

The Service has determined that the Applicants' proposal, including the proposed mitigation and minimization measures, will individually and cumulatively have a minor or negligible effect on the species covered in the HCP. Therefore, the ITP is a "low-effect" project and qualifies as a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as provided by the Department of Interior Manual (516 DM 2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1). This preliminary information may be revised based on our review of public comments that we receive in response to this notice. Low-effect HCPs are those involving: (1) Minor or negligible effects on federally listed or candidate species and their habitats, and (2) minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources. The Applicants' HCP qualifies for the following reasons:

1. Approval of the HCP would result in minor or negligible effects on the Florida scrub-jay population as a whole. The Service does not anticipate significant direct or cumulative effects to the Florida scrub-jay population as a result of the project.
2. Approval of the HCP would not have adverse effects on known unique geographic, historic, or cultural sites, or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
3. Approval of the HCP would not result in any significant adverse effects on public health or safety.
4. The project does not require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, nor does it threaten to violate a Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
5. Approval of the Plan would not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

The Service will evaluate the HCP and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). If it is determined that those requirements are met, the ITP will be issued for incidental take of the Florida scrub-jay. The Service will also evaluate whether issuance of the section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service section 7 consultation. The results of this consultation, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP. This notice is provided

pursuant to section 10 of the Endangered Species Act and NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

Dated: March 24, 2006.

Cynthia K. Dohner,

Acting Regional Director, Southeast Region.

[FR Doc. E6-4988 Filed 4-5-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Receipt of an Application and Availability of an Environmental Assessment for an Incidental Take Permit for Florida Scrub-Jays During Construction for the Expansion of the Deltona Regional Library, Deltona, Volusia County, FL

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The County of Volusia, Environmental Management Division (Applicant) requests an incidental take permit (ITP) pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The Applicant anticipates taking two families of Florida scrub-jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) (scrub-jay) over the requested 30-year permit term as a result of the destruction of 1.9 acres of foraging, sheltering, and possible nesting habitat, incidental to land clearing for the expansion of the Deltona Regional Library and supporting infrastructure in Volusia County, Florida (Project).

The Applicant's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) describes the mitigation and minimization measures proposed to address the effects of the Project to the Florida scrub-jay. These measures are outlined in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below. We announce the availability of the ITP application and HCP and an environmental assessment.

DATES: Written comments on the ITP application and HCP should be sent to the Service's Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**) and should be received on or before June 5, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the application, environmental assessment, and HCP may obtain a copy by writing the Service's Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia. Please reference permit number TE103648-0 in such requests. Documents will also be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours at the Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta,

Georgia 30345 (Attn: Endangered Species Permits), or Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 6620 Southpoint Drive South, Suite 310, Jacksonville, Florida 32216-0912.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. David Dell, Regional HCP Coordinator, (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone: 404/679-7313, facsimile: 404/679-7081; or Mr. Michael Jennings, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Jacksonville Field Office, Jacksonville, Florida (see **ADDRESSES** above), telephone: 904/232-2580, ext. 113.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: If you wish to comment, you may submit comments by any one of several methods. Please reference permit number TE103648-0 in such comments. You may mail comments to the Service's Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**). You may also comment via the Internet to "david_dell@fws.gov". Please submit comments over the Internet as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include your name and return address in your Internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation from us that we have received your Internet message, contact us directly at either telephone number listed below (see *Further Information*). Finally, you may hand deliver comments to either Service office listed below (see **ADDRESSES**). Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the administrative record. We will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law. There may also be other circumstances in which we would withhold from the administrative record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. We will not, however, consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

The Florida scrub-jay (scrub-jay) is geographically isolated from other species of scrub-jays found in Mexico and the western United States. The scrub-jay is found exclusively in peninsular Florida and is restricted to xeric uplands (predominately in oak-dominated scrub). Increasing urban and agricultural development has resulted in

habitat loss and fragmentation that has adversely affected the distribution and numbers of scrub-jays. The total estimated population is between 7,000 and 11,000 individuals.

