

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Field Supervisor at the above U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Ecological Services Field Office, Phoenix, Arizona (602) 242-0210.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

The Malpai Borderlands Group (Applicants) plan to implement conservation measures on approximately 1 million acres (404,700 hectares) in Cochise County, Arizona, and Hidalgo County, New Mexico. The conservation measures will improve and maintain livestock tanks and other artificial waters and use them to establish Chiricahua leopard frog populations. The Agreement as currently written is expected to provide a net conservation benefit to the Chiricahua leopard frog. The Agreement will provide protection to the Applicants against further regulation under the Endangered Species Act in the event that the Chiricahua leopard frog naturally or artificially establishes populations in the area as a result of implementation of the proposed conservation measures.

Section 9 of the Act prohibits the "taking" of threatened or endangered species. However, the Service, under limited circumstances, may issue permits to take threatened and endangered wildlife species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Regulations governing permits for endangered species are at 50 CFR 17.22 and 50 CFR 17.32 for threatened species.

Bryan Arroyo,

Acting Regional Director, Region 2, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

[FR Doc. 03-25236 Filed 10-3-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4510-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Fish and Wildlife Service****Recovery Plan for Coastal Plants of the Northern San Francisco Peninsula**

AGENCY: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("we") announces the availability of the Recovery Plan for Coastal Plants of the Northern San Francisco Peninsula. This recovery plan includes the endangered San Francisco lessingia (*Lessingia germanorum*) and Raven's manzanita (*Arctostaphylos hookeri* ssp. *ravenii*). The portion of the plan dealing with Raven's manzanita is

a revision of the 1984 Raven's Manzanita Recovery Plan. Additional species of concern that will benefit from recovery actions taken for these plants are also discussed in the recovery plan. This recovery plan includes recovery criteria and measures for the San Francisco lessingia and Raven's manzanita.

ADDRESSES: Hard copies of the final recovery plan will be available in 4 to 6 weeks by written request addressed to the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, 2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605, Sacramento, California 95825-1888. This final recovery plan is currently available on the World Wide Web at <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html#plans>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Larry Host or Kirsten Tarp, Fish and Wildlife Biologists, at the above Sacramento address (telephone 916-414-6600).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

Recovery of endangered or threatened animals and plants is a primary goal of our endangered species program and the Endangered Species Act (Act) (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Recovery means improvement of the status of listed species to the point at which listing is no longer appropriate under the criteria set out in section 4(a)(1) of the Act. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for the conservation of the species, establish criteria for downlisting or delisting listed species, and estimate time and cost for implementing the measures needed for recovery.

The Act 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 that public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment be provided during recovery plan development. The Draft Recovery Plan for Coastal Plants of the Northern San Francisco Peninsula was available for comment from December 4, 2001, through September 9, 2002. We sent 1,574 copies of the draft plan to affected or interested parties. About 430 comment letters were received and reviewed by us, including 5 responses from peer reviewers.

Substantive technical comments resulted in several changes to the plan. Many of these came from the National Park Service and the Presidio Trust who have been working to recover the two focus species for several years. Their comments provided helpful information

about the costs and time needs for several of the actions recommended in the plan. Substantive comments regarding implementation of the plan did not necessarily result in changes to the recovery plan, but will be used to assist the work of participating Federal and other entities during the course of implementing recovery actions.

San Francisco lessingia and Raven's manzanita are restricted to the San Francisco peninsula in San Francisco County and the northern part of San Mateo County, California. San Francisco lessingia, an annual herb in the aster family, is restricted to coastal sand deposits. Raven's manzanita, a rare evergreen creeping shrub in the heath family, was historically restricted to a few scattered serpentine outcrops. Habitat loss, adverse alteration of ecological processes, and invasion of non-native plant species threaten San Francisco lessingia. Raven's manzanita has also been threatened by habitat loss. The primary current threats to Raven's manzanita include invasion of non-native vegetation; fungal pathogens; and tussock moth caterpillars, the larvae of moths from the family Lymantriidae, that eat the plants' leaves.

The plan also makes reference to several other federally listed species which are ecologically associated with San Francisco lessingia and Raven's manzanita, but which are treated comprehensively in other recovery plans. These species are beach layia (*Layia carnosa*), Presidio clarkia (*Clarkia franciscana*), Marin dwarf-flax (*Hesperolinon congestum*), Myrtle's silverspot butterfly (*Speyere zerene myrtleae*), and bay checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha bayensis*). In addition, 16 plant species of concern and 17 plant species of local or regional conservation significance are considered in this recovery plan.

