

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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REGULATIONS PROPOSED TO EASE REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL-STATE AGREEMENTS ON ENDANGERED SPECIES

New regulations proposed by the Interior Department's U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will make it easier for States to qualify for cooperative agreements with the Service on the conservation of endangered and threatened species.

Cooperative agreements enable States to receive Federal financial assistance for endangered species conservation, provide for joint State and Federal law enforcement and research efforts, and in general greatly increase the manpower and other resources available for endangered species conservation programs.

The proposed regulations, published in the August 30, 1978, Federal Register would implement a recently enacted amendment to Section 6(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Section 6(c) provides that the Secretary of the Interior may enter into cooperative agreements with the States for the conservation of endangered or threatened species.

"When they become final, these regulations will provide an alternative way for the Fish and Wildlife Service to enter into cooperative agreements with States that were formerly ineligible because of the original wording of Section 6(c)," Associate Director Keith Schreiner said.

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Under the wording of the original legislation, a State fish and wildlife agency could not qualify for a cooperative agreement unless it had the authority to manage all federally listed endangered or threatened species within its border. Difficulties arose because some State agencies do not have the authority to manage insects, plants, and some other species listed by the Interior Department. These States were thus prohibited from entering into cooperative agreements.

To eliminate this problem, in December 1977 Congress enacted an amendment to Section 6(c) that provides an alternative way for States to qualify for cooperative agreements. The amendment (P.L. 95-212) permits States to reach an agreement with the Secretary of the Interior as to which listed species are most urgently in need of conservation.

The new regulations now being proposed by the Fish and Wildlife Service will provide the means to implement this amendment. The proposed regulations also provide a basis for determining which listed species are most urgently in need of a conservation program.

States that qualify may still choose to enter into cooperative agreements under the original criteria. Twenty-two States have already signed cooperative agreements with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Public comments on the proposed regulations should be sent to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. Comments should be received no later than October 20, 1978. After public comments on the proposal are reviewed, final regulations will be published in the Federal Register.

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