DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Comprehensive Conservation Plans and an Environmental Impact Statement for Monomoy and Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuges

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) intends to gather information necessary to prepare Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP) for Monomoy and Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) and an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The CCPs/EIS will present management alternatives and analyze the effects of implementing the management actions. The refuges are a part of the Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex (Great Meadows, Oxbow, and Assabet River NWRs) are in final development, and the remaining three refuges of the Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex (Mashpee, Massaquoi, and Nantucket NWRs) will be evaluated under separate process(es).

This notice amends previous notices, published on February 24, 1999, that stated an EIS would be developed for all eight units of the complex (previously called Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge Complex), and on February 15, 2001, that stated an EIS would be developed for three units (Monomoy, Nantucket, and Nomans Land Island NWRs). Comments already received for these refuges under the previous notices will be considered. The Service invites agencies, groups, and the public to submit any additional comments concerning the scope of issues to be addressed, as well as possible management alternatives and environmental impacts to consider in the EIS. We will hold public meetings regarding the CCP process in the near future. Notices of such meetings will be advertised in the local newspaper, announced on the refuge Web site, and sent to the refuge CCP mailing list. If you would like to be included on the mailing list, please contact Bill Perry at the address listed below.

The Service is furnishing this notice in compliance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.):

(1) To advise other agencies and the public of our intentions, and
(2) To obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to include in the environmental documents.

DATES: Inquire at the following address for dates of planning activity. Comments concerning the scope of issues to be addressed must be submitted by January 27, 2005.

Send Comments To: Bill Perry, Refuge Planner, 73 Weir Hill Road, Sudbury, Massachusetts 01776, or e-mail comments to northeastplanning@fws.gov with a subject line stating “Monomoy and Nomans Land Island NWRs.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bill Perry, Refuge Planner, 73 Weir Hill Road, Sudbury, Massachusetts 01776, 978–449–4661 extension 32, or e-mail Bill_Perry@fws.gov. Information will be periodically updated on the refuge Web site at http://monomoy.fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, all lands within the National Wildlife Refuge System are to be managed in accordance with an approved CCP. The CCP guides management decisions and identifies refuge goals, long-range objectives, and strategies for achieving refuge purposes. The planning process will consider many elements, including habitat and wildlife management, habitat protection, public use, and cultural resources. Public input into this planning process is essential. The CCP
will provide other agencies and the public with a clear understanding of the desired conditions for the refuges and how the Service will implement management strategies.

The Service has already solicited information from the public via open houses, meetings, and written comments. Special mailings, newspaper articles, and announcements will continue to inform people in the general area near the refuges of the time and place of opportunities for further public input to the CCP.

The Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex is a diverse group of coastal and inland refuges. Habitats include forest, field, riparian, barrier island beach, freshwater marsh, and pond. Monomoy NWR contains 7,604 acres in a combination of land and open water. With the exception of approximately 300 acres, all of the land area is a designated Federal Wilderness Area. Nomans Land Island NWR contains 628 acres.

Review of this project will be in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), other appropriate laws and regulations, and Service policies and procedures for compliance with those regulations. Concurrent with the CCP process we will conduct a wilderness review of Nomans Land Island and the non-wilderness portion of South Monomoy Island and incorporate a summary of the review into the CCP. Wilderness review is the process we use to determine if we should recommend National Wildlife Refuge System lands and waters to Congress for wilderness designation.

We estimate that the draft environmental documents will be available December 2005 for public review and comment.


Marvin E. Moriarty, Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hadley, Massachusetts.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service

Draft Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan for the Tinian Monarch (Monarcha takasukasae)

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability for review and comment.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (we) announces the availability of the Draft Post-delisting Monitoring Plan for the Tinian Monarch (Monarcha takasukasae) (Monitoring Plan). We propose to monitor the status of the Tinian monarch over a 5-year period from 2005 to 2010 through regular field surveys of the distribution and abundance of the Tinian monarch, regular field surveys for brown treesnakes (Boiga irregularis) on Tinian, and tracking of land use and development on Tinian. We solicit review and comment on this Monitoring Plan from local, State and Federal agencies, and the public.

DATES: We will accept and consider all public comments received on or before January 12, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Monitoring Plan are available by request from Dr. Eric VanderWerf, Hawaiian Bird Recovery Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850 (telephone: (808) 792–9400; fax: (808) 792–9580). This Monitoring Plan is also available on the World Wide Web at http://pacificislands.fws.gov

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Eric VanderWerf, Hawaiian Bird Recovery Coordinator, at the above Honolulu address or at (808) 792–9400.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Tinian monarch, or Chuchurican Tinian in the Chamorro language, is a forest bird endemic to the island of Tinian in the Mariana Archipelago in the western Pacific Ocean. The Tinian monarch inhabits a variety of forest types on Tinian, including native limestone forest, secondary vegetation consisting primarily of non-native plants, and nearly pure stands of introduced tangelangan (Leucaena leucocephala).

The Tinian monarch was listed as endangered on June 2, 1970 (35 FR 8491), because its population was reported to be critically low due to the destruction of native forests by pre-World War II (WW II) agricultural practices, and by military activities during WW II. We conducted forest bird surveys on Tinian in 1982, which resulted in a population estimate of 39,336 Tinian monarchs. On November 1, 1985, we published a proposed rule to delist the Tinian monarch (50 FR 45632). Based on comments received, we instead downlisted the Tinian monarch, and a final rule reclassifying it from endangered to threatened was published on April 6, 1987 (52 FR 10890). There is no recovery plan specifying delisting criteria for the Tinian monarch. A study of Tinian monarch breeding biology in 1994 and 1995 resulted in a population estimate of approximately 52,900 birds. In 1996, a replication of the 1982 surveys yielded a population estimate of 55,720 birds. The 1996 survey also found a significant increase in forest density since 1982, indicating an improvement in Tinian monarch habitat quality.

On February 22, 1999, we published a proposed rule to remove the Tinian monarch from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (64 FR 8533). That proposal was based primarily on information from population surveys and demographic research, which indicated the Tinian monarch has increased in number or is stable, and that the primary listing factor, loss of habitat, has been ameliorated. On September 21, 2004, we published a final rule removing the Tinian monarch from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (69 FR 65367).

Section 4(g)(1) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), requires that we implement a system, in cooperation with the States, to monitor for no fewer than 5 years the status of all species that have recovered and been removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. The purpose of post-delisting monitoring is to verify that a species delisted due to recovery remains secure from risk of extinction after it has been removed from the protections of the Act.

On December 7, 2002, we mailed letters to 18 scientific experts on the Tinian monarch and the brown treesnake, asking for scientific review of the Monitoring Plan. We received nine responses to our request. We carefully considered the comments of the reviewers and used them to improve the Monitoring Plan.

We propose to monitor the status of the Tinian monarch over a 5-year period from 2005 to 2010 in cooperation with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Navy through regular field surveys of the distribution and abundance of the Tinian monarch, regular field surveys for brown treesnakes on Tinian, and by tracking changes in land use and development on Tinian. If data from this monitoring effort, or from some other source, indicate that the Tinian