

of the complete applications or requests for a public hearing on these applications should be submitted to the Director (address above). Anyone requesting a hearing should give specific reasons why a hearing would be appropriate. The holding of such a hearing is at the discretion of the Director.

PRT-067925

Applicant: Alaska Science Center, USGS, Anchorage, AK

Permit Type: Take and import.

Name and Number of Animals: *Enhydra lutris nereis*, 20; *Enhydra lutris lutris*, 150.

Summary of Activity to be

Authorized: The applicant requests a permit for scientific research to conduct take activities with sea otters in California and Alaska and to import biological samples from sea otters in Russia, Canada, and Japan in order to assess the population status and health of sea otters.

Source of Marine Mammals: Central California coast; Alaska; Russia, Canada, and Japan.

Period of Activity: Up to 5 years.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, the Division of Management Authority is forwarding copies of the above applications to the Marine Mammal Commission and the Committee of Scientific Advisors for their review.

PRT-068430

Applicant: Arnold Goldschlager, Hillsborough, CA

The applicant requests a permit to import a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sport hunted from the Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population in Canada for personal use.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has information collection approval from OMB through March 31, 2004, OMB Control Number 1018-0093. Federal agencies may not conduct or sponsor and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a current valid OMB control number.

February 28, 2003.

Michael S. Moore,

Senior Permit Biologist, Branch of Permits, Division of Management Authority.

[FR Doc. 03-6318 Filed 3-14-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of the Mead's Milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*) Draft Recovery Plan for Review and Comment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces availability for public review of the draft recovery plan for the Mead's milkweed, a species that is federally listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act). The purpose of this plan is to recover this species in order that it can be removed from the list of Threatened and Endangered Species. This species occurs or may occur on public and private land in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The Service solicits review and comment from the public on this draft plan.

DATES: Comments on the draft recovery plan must be received on or before May 16, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the draft recovery plan may obtain a copy by contacting the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chicago, Illinois, Ecological Services Field Office, 1250 South Grove Avenue, Suite 103, Barrington, Illinois 60010-5091 or by accessing the Web site: <http://midwest.fws.gov/Endangered>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Kristopher Lah, (847) 381-2253. TTY users contact the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Restoring an endangered or threatened animal or plant to the point where it is again a secure self-sustaining member of its ecosystem is a primary goal of the Service's endangered species program. To help guide the recovery effort, the Service is working to prepare recovery plans for most of the Federally listed threatened and endangered species native to the United States. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for conservation of the species, establish criteria for reclassification and delisting, and provide estimates of the time and costs for implementing the recovery measures needed.

The Act requires the development of recovery plans for listed species unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species.

Section 4(f) of the Act, as amended in 1988, requires public notice and opportunity for public review and comment be provided during recovery plan development. The Service will consider all information presented during a public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised recovery plan. The Service and other Federal agencies will also take these comments into consideration in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

The Mead's milkweed was listed as threatened on September 1, 1988. The species is known to persist at 171 sites in 34 counties in eastern Kansas, Missouri, south-central Iowa, and southern Illinois. Populations no longer occur in Wisconsin and Indiana. Seventy-five percent of the Mead's milkweed populations are in the Osage Plains Physiographic Region in Kansas and Missouri. The remainder of the populations occur in the Shawnee Hills of Illinois; the Southern Iowa Drift Plain in Iowa; the Glaciated Plains, Ozark Border, Ozark Springfield Plateau, and the Ozark-St. Francois Mountains of Missouri; and the Glaciated Physiographic Region of Kansas. Mead's milkweed populations have been eliminated by wide-scale agriculture in the eastern part of the species' range. Many large populations occur in private hay meadows where a century of annual mowing, which prevents sexual reproduction, has severely reduced genetic diversity. Among the surviving populations in eastern Missouri, Illinois and Iowa, most apparently consist of a few genetically invariant clones that are incapable of sexual reproduction. Population restoration efforts are being made in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin by introducing Mead's milkweed into suitable habitat.

Mead's milkweed occurs primarily in tallgrass prairie, and occasionally in thin-soil glades or barrens. This plant is essentially restricted to late-successional prairie habitat, which has never been plowed and only lightly grazed, or hay meadows that are cropped annually for hay. Plants reproduce sexually by seed and spread vegetatively by rhizomes, especially under midsummer haymowing regimes. As with other native milkweeds, Mead's is either self-incompatible or subject to severe inbreeding depression. Mead's milkweed populations that are managed by prescribed burning experience an increase in flowering, reproduction, and seedling establishment and are more genetically diverse than sites that are mowed.

