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US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 28, 2012

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FRUIT GROWERS SUPPLY COMPANY, FEDERAL AGENCIES BEGIN LONG TERM PARTNERSHIP TO PROTECT NUMEROUS SPECIES

Sacramento, Calif., – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (Services) today issued incidental take permits (ITPs) to Fruit Growers Supply Company (FGS), a timber company based in Siskiyou County, Calif. The issuance of these permits inaugurates a 50-year conservation partnership that will provide habitat for numerous wildlife and fish species protected under federal law.

Under the terms of the permit, FGS will operate in compliance with the ESA as long as the company implements the mandated conservation and mitigation measures developed in the multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The permits are authorized under the ESA and will allow the company to proceed with their operations that could result in the prohibited “take” (i.e., harm) of a listed species.

In exchange, FGS will contribute to the recovery of the northern spotted owl by protecting active nest sites on their property and by managing their land for high quality habitat. Additionally, water quality and fish habitat will benefit from a focused effort to promote and maintain riparian functions that reduce sediment delivery to area streams, and protect hydrologic and riparian processes in area watersheds. FGS will also help in the recovery process for the Yreka phlox by surveying for unknown populations of the endangered flower.

“Today we celebrate the completion of a permitting process - one based on the best available science and the expertise of the federal agencies - and the beginning of a program which will protect and improve the habitat used by numerous species while allowing active management of our private lands,” said Charles Brown, Vice President for Fruit Growers Supply Company. “Our company has worked very hard with federal and state agencies to develop a conservation plan that meets the goals of those involved, and we are grateful to the Services for all their support, guidance and cooperation.”

“A high priority for the Fish and Wildlife Service is to make implementation of the Endangered Species Act less complex, less contentious and more effective,” said Ren Lohofener, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Southwest Region. “This habitat conservation plan is a good example of how we can work with private landowners like Fruit Growers Supply Company to recover threatened and endangered species, while also making it easier for companies to operate in these working landscapes.”

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“Fruit Growers Supply Company has remained a steadfast partner in improving stream conditions for fish during a complex process of coordinating land management practices with the needs of fish,” said Rodney McInnis, Regional Administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Southwest Region. “When conscientious landowners like FGS turn scientific information into action, real progress is made toward recovering listed salmon and steelhead.”

The Services issued the permits based on a HCP developed in collaboration with FGS, and public comments received through the National Environmental Policy Act process. The HCP applies to 152,178 acres of commercial timberland owned by FGS in Siskiyou County, California.

Fruit Growers today also expressed its support of the HCP/ITP process allowed under the federal law. “This program is truly an example of win-win partnerships that can exist between the private sector and the federal government,” Brown said. “Fruit Growers is committed to implementing its conservation plan and reaching the mutually-agreed goals we have developed with the Services. In the meantime, the company can operate with regulatory certainty that our work will not interfere with the protections afforded to listed species under the ESA,” he added, noting that “the dedication and commitment of the federal agencies to help us complete this process is commendable.”

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Organized in 1907, FGS has grown along with the West's citrus production. Today, the nonprofit agriculture cooperative is open to the public and provides the agricultural items required to grow, harvest, package, and ship various commodities of citrus in southern California and Arizona.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources.



Photo Caption: Officials from Fruit Growers Supply Company signed a 50-year agreement with federal officials in Sacramento on Wednesday, Nov. 28. The agreement will help protect a number of species that occur on forest lands owned by the company in Siskiyou County, Calif. From left to right are Ren Lohofener, Regional Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Charles Brown, Vice President of Fruit Growers Supply Company, Mark Lindgren, President and CEO of Fruit Growers Supply Company, and Chris Yates, Assistant Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service.