

Register on July 20, 2005 (70 FR 41786), August 6, 2006 (71 FR 47242), and November 16, 2007 (72 FR 64665).

Public Review of Comments

Please refer to the permit number for the application when submitting comments.

We solicit public review and comment on this recovery permit application. 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 received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

Dated: May 23, 2008.

Ren Lohoefener,

Regional Director, Region 1, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. E8-13486 Filed 6-16-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R4-ES-2008-N0111]; [40120-1113-0000-C2]

Notice of Availability of a Technical Agency Draft Recovery Plan for the Puerto Rican Parrot for Review and Comment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability and opening of public comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the availability of the technical agency draft revised recovery plan for the Puerto Rican Parrot (*Amazona vittata*). The technical agency draft revised recovery plan includes specific recovery objectives and criteria to be met in order to reclassify this species to threatened status and delist it under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). We solicit review and comment on this technical agency draft recovery plan from local, state, and Federal agencies, and the public.

DATES: In order to be considered, we must receive comments on the technical

agency draft recovery plan on or before August 18, 2008.

ADDRESSES: If you wish to review this technical agency revised draft recovery plan, you may obtain a copy by contacting the Caribbean Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 491, Boquerón, Puerto Rico 00622 (telephone (787) 851-7297 Ext. 231) or by visiting our Web site at <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html#plans>. If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by the following methods:

1. You may submit written comments and materials to the Project Leader, at the above address.

2. You may hand-deliver written comments to our Caribbean Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 491, Boquerón, Puerto Rico 00622, or fax your comments to (787) 851-7440.

3. You may send comments by e-mail to Marelisa Rivera at marelisa_rivera@fws.gov. For directions on how to submit electronic filing of comments, see the "Public Comments Solicited" section.

Comments and materials received are available for public inspection on request, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Marelisa Rivera at the above address (Telephone 787-851-7297, ext. 231).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Once abundant and widespread on the Puerto Rican archipelago, the Puerto Rican parrot is considered one of the ten most endangered birds in the world. Largely green with a red forehead and blue flight feathers, the parrot is one of nine *Amazona* parrots occurring in the West Indies. The species is one of the smallest in its genus, measuring about 29 centimeters (11 inches) in length and weighing about 270 grams (10 ounces). Presently, a minimum of 25 individuals survive in the wild in the El Yunque National Forest (YNF) in eastern Puerto Rico and 10 in the Río Abajo Forest (RAF) in north central Puerto Rico. Two captive population facilities hold more than 225 individuals: the Iguaca Aviary and the José L. Vivaldi Aviary in eastern and west-central Puerto Rico, respectively.

The Puerto Rican parrot is a fruit-eating cavity nester seldom seen far from forests. The decline of the parrot and its restricted distribution are due to many factors, but mostly due to widespread habitat loss (e.g., deforestation.) Due to its nesting requirements, it depends on mature forests with large cavity-forming trees.

At present, in addition to low numbers and a limited distribution, major threats to this species are nest competition and predation of eggs and chicks by pearly-eyed thrashers (*Margarops fuscatus*), predation of fledglings and adults by red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), predation by rats (*Rattus rattus* and *R. norvegicus*), parasitism by warble flies (*Philornis pici*), and the impact of hurricanes. Other threats include competition for cavities with European and Africanized honeybees (*Apis mellifera*). Many of the threats are being controlled through management strategies.

Restoring an endangered or threatened animal or plant to the point where it is again a secure, self-sustaining member of its ecosystem is a primary goal of the endangered species program. To help guide the recovery effort, we are preparing recovery plans for most listed species. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for conservation of the species, establish criteria for downlisting or delisting, and estimate time and cost for implementing recovery measures.

The Act (16 U.S.C. 1533 *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 requires us to provide a public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment during recovery plan development. We will consider all information presented during a public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised recovery plan. We and other Federal agencies will take these comments into account in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

The objective of this technical agency draft revised plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of the Puerto Rican parrot, so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. As reclassification and recovery criteria are met, the status of the species will be reviewed and it will be considered for reclassification or removal from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

Public Comments Solicited

We solicit written comments on the recovery plan described. We will consider all comments received by the date specified above prior to final approval of the revised recovery plan.

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.

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

Dated: April 24, 2008.