In order to accomplish recovery, the following actions are recommended in

the draft recovery plan: (1) Protect habitat; (2) manage habitat; (3) increase size and number of populations; (4) conduct field surveys for new population occurrences or potential habitat for introduction; (5) conduct research on restoration, management and introduction techniques; (6) maintain conservation populations; (7) promote public understanding; and (8) review and track recovery progress.

Recovery will be achieved, and the species may be removed from the list of Threatened and Endangered Species when the following criteria are met: (1) 26 populations are distributed across plant communities and physiographic regions within the historic range of the species, (2) each of these 26 populations is highly viable, and (3) monitoring data indicates that these populations have been stable or increasing for 15 years.

Public Comments Solicited

The Service solicits written comments on the recovery plan described. All comments received by the date specified will be considered prior to approval of the plan. Written comments and materials regarding the plan should be sent to the Field Supervisor, Ecological Services Field Office (see **ADDRESSES** section). Comments received will be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours.

Authority: The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Dated: February 19, 2003.

Charles M. Wooley,

Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 3.

[FR Doc. 03-6265 Filed 3-14-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment/Habitat Conservation Plan Related to Application for an Incidental Take Permit for the Long Point Homeowner's Association Development

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public and other agencies of the availability of a draft Environmental Assessment (EA)/Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Incidental Take Permit (ITP) application for review and comment. The draft EA/

HCP and ITP application were submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) by the Long Point Homeowner's Association proposing residential development of the Long Point Subdivision on Kelleys Island, Erie County, Ohio. Federally-threatened Lake Erie water snakes (*Nerodia sipedon insularum*) occupy the project area and it has been determined that the proposed actions will result in incidental take. The Long Point Homeowner's Association submitted an ITP application to the Service for incidental take pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended. The submission of the ITP application required the development of an HCP by the applicants detailing measures to be taken to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to Lake Erie water snakes.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before May 16, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written comments can be mailed to the address or fax number below. Electronic mail comments should be submitted to:

longpointhcp@fws.gov. Persons wishing to review the documents may obtain copies by writing, telephoning, faxing, or e-mailing: Regional HCP Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056, Telephone: (612) 713-5343, Fax: (612) 713-5292. The draft EA/HCP is also available at the following internet address: <http://midwest.fws.gov/nepa/>. Copies of the draft EA/HCP may also be viewed at four public libraries listed in **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Peter Fasbender, Regional HCP Coordinator, Telephone: (612) 713-5343, or e-mail *peter_fasbender@fws.gov*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Public Involvement

The draft EA/HCP is available for public review and comment for a period of 60 days. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). Copies of the documents can be obtained as indicated in the **ADDRESSES** section. In addition, documents will be available for public inspection during normal business hours (8-4:30), at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and at the Reynoldsburg Ecological Services Field Office, 6950 Americana Parkway, Suite H, Reynoldsburg, Ohio and at the following libraries:

Port Clinton Public Library, 310 Madison St., Port Clinton, Ohio 43452

Sandusky Library, 114 W. Adams St., Sandusky, Ohio 44870
Sandusky Library, 528 Division St., Kelleys Island, Ohio 43438
Oak Harbor Public Library, 147 W. Main St., Oak Harbor, Ohio 43449

All comments received from individuals become part of the official public record. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations [40 CFR 1506.6(f)]. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. If a respondent wishes us to withhold his/her name and/or address, this must be stated prominently at the beginning of the comment.

Incidental Take Permits

Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act (Act) and Federal regulations prohibit "take" of fish or wildlife species listed as endangered or threatened. Take of listed fish or wildlife is defined under the Act to mean harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct (16 U.S.C. 1538). Harm may include significant habitat modification where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, and sheltering [50 CFR 17.3(c)]. The Service may under limited circumstances issue permits to take listed species, provided such take is incidental to, and not the purpose of, an otherwise lawful activity. Regulations governing permits for endangered species are found in 50 CFR 17.22.

Background on Habitat Conservation Plan

The Long Point Homeowner's Association proposes to develop the 15-acre Long Point Subdivision on Kelleys Island, Erie County, Ohio. The Lake Erie water snake and its habitat occur on the 15-acre tract. Within the HCP boundary, 7 acres will be cleared and 6.1 acres permanently maintained for the proposed development of the seven residential lots known as the Long Point Subdivision. Incidental take of Lake Erie water snakes is expected to occur due to the loss and degradation of sheltering and hibernation habitat and due to the increase in human activity in the project area. Loss of suitable habitat would