DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Draft WaterSMART Strategic Implementation Plan

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The Department of the Interior’s draft WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America’s Resources for Tomorrow) Strategic Implementation Plan (draft Strategic Implementation Plan) identifies activities that will be undertaken to secure and stretch water supplies for use by existing and future generations. Within the draft Strategic Implementation Plan each bureau and office within the Department of the Interior shall identify, coordinate, and integrate its water conservation and sustainable water strategies; identify its information needs; utilize best available science to understand the impacts of climate change on water supplies; and provide Federal leadership and assistance in working toward the goal of sustainable water supplies.

DATES: Submit written comments on the draft Strategic Implementation Plan on or before August 1, 2011.

ADDRESS: Send written comments to Mr. David Raff, Bureau of Reclamation, Office of Policy and Administration 84–51000, P.O. Box 25007, Denver, Colorado 80225; or e-mail WaterSMARTBOR@usbr.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Raff, Bureau of Reclamation, (303) 445–2461, draff@usbr.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Adequate water supplies are essential to people, the economy, and the environment. The Nation faces an increasing set of water resource challenges. Aging infrastructure, rapid population growth, depletion of groundwater resources, impaired water quality associated with particular land uses and covers, reservoir sedimentation, water needed for human and environmental uses, increased domestic energy development, and climate variability and change all play a role in determining the amount of fresh water available at any given place and time. It is increasingly recognized that water is the primary means through which climate change impacts the earth and people’s livelihoods and well being. Water shortage and water-use conflicts have become more commonplace in many areas of the United States.

To ensure that the Department of the Interior is positioned to meet these challenges, the Secretary issued an order (Secretarial Order 3297) in February 2010 establishing the WaterSMART Program. Through the WaterSMART Program the Department of the Interior will work with states, tribes, local governments, and non-governmental organizations to secure and stretch water supplies for use by existing and future generations to benefit people, the economy, the environment, and will identify adaptive measures needed to address climate change and future demands. Within Secretarial Order 3297, Section 5(a) calls for the development of a written plan to implement the WaterSMART Strategy. The draft Strategic Implementation Plan fulfills that requirement and will provide the framework the Department of the Interior will use to provide Federal leadership in moving toward a sustainable water resources future.

The Department of the Interior began developing the draft Strategic Implementation Plan in the summer of 2010. The draft Strategic Implementation Plan was distributed to members of the Advisory Committee on Water Information for review and comment in the fall of 2010. Comments received during that review period have been incorporated within the draft Strategic Implementation Plan. The draft Strategic Implementation Plan includes information from each Department of the Interior bureau and office presented within 11 sections, including:

- Program Coordination.
- Best Available Science.
- Water Footprint Reduction Program.
- WaterSMART Clearinghouse.
- Promoting Sustainable Water Strategies.
- Evaluation of Needed Information.
- Education and Awareness.
- Collaboration with States and Tribes.
- Planning Efforts.
- The Colorado River Basin Pilot.

The activities identified within the draft Strategic Implementation Plan represent a comprehensive and coordinated approach by which the Federal government can provide leadership in working with other Federal agencies, states, tribes, and local governments as well as non-governmental organizations to achieve a sustainable future.

Public Disclosure

Before including your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Dated: May 12, 2011.

Anne J. Castle, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.
for Phyllostegia hispida under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). This draft plan is an addendum to the recovery plan for the Molokai Plant Cluster published in September of 1996. This plant species is endemic to the island of Molokai, Hawaii. We request review and comment on our plan from local, State, and Federal agencies and the public. We will also accept any new information on the species' status throughout its range.

DATES: We must receive written comments on or before August 1, 2011. However, we will accept information about any species at any time.

ADDRESSES: An electronic copy of the draft recovery plan is available at our Web site at http://www.fws.gov/ endangered/index.html#plans. Alternatively, copies of the recovery plan are available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3–122, Box 50088, Honolulu, HI 96850 (phone: 808–792–9400). If you wish to comment on the plan, you may submit your comments in writing by any one of the following methods:

- U.S. mail: Field Supervisor, at the above address;
- Hand-delivery: Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office at the above address; or
- Fax: (808)–792–9580

For additional information about submitting comments, see the “Request for Public Comments” section below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeff Newman, Deputy Field Supervisor, at the above Honolulu address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Recovery of endangered or threatened animals and plants to the point where they are again secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystems is a primary goal of our endangered species program and the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). Recovery means improvement of the status of listed species to the point at which listing is no longer appropriate under the criteria set out in section 4(a)(1) of the Act. The Act requires the development of recovery plans for listed species, unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species.

