

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Fish and Wildlife Service****Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Horicon and Fox River National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) Dodge, Fond du Lac, and Marquette Counties, WI**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces that the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is available for Horicon and Fox River NWRs, Wisconsin.

The CCP was prepared pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Goals and objectives in the CCP describe how the agency intends to manage the refuge over the next 15 years.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Final CCP are available on compact disk or hard copy. You may obtain a copy by writing to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Conservation Planning, Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111 or you may access and download a copy via the planning Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/horicon>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Patti Meyers, (920) 387-2658.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The 21,417-acre Horicon NWR was established in 1941 through land purchases approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The 1,004-acre Fox River NWR is administered by the Horicon staff and was established by the Director in October 1978. The southern one-third of the Horicon Marsh is managed by the Department of Natural Resources and their land managers actively participated in the development of the CCP.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee *et seq.*), requires the Service to develop a CCP for each National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose in developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System,

consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction for conserving wildlife and their habitats, the CCP identifies wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update these CCPs at least every 15 years.

Management of the Refuges for the next 15 years will focus on: (1) Improving the long-term sustainability of wildlife habitats; (2) increasing opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation; and (3) strengthening and expanding partnerships with government agencies, organizations, and communities.

This document was received at the Office of the Federal Register on April 11, 2007.

Dated: December 8, 2006.

Charles M. Wooley,

Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Fish and Wildlife Service****Draft Indiana Bat Recovery Plan, First Revision; Draft Survey Protocol**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability for review and comment.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce availability of the draft revised recovery plan and draft survey protocol for the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) for public review and comment. This species is federally listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act).

DATES: In order to consider your comments on the draft recovery plan and draft survey protocol, we must receive them on or before July 16, 2007.

ADDRESSES: *Recovery Plan:* You may obtain a copy of the recovery plan by any of the following means:

1. World Wide Web: <http://midwest.fws.gov/endangered>; or
2. U.S. mail or in-person pickup: Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Field Office, 620 South Walker Street, Bloomington, IN 47403-2121.

You may submit electronic comments on the recovery plan to this e-mail address: ibat_recovery_plan@fws.gov.

Draft Survey Protocol: The draft survey protocol is available at http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/ibat_srvyprtl.html; this Web page also provides instructions and addresses for submitting comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Lori Pruitt, by U.S. mail or e-mail (see ADDRESSES).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

Recovery of endangered or threatened animals or plants is a primary goal of our endangered species program. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for the conservation of the species, establish criteria for delisting species, and provide estimates of the time and cost for implementing the measures needed for recovery.

The Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) 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 that we provide public notice and opportunity for public review and comment 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 all also take these comments into consideration in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

The species was originally listed as in danger of extinction under the Exchanged Species Preservation Act of 1966. The original recovery plan for the species was published in 1983; this is the first recovery plan revision. As of October 2006, the Service had records of extant winter populations at approximately 281 hibernacula in 19 states and 269 maternity colonies in 16 states. The 2005 winter census estimate of the population was 457,000.

During winter, Indiana bats are restricted to suitable underground hibernacula. The vast majority of these sites are caves located in karst areas of the east-central United States; however, Indiana bats also hibernate in other cave-like locations, including abandoned mines. Most Indiana bats hibernate in caves or mines where the ambient temperature remains below 10° C but infrequently drops below freezing, and the temperature is relatively stable. In summer, most reproductive females

occupy roost sites under exfoliating bark of dead trees that retain large, thick slabs of peeling bark. These trees are typically within canopy gaps in a forest, in a fenceline, or along a wooded edge. Habitats in which maternity roosts occur include riparian zones, bottomland and floodplain habitats, wooded wetlands, and upland communities. Indiana bats typically forage in semi-open to closed forested habitats, forest edges, and riparian areas.

Threats to the Indiana bat vary during its annual cycle. At the hibernacula, threats include modifications to caves, mines, and surrounding areas that change airflow and alter microclimate in the hibernacula. Human disturbance and vandalism pose significant threats during hibernation through direct mortality and by inducing arousal and consequent depletion of fat reserves. Natural catastrophes can also have a significant effect during winter because of the concentration of individuals in a relatively few sites. During summer months, possible threats relate to the loss and degradation of forested habitat. Migration pathways and swarming sites may also be affected by habitat loss and degradation. In addition to these threats, significant information gaps remain regarding the species' ecology that hinder sound decision-making on how best to manage and protect the species.

