

Federal Communications Commission.

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Chief, Allocations Branch, Policy and Rules
Division, Mass Media Bureau.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-AF43

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Reopening of the Comment Period on the Proposed Delisting of the Douglas County Population of the Columbian White- Tailed Deer

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service,
Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; notice of
reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service (Service), pursuant to
the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as
amended (Act), provide notice of the
reopening of the comment period for the
proposed delisting of the Douglas
County, Oregon population of the
Columbian white-tailed deer
(*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*). The
comment period has been reopened in
order to conduct a peer review of the
proposed rule.

DATES: Comments from all interested
parties must be received by November
18, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Written comments,
materials, data, and reports concerning
this proposal should be sent to the
Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Service, Southwest Oregon Field Office,
2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg,
Oregon 97470. Comments and materials
received will be available for public
inspection, by appointment, during
normal business hours, at the above
address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
David Peterson, at the address listed
above (telephone 541/957-3474;
facsimile 541/957-3475).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Columbian white-tailed deer
(*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*)
resembles other white-tailed deer
subspecies, ranging in size from 39 to 45
kilograms (kg) (85 to 100 pounds (lbs))
for females and 52 to 68 kg (115 to 150
lbs) for males. Generally a red-brown
color in summer, and gray in winter, the

species has white rings around the eyes
and a white ring just behind the nose.
Its tail is long and triangular in shape,
and is brown on the dorsal (upper)
surface, fringed in white, and the
ventral (under) portion is white (Oregon
Department of Fish and Wildlife
(ODFW) 1995). The species was
formerly distributed throughout the
bottomlands and prairie woodlands of
the lower Columbia, Willamette, and
Umpqua River basins in Oregon and
southern Washington (Bailey 1936). It is
the westernmost representative of the 38
subspecies of white-tailed deer. Early
accounts suggested this deer was locally
common, particularly in riparian areas
along the major rivers (Gavin 1978). The
decline in deer numbers was rapid with
the arrival and settlement of pioneers in
the fertile river valleys. Conversion of
brushy riparian land to agriculture,
urbanization, uncontrolled sport and
commercial hunting, and perhaps other
factors apparently caused the
extirpation of this deer over most of its
range by the early 1900s (Gavin 1984).
Only a small herd of 200 to 400 animals
in the lower Columbia River area of
Clatsop and Columbia counties, Oregon,
and Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties,
Washington, and a disjunct population
of unknown size in Douglas County,
Oregon, survived. These two remnant
populations are geographically
separated by about 320 kilometers (km)
(200 miles (mi)) of unsuitable or
discontinuous habitat.

Population declines led to
classification of this subspecies as
endangered in 1967 under the
Endangered Species Protection Act of
1966 (32 FR 4001). The subspecies was
automatically included in the lists of
threatened and endangered species
when the Endangered Species Act was
authorized in 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et
seq.*). Prior to 1977, only the Columbia
River population was listed as
endangered since the Douglas County
population was considered a black-
tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus
columbiana*) or a hybrid between the
black-tailed deer and the Columbian
white-tailed deer by the State of Oregon.
In 1978, the State of Oregon recognized
the white-tailed deer population in
Douglas County as the Columbian
white-tailed deer and prohibited
hunting of white-tailed deer in that
county (ODFW 1995). The Columbian
White-tailed Deer Recovery Plan
(Recovery Plan) was approved by us in
1976, and a revised version was
approved in 1983 (Service 1983).
Because of the distance between the
Douglas County and Columbia River
populations, and differences in habitats

and threats, the Recovery Plan addresses
the recovery of these two populations
separately.

Crews (1939) estimated the
population in the 1930s in Douglas
County at 200 to 300 individuals within
a range of about 78 square kilometers (sq
km) (30 square miles (sq mi)). In 1970,
ODFW estimated that 450 to 500 deer
were present. By 1983, the number had
increased to about 2,500 (Smith 1985).
The population has continued to grow,
and are presently are estimated to be
between 5,900 to 7,900 deer (ODFW
1999).

Along with this increase in numbers,
the range also has expanded. The deer
have expanded to the north and west in
the last 10 years, and now occupy an
area of approximately 800 sq km (308 sq
mi) (ODFW 1995).

Most habitat for the Douglas County
population is on private lands.
Approximately 3,880 hectares (ha)
(9,586 acres (ac)) of suitable habitat are
presently considered secure on Federal,
County and private lands. For the
purpose of delisting, habitat is
considered secure if it is protected by
legally binding measures or law from
adverse human activities for the
foreseeable future.

The current total population size is
estimated as approximately six times
the population size required for
downlisting, which greatly reduces the
risk to the population. It is also
anticipated that as habitat management
and restoration activities are
implemented by the Bureau of Land
Management, which contains the
majority of secure lands, the carrying
capacity and numbers of deer on these
lands will increase accordingly. The
Douglas County population has met the
objectives in the Recovery Plan, and
greatly exceeded the habitat objectives.