Species History

We listed Phyllostegia hispida as an endangered species without critical habitat under the Act on March 17, 2009 (74 FR 13119).

Phyllostegia hispida is found only on the island of Molokai. Currently there are 20 wild, mature plants and an unknown number of seedlings nearby, and fewer than 300 outplanted individuals. In addition, there are four small naturally occurring populations—containing one to six seedlings each—that are not located next to mature, parent plants. No known population is entirely protected from the numerous factors threatening the species' recovery, and the species is endangered throughout its range. P. hispida is typically found in wet Metrosideros polymorpha (ohia)—dominated forest, occurring between 1,112 and 1,280 meters (3,650 and 4,200 feet) elevation.

The greatest threats to all known populations are habitat degradation and predation by feral pigs (Sus scrofa); competition with invasive introduced plants; and the negative demographic and genetic consequences of extremely small population size, as well as the consequent vulnerability to extinction through deterministic or stochastic (chance) events. Unidentified caterpillar species may also be a threat to this species.

Recovery Plan Goals

The objective of a recovery plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of a species so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. A recovery plan includes scientific information about the species and provides criteria and actions necessary for us to be able to downlist or delist the species. Recovery plans help guide our recovery efforts by describing actions we consider necessary for the species' conservation, and by estimating time and costs for implementing needed recovery measures.

Needed conservation and recovery activities for Phyllostegia hispida include protection, management, and increasing the size of all known wild populations. Continuing survey efforts will focus on identifying any additional populations that may exist but are currently unknown. In order to reduce the potential for extinction due to the catastrophic loss of the small population on a single island, recovery actions will likely require increasing the area occupied by the existing population where space and habitat allow, as well as establishing new populations within the estimated historical range of the species. Threats such as habitat degradation and predation by feral pigs and competition with invasive introduced plants must be sufficiently controlled to allow for this population expansion. The effective management and reintroduction of P. hispida will require gaining further knowledge about the life history of the species and the functioning of the ecosystem on which it depends. Therefore, research and monitoring are key components of the recovery strategy. The habitat must be managed for the long-term recovery of P. hispida in sufficiently large and self-sustaining populations.

The overall objective of this draft addendum to the Molokai recovery plan is to ensure Phyllostegia hispida's long-term conservation and to conduct research necessary to refine recovery criteria so that the species can be downlisted and eventually delisted.

Current recovery criteria include: (1) A total of at least 8 populations should be documented on Molokai. Each of these populations must be naturally reproducing, and stable or increasing in number, and threats must be managed so that a minimum of 300 mature individuals are maintained per population. Each population should persist at this level for a minimum of 5 consecutive years. (2) Management plans for each site will be evaluated on a regular basis, and updated to include monitoring to detect demographic or new environmental threats to P. hispida. (3) All of the populations that meet criterion 1 above shall be fenced and protected from ungulates, with agreements from conservation partners to maintain those protections in perpetuity. The agreements will also include provisions for invasive introduced plant removal, as appropriate, and adaptive management plans to address herbivory and habitat degradation by feral pigs and caterpillars and other unforeseeable threats. In addition, the agreements will include provisions for maximizing native plant biodiversity in these areas.

As the species meets reclassification and recovery criteria, we will review the species' status and consider the species for reclassification or removal from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

Request for Public Comments

Section 4(f) of the Act requires us to provide public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment during recovery plan development. It is also our policy to request peer review of recovery plans (July 1, 1994; 59 FR 34270). In an appendix to the approved recovery plan, we will summarize and respond to the issues raised by the public and peer reviewers. Substantive comments may or may not result in changes to the recovery plan; comments regarding recovery plan implementation will be forwarded as appropriate to Federal or other entities so that they can be taken into account during the course of
implementing recovery actions. Responses to individual commenters will not be provided, but we will provide a summary of how we addressed substantive comments in an appendix to the approved recovery plan.

Before we approve the plan, we will consider all comments we receive by the date specified in DATES. Methods of submitting comments are in ADDRESSES.

Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments and materials we receive will be available, by appointment, for public inspection during normal business hours at our office (see ADDRESSES).

Authority: We developed our draft recovery plan under the authority of section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). We publish this notice under section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Dated: January 28, 2011.

