Comments and materials may also be mailed or hand-delivered to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AU96; Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

A copy of the proposed rule and draft post-delisting monitoring plan may be downloaded from the Service’s website at http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/. Copies are also available by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service office in Honolulu at 808 792-9400.

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**.

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