Cynthia K. Dohner,
Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. E8-13580 Filed 6-16-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[OR-025-1110-MR-SSSS; 8-0118]

Notice of Intent To Amend the Three Rivers Resource Management Plan and Conduct Public Scoping

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Burns District in Burns, Oregon, intends to amend the Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP) with an associated Environmental Assessment (EA) that also analyzes effects of undertaking the Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Improvement Project (GSHIP) located in Harney County, Oregon. The objective of the proposal is to improve sage-grouse habitat and reestablish once open sagebrush habitats encroached upon by western juniper. The BLM also intends to consider allowance for harvest of downed western juniper trees south of U.S. Highway 20 and west of Oregon State Highway 205 for fuel wood, posts and poles, and for commercial harvest of juniper boughs for use in holiday decorating. Allowance for harvest of downed juniper trees and juniper boughs would amend the Three Rivers RMP. By this notice, the BLM is announcing the beginning of the public scoping process.

DATES: Scoping comments will be accepted for 30 days following publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. Public notice will be provided when the Draft RMP Amendment and associated EA become available later this year (2008). Written comments will also be accepted throughout the planning process at the address below.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments to GSHIP/RMP Amendment Lead, BLM Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738; fax to (541) 573-4411; or e-mail to *Joan_Suther@or.blm.gov*. Comments, including the names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Burns District Office during regular business hours 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the Decision. 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. Anonymous comments will not be considered. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: GSHIP/RMP Amendment Project Lead, BLM Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738; (541) 573-4503; Fax (541) 573-4411; e-mail *Joan_Suther@blm.gov*; or visit the Burns District Web site at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns/plans/index.php>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The GSHIP project was developed from management objectives identified in the Three Rivers RMP. The Three Rivers Plan directs BLM to: “* * * restore, maintain, or enhance the diversity of plant communities and wildlife habitat in abundances and distributions which prevent the loss of specific native plant community types or indigenous wildlife species habitat within the Resource Area” (WL-7.2); “* * * maintain, restore or enhance the habitat of candidate, State listed and other sensitive species to maintain the populations at a level which will avoid endangering the species and the need to list the species by either State or Federal governments” (SSS-2); and “* * * maintain, restore or enhance the diversity of plant communities and plant species in abundances and distributions, which prevent the loss of specific native plant community types or indigenous plant species within the Resource Area” (V-1).

In addition to direction from the Three Rivers RMP, managers are directed to meet management objectives and guidelines set forth in the Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush-Steppe Ecosystems Management Guidelines (2001). These management objectives and guidelines include: “* * * maintain and enhance existing sage-grouse habitats, use mechanical treatment or prescribed fire to remove juniper where it has invaded into * * * sites with mountain big sagebrush and/or low sagebrush; and vegetation manipulations should benefit the long-term health of sage-grouse habitat.”

Greater sage-grouse have been declining across much of their native range for decades due to habitat modification and fragmentation. Changes to habitat and habitat fragmentation have come from both natural and human causes. Human caused habitat change and fragmentation have resulted from urban sprawl, rangeland modification, and infrastructure development (i.e., power lines, highways, etc.). Natural habitat changes have been induced through fire, climate change, and succession; however, even natural causes have been influenced by man to some degree. One cause of sage-grouse habitat loss in the Three Rivers Resource Area is due to western juniper encroachment into what were once sagebrush dominated landscapes.

Historic grazing practices (which removed fine herbaceous fuels) and fire suppression activities at the turn of the century reduced influence of the fire regime in the project area. Fire was the principal factor controlling conifer encroachment into shrub-grassland communities in the Intermountain West prior to Euro-American immigration (110 to 130 years ago) (West 1999; Miller and Tausch 2001). As frequency and size of fires across the landscape lessened, juniper expanded into shrub-grassland communities with an overall loss in ecosystem function and a dramatic alteration in historic biodiversity, hydrologic cycles, fauna, and nutrient cycling (Bates *et al.* 1998).

Recent inventories of western juniper in eastern Oregon indicate juniper woodlands and savannahs cover an area of over five million acres (Gedney *et al.* 1999). Comparisons with data generated by earlier inventories suggest the area supporting western juniper has increased fivefold since 1936. Harney County is one of four counties in Oregon that contain more than one-half million acres of western juniper woodlands.

Sage-grouse are sensitive to juniper encroachment and have been shown to avoid juniper communities for nesting