We published a proposed rule to
delist the Douglas County population of
the Columbian white-tailed deer on May
11, 1999 (64 FR 25263). The original
comment period closed on June 25,
1999. We will conduct a peer review of
this proposal and solicit the opinions of
three appropriate and independent
specialists regarding the data,
assumptions, and supportive
information presented for the
Columbian white-tailed deer, per our
Interagency Cooperative Policy for Peer
Review in Endangered Species Act
Activities (59 FR 34270).

References Cited

Bailey, V. 1936. The mammals and life zones
of Oregon. North American Fauna. U.S.
Department of Agriculture, Washington DC
55: 89-91.

- Crews, A.K. 1939. A study of the Oregon white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus* (Douglas). M.S. thesis. Oregon State College. Corvallis. 46 pp.
- Gavin, T.A. 1984. Pacific Northwest. in: White-tailed deer, ecology and management. L.K. Halls, editor. A Wildlife Management Institute publication. Pages 491–492.
- Gavin, T.A. 1978. Status of the Columbian white-tailed deer: some quantitative uses of biogeographic data. Pages 185–202 in: Threatened Deer. IUCN. Morges, Switzerland. 434 pp.
- Oregon Department of Fish Wildlife. 1999. Deer census and population trend data. Unpublished ODFW report, Southwest Regional Office. 4 pages.
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. 1995. Columbian white-tailed deer biological status assessment. Report to Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. 83 pp.
- Smith, W.P. 1985. Current geographic distribution and abundance on the Columbian white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus* (Douglas). Northwest Science 59:243–251.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1983. Revised Columbian white-tailed deer recovery plan. Portland, Oregon. 75 pp.

Author: The primary author of this notice is Barbara Behan of the Regional Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97232–4181 (telephone 503/231–6131).

Authority

The authority of this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: October 26, 1999.

Thomas Dwyer,

Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.
[FR Doc. 99–28696 Filed 11–2–99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[I.D. 102699G]

Groundfish Fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notification of draft alternatives; extension of scoping and comment period.

SUMMARY: NMFS is publishing draft alternatives to be analyzed in a programmatic supplemental

environmental impact statement (SEIS) on Federal groundfish fishery management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Alaska. This document also provides an extension of the scoping period from November 15 until December 15, 1999.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before December 15, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Lori Gravel, Sustainable Fisheries Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802. Comments may also be hand delivered to Room 457–1 Federal Office Building, 907 West 9 Street, Juneau, AK.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steven Davis, NMFS, (907) 271–3523 or steven.k.davis@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS published in the **Federal Register**, a notice of intent to prepare an SEIS on Federal groundfish fishery management in the EEZ off Alaska and announced scoping meetings (64 FR 53305, October 1, 1999). The reason for undertaking the analysis, and the issues to be analyzed, are detailed in the notice of intent and are not repeated here. In the notice, NMFS indicated that, prior to the scoping meetings, NMFS will publish in the **Federal Register** draft alternatives to be developed further during the scoping process.

NMFS manages the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries to achieve the goals and objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for the Groundfish Fisheries in the BSAI Area, and the Groundfish of the GOA. The goals and objectives reflect the complicated array of often competing concerns that affect the Alaska groundfish fisheries. In some instances, contradictory objectives are articulated within a single goal. For example, paraphrasing from the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the FMPs, we find they generally contain the following goals and objectives: Assure continuing availability of food supply and recreational opportunities; minimize irreversible adverse effects on fishery resources and the marine environment, including essential fish habitat; maximize economic benefits to the Nation and to the states; provide for sustained participation of fishing communities; minimize waste, reduce bycatch and the mortality of bycatch, encourage development of underused fisheries; control effort; promote

equitable allocations; keep management options open for the future; prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks; manage stocks as a unit; promote protection of the safety of human life at sea; promote regulatory and fishing efficiency; use the best available data; account for all fishery related removals. In deciding on particular new management measures, NMFS and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council review reasonable alternatives for achieving one or more of those goals and objectives, then base decisions according to the views of competing interests and concerns.

With this programmatic environmental impact analysis, NMFS will evaluate how successfully the current management regime achieves those goals and objectives. The SEIS will support these determinations by presenting an analysis of the environmental impacts of the current regime and compare them to configurations of alternatives management measures that would also achieve those goals and objectives.

Alternatives

NMFS has chosen to analyze broad thematic alternatives that will provide, in a programmatic sense, a conceptual framework for understanding how effectively alternative harvest management regimes achieve the articulated goals and objectives and what their environmental impacts would be. The SEIS will look at the themes: (1) Who harvests groundfish; (2) what groundfish is harvested; (3) when and where is groundfish harvested; and (4) how groundfish is harvested. Sub-alternatives will be developed for each theme. The alternatives and sub-alternatives NMFS is currently considering include the following:

Allocative Schemes (Who harvests groundfish?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo: Allocation of groundfish harvest is currently based on the species or species group and is made to individuals, cooperatives, and Olympic-style fisheries (i.e., non-Community Development Quota (CDQ), non-Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fisheries) by sector.

Sub-alternative 2 - IFQ: Expand or reduce allocations to individuals by species or species group.

Sub-alternative 3 - Cooperatives: Expand or reduce allocations to cooperatives by species or species group.

Sub-alternative 4 - Open access: Reduce or remove limited access systems.