The recovery plan stresses re-establishing dynamic, persistent populations of San Francisco lessingia and Raven's manzanita within plant communities which have been restored to be as "self-sustaining" as possible within urban wildland reserves. Because the species has been reduced to small remnant areas of habitat, specific recovery actions for San Francisco lessingia focus on the restoration and management of larger, dynamic mosaics of coastal dune areas supporting shifting populations within the species' narrow historic range. Recovery of Raven's manzanita will include, but will not be limited to, the strategy of the 1984 Raven's Manzanita Recovery Plan, which emphasized the stabilization of the single remaining genetic individual. The plan also seeks to re-establish

multiple sexually reproducing populations of Raven's manzanita in association with its historically associated species of local serpentine outcrops.

The objectives of this recovery plan are to delist San Francisco lessingia and to downlist Raven's manzanita through implementation of a variety of recovery measures including: (1) Protection and restoration of a series of ecological reserves (often with mixed recreational and conservation park land uses); (2) promotion of population increases of San Francisco lessingia and Raven's manzanita within these sites, and reintroduction of them to restored sites; (3) management of protected sites, especially the extensive eradication or suppression of invasive dominant non-native vegetation; (4) research; and (5) public participation, outreach, and information.

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

Dated: August 8, 2003.

Steve Thompson,

Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office, Region 1, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 03-25238 Filed 10-3-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians

Working Group on Land Consolidation Program

AGENCIES: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior; Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: On April 22, 2003, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) in the Department of the Interior filed a **Federal Register** notice (68 FR 19845) calling for nominations of Tribal officials to participate in a working group to address the rapidly increasing fractionation of ownership of Indian land. This fractionation is due to the system of allotments established by the General Allotment Act of 1887. The President's fiscal year (FY) 2004 Budget incorporates a request for a significant increase for the Indian Land Consolidation program aimed at reducing the number of individual owners in parcels of Indian lands allotted to individuals. The Department has been actively working with tribal

groups on the issue and will therefore not be convening a new working group.

DATES: Effective on the date of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

ATTN: Terry Virden, Deputy Commissioner for Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Room 4160, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240, or ATTN: Donna Erwin, Acting Special Trustee, Office of Special Trustee for American Indians, Room 5140, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The allotment of Indian lands—dividing tribal lands into small parcels and allocating those parcels to individual Indians—became federal policy in 1887 with the enactment of the General Allotment Act. By the 1930s, however, it was widely accepted that the policy was a failure and, in 1934 it was ended with passage of the first Indian Reorganization Act. Interests in these allotted lands started to “fractionate” as interests divided among the heirs of the original allottees, expanding rapidly with every generation.

Today, there are approximately four million owner interests in the 10 million acres of individually-owned trust lands, and these four million interests could expand to 11 million interests by 2030. Moreover, there are an estimated 1.4 million fractional interests of 2 percent or less involving 58,000 tracks of individually-owned trust and restricted lands. There are not single pieces of property with ownership interests that are less than 0.000002 percent of the whole interest.

Addressing this issue is critical to improving the management of trust assets. The Department of the Interior, the Department in which the BIA and OST are located, is bound by its trust obligations to maintain ownership records, and in some cases to collect and distribute income for each Indian owner's interest, regardless of size. Reduction of fractional interests will increase the likelihood of more productive economic use of the land, reduce record keeping and large numbers of small dollar financial transactions, and decrease the number of interests subject to probate.

Starting in 2004, the BIA will oversee the National Indian Land Consolidation Program. The Department has established an internal working group that has actively met with tribal organizations, such as the Indian Land Working Group and the National Congress of American Indians, to discuss fractionation, the problems associated with fractionation, and

possible solutions to problems. Since the Department is actively working with tribal organizations, the Department will not be convening another fractionation working group.

Dated: September 10, 2003.

Aurene M. Martin,

Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

[FR Doc. 03-25232 Filed 10-03-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-02-M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians

Working Group on the “As-Is” “To-Be” Process and Trust Improvement Efforts

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs and Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: On April 22, 2003, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) in the Department of the Interior filed a **Federal Register** notice (68 FR 19846) calling for nominations of Tribal officials to participate in a working group to discuss the “As-Is” “To-Be” processes and provide input and comments on potential alternatives on how the trust process should be improved and administered. Because mechanisms are now in place for soliciting input from Tribes on the “To-Be” processes, the Department will not be convening a new working group.

DATES: Effective on the date of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

ATTN: Terry Virden, Deputy Commissioner for Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Room 4160, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240; or ATTN: Donna Erwin, Acting Special Trustee, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, Room 5140, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Electronic Data Systems Corporation, in its January 2002 Trust Reform Report, recommended that the Department develop an accurate, current state model to include business processes, internal controls, and associated information technology. The Department worked extensively on documenting the “As-Is” business processes currently employed in managing Indian trust assets. Through this “As-Is” business process,