The decline in the number and distribution of scrub-jays in east-central Florida has been exacerbated by tremendous urban growth in the past 50 years. Much of the historic commercial and residential development has occurred on the dry soils that previously supported scrub-jay habitat. Based on existing soils data, much of the historic and current scrub-jay habitat of coastal east-central Florida occurs proximal to the current shoreline and larger river basins. Much of this area of Florida was settled early because few wetlands restricted urban and agricultural development. Due to the effects of urban and agricultural development over the past 100 years, much of the remaining scrub-jay habitat is now relatively small and isolated. What remains is largely degraded due to the exclusion of fire that is needed to maintain xeric uplands in conditions suitable for scrub-jays.

Surveys conducted during the summer of 2004 found two scrub-jay family groups using a total of about 2.5 acres that will be impacted by the Project. The remaining habitat for these two families of scrub-jays is protected within the Lyonia Preserve, a county-owned and managed parcel dedicated to scrub and scrub-jay conservation. Lyonia Preserve is contiguous with the Project site and contains another 18 families of scrub-jays.

Scrub-jays using the Project site are part of a larger complex of scrub-jays located in a matrix of urban and natural settings in areas of western Volusia County. Scrub-jays in urban areas are particularly vulnerable and typically do not successfully produce young that survive to adulthood. Persistent urban growth in this area will likely result in further reductions in the amount of suitable habitat for scrub-jays. Increasing urban pressures are also likely to result in the continued degradation of scrub-jay habitat as fire exclusion slowly results in vegetative overgrowth. Thus, over the long-term, scrub-jays are unlikely to persist in urban settings, and conservation efforts for this species should target acquisition and management of large parcels of land outside the direct influence of urbanization. The retention of small patches of habitat similar to the onsite mitigation proposed by the Applicant can provide benefits to scrub-jays by creating "stepping stones" used by scrub-jays dispersing between larger parcels of conservation lands in Volusia County.

Construction of the Project's infrastructure and facilities will result in harm to scrub-jays, incidental to the carrying out of these otherwise lawful activities. Habitat alteration associated with the proposed expansion of the regional library and associated infrastructure will reduce the availability of foraging, sheltering, and possible nesting habitat for two families of scrub-jays.

The Applicant proposes to minimize impacts to scrub-jays by reducing the Project's footprint and avoiding active nest sites during the breeding season. The Applicant proposes to mitigate the take of scrub-jays by protecting and managing scrub-jay habitat within Lyonia Preserve pursuant to an agreement between the Service and County of Volusia. In that agreement, Volusia County agreed to provide long-term protection of scrub-jay habitat and to implement land management activities that will enhance habitat for this species. Until the Service and County of Volusia entered into this agreement, no such protection was afforded to scrub-jays in Lyonia Preserve. In return for their commitment to protect and manage scrub-jay habitat within Lyonia Preserve, the agreement stipulates that the County of Volusia's Public Works Department and Volusia County School District may use the Lyonia Preserve as a scrub-jay mitigation site for locally sponsored projects, such as the expansion of the regional library. The Applicant proposes to use a portion of their scrub-jay enhancement credits as mitigation for the Project.

The Service has made a preliminary determination that issuance of the requested ITP is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This preliminary information may be revised due to public comment received in response to this notice and is based on information contained in the EA and HCP. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10 of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

We will evaluate the HCP and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Act. If it is determined that those requirements are met, the ITP will be issued for the incidental take of the Florida scrub-jay. We will also evaluate whether issuance of the section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service section 7 consultation. The

results of this consultation, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP.

Dated: January 27, 2006.

Cynthia K. Dohner,

Acting Regional Director, Southeast Region.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Umbrella Incidental Take Permit Coverage for Small Lot Developments Throughout 34 Florida Counties

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared, and proposes to make available for use by the public for a term of seven years, a combined Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (HCP/EA) that addresses incidental take of the threatened Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) (scrub-jay) that would result from residential, commercial, industrial, and similar development activities on properties one acre or smaller in size located in urban areas. The Service anticipates that the HCP/EA will act as an "umbrella" document for qualifying landowners who might need an incidental take permit (ITP) pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) on an estimated total of 14,928 acres of scrub-jay foraging, sheltering, and nesting habitat throughout 34 counties. The HCP portion of this document identifies minimization and mitigation measures that will be required of individual landowners wishing to participate under the umbrella HCP/EA. A more detailed description of the mitigation and minimization measures required pursuant to section 10 of the Act is provided in the HCP/EA and in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.

DATES: Written comments on the HCP/EA should be sent to the Service's Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**) and received on or before June 5, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the HCP/EA may obtain a copy by writing the Service's Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia. Requests must