Theresa E. Rabot,
Acting Regional Director, Pacific Region.

[FR Doc. 2011–13637 Filed 6–1–11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–65–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Wheatgrass Ridge Wind Project, Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Idaho

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), as Lead Agency, intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Wheatgrass Ridge Wind Project, Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Idaho. It also announces the beginning of the scoping process to identify potential issues and content for inclusion in the EIS. Construction of the Wheatgrass Ridge Wind Project within the Fort Hall Reservation is subject to BIA approval of a lease and, as proposed, is a major Federal action under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended. The information in the EIS will be used to support a decision whether or not to lease Shoshone-Bannock Tribal lands to Wheatgrass Ridge Wind, LLC, for construction, operation, and maintenance of a wind energy facility up to 160 megawatt (MW). The EIS will describe and analyze potential environmental impacts from the proposed action and a range of reasonable alternatives.

DATES: Written comments on the scope and implementation of this proposal must arrive by August 1, 2011. The date(s) and location(s) of any scoping meetings will be announced at least 15 days in advance through local news media, newspapers and the Wheatgrass Ridge Wind EIS Project Web site at: http://www.wheatgrassridgewindeis.info.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the Wheatgrass Ridge Wind Project EIS by any of the following methods:

E-mail: info@WheatgrassRidgeWindEIS.info.
Fax: (208) 286–6199 (attention: Steve Linhart, POWER Engineers-Wheatgrass Ridge Wind EIS).

Mail: Wheatgrass Ridge Wind EIS, c/o Steve Linhart, POWER Engineers, 2041 South Cobalt Point Way, Meridian, Idaho 83642.

In person: At any EIS public scoping meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northwest Regional Office, Attention Dr. BJ Howerton, Environmental Services, 911 NE, 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97232–4169 Telephone: (503) 231–6749.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The EIS will assess the potential environmental impacts of BIA approval of leasing Tribally owned lands on Fort Hall Indian Reservation near Pocatello, Idaho, to Wheatgrass Ridge Wind, LLC, to construct, operate, and maintain a wind energy facility up to 160 megawatt (MW). Wheatgrass Ridge Wind, LLC, is a company co-owned by Shoshone-Bannock Renewable Energy Development Company (SBRED) and Boreas Wind, LLC. SBRED (a corporation created under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act) is wholly owned by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, a Federally recognized Indian Tribe organized under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 located in the State of Idaho. Boreas is wholly owned by Southern Ute Alternative Energy, LLC (SUAE), a Colorado limited liability company, and was formed for the purpose of pursuing and developing wind power projects. The SUAE is wholly owned by the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and was created to invest in and develop alternative and renewable energy.

The wind energy facility would be located on 100 percent Tribally owned lands in the Bannock Creek District located in the southwestern part of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. The proposed facility is anticipated to be comprised of between 53 and 100 wind turbines with a hub height of up to 330 feet and a tip height from 300 to 525 feet (tip height is measured from the ground to the tip of the rotor blade when it is perpendicular to the ground), depending on type and model of wind turbine). The facility would include: turbines anchored to concrete foundations approximately 20 feet in diameter surrounded by a gravel area around the exposed turbine foundation of approximately 60 feet; overhead and underground transmission lines; interconnection to adjacent transmission lines (138kV to 345 kV depending on the interconnection point) owned and operation by Idaho Power or Pacificorp; up to three substations approximately two to five acres each; eight to 10 temporary and two to four permanent meteorological towers, approximately 200 to 315 feet in height, depending on the meteorological data collected; new all-weather gravel access roads approximately 16 feet wide to each turbine location; widening and improvements to existing two-track roads to achieve an approximate 16 to 22 foot wide all-weather gravel access road; temporary lay down yards and hardened crane pads used for erecting turbines; and an operations and maintenance building built on approximately five acres of land within the project area. Wind turbine models in the 1.3–3 MW range from various manufacturers are being considered. The wind project would be located in an area up to approximately 21,355 acres on a land feature known as Wheatgrass Ridge. However, the actual wind turbines, roads, transmission lines, substation(s), and other infrastructure would have a footprint of approximately 250 to 500 acres of land.

The purpose of this project is to: (1) Increase electrical generation to meet existing and future energy demands in the western United States; (2) provide new opportunities for economic development and economic diversification for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes; (3) raise renewable energy resources for the western United States; (4) promote the self-governance