The objective of the recovery plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of Indiana bat so that protection by the Act is no longer necessary. We may consider Indiana bat for classification from Endangered to Threatened status when the likelihood of the species becoming extinct in the foreseeable future has been precluded by achievement of the following criteria: (1) Permanent protection of a minimum of 80 percent of Priority-1 hibernacula in each of four Recovery Units (Ozark-Central, Midwest, Appalachian Mountains, and Northeast), with a minimum of one Priority-1 hibernaculum protected in each unit; (2) A minimum overall population estimate equal to the 2005 population estimate of 457,000; and (3) Documentation that shows important hibernacula within each Recovery Unit have a positive annual population growth rate over the next 10-year period (i.e., five survey periods).

We will consider Indiana bat for delisting when the likelihood of the species becoming threatened in the foreseeable future has been reduced by the achievement of the following criteria: (1) Permanent protection of a minimum of 50 percent of Priority-2 hibernacula in each Recovery Unit; (2) A minimum overall population estimate

equal to the 2005 population estimate of 457,000; and (3) Documentation that shows a positive population growth rate within each Recovery Unit over an additional five sequential survey periods (i.e., 10 years). If research on summer habitat requirements indicates the quality or quantity of maternity habitat is threatening recovery of the species, the Service will amend these criteria. Additional details on reclassification and delisting criteria are available in the recovery plan.

We will meet these criteria through the following actions: (1) Conserving and managing hibernacula and their winter populations, (2) Conserving and managing summer habitat to maximize survival and fecundity, (3) Planning and conducting research essential for recovery, and (4) Developing and implementing a public information and outreach program.

In addition to seeking comments on the content of the entire recovery plan, we request any information on the appropriate scope and breadth of this recovery plan as it relates to the inclusion of available science for summer habitat. Furthermore, we are seeking any information related to hybridization that may be occurring with other bats within the range of Indiana bat. We are interested to know about this, the extent of such hybridization and its potential to affect the Indiana bat as a species. We also request information about the use of records of captured individuals to describe the summer, winter and maternity distribution of the species. In addition to soliciting comment on the recovery plan, we are seeking comment on a draft survey protocol for determining presence or probable absence of Indiana bats at cave portals or abandoned mines that could serve as hibernacula. Our goal is to incorporate comments and finalize the draft survey protocol in time to be included in the approved Indiana Bat Recovery Plan. The draft survey protocol, with instructions for commenting, is available on the Internet (see ADDRESSES).

Public Comments Solicited

The Service solicits written comments on the recovery plan and the draft survey protocol. All comments received by the date specified will be considered prior to approval of the plan. Written comments and materials regarding the draft recovery plan should be addressed to the Field Supervisor (see ADDRESSES). Comments and materials received about the draft recovery plan will be available by appointment for public inspection during normal business hours at the

above address. For information on commenting on the draft survey protocol, see ADDRESSES.

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

Dated: April 4, 2007.

Lynn Lewis,

*Deputy Assistant Regional Director,
Ecological Services, Region 3, Fort Snelling,
Minnesota.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge, Seal Beach, Orange County, CA

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; announcement of public open house meetings; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we), intend to gather information necessary to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and associated environmental documents for the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). We furnish this notice in compliance with our CCP policy to advise other agencies and the public of our intentions, and to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to be considered in the planning process.

DATES: To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by May 18, 2007. Two public open house meetings will be held during the scoping phase of the comprehensive conservation plan development process. Special mailings, newspaper articles, and other media announcements will be used to inform the public and Tribe, state, and local governments of the dates and opportunities for input throughout the planning process.

ADDRESSES: Send your comments or requests for more information to Victoria Touchstone, Refuge Planner, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, CA 92011; telephone: 760-431-9440 ex. 349; fax: 760-930-0256; or electronic mail: Victoria_Touchstone@fws.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Victoria Touchstone, Refuge Planner, San Diego NWR Complex, 760-431-9440 extension 349.