

Based on the environmental assessment and the comments received, the Service adopted Alternative 2 as its preferred alternative. This alternative was considered to be the most effective for meeting the purposes of the refuge by conserving, restoring, and managing the refuge's wetlands and moist-soil habitats and hydrology. Alternative 2 best achieves national, ecosystem, and refuge-specific goals and objectives and positively addresses significant issues and concerns expressed by the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tina Chouinard, Natural Resource Planner, Central Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex, telephone: 318/253-4238; fax: 318/253-7139; e-mail: tina_chouinard@fws.gov; or by writing to the Natural Resource Planner at the address in the **ADDRESSES** section.

AUTHORITY: This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105-57.

Dated: September 12, 2006.

Cynthia K. Dohner,

Acting Regional Director.

Editorial Note: This document was received at the Office of the Federal Register on December 21, 2006.

[FR Doc. 06-9871 Filed 12-26-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Brevard and Volusia Counties, Florida

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: The Fish and Wildlife Service announces that a Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge are available for review and comment. The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, requires the Service to develop a comprehensive conservation plan for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose in developing a comprehensive conservation plan is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation,

legal mandates and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, plans identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

DATES: Comments on the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge must be received no later than February 26, 2007.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the draft plan and environmental assessment is available on compact diskette or hard copy, and may be obtained by contacting the refuge at: Telephone: 321/861-0667; E-mail: MerrittIslandCCP@fws.gov; or by writing to: Merritt Island NWR CCP, P.O. Box 6504, Titusville, Florida 32782-6504. You may also access or download a copy of the plan and environmental assessment at the following Web site address: <http://southeast.fws.gov/planning/>. Comments should be mailed to the refuge at the above address or e-mailed to: MerrittIslandCCP@fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The draft comprehensive conservation plan addresses several priority issues raised by the Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, other governmental partners, and the public, including: the spread of exotic, invasive, and nuisance species; the threats to threatened, endangered, and other imperiled species; the threats and impacts of an ever-increasing human population and the associated demand for public use activities; the management/maintenance of impounded wetlands; the coordination between intergovernmental partners; and the decline in migratory birds and their habitats.

To address these priority issues, four alternatives were developed and evaluated during the planning process.

Alternative A continues current refuge management activities and programs. Under this alternative, the refuge would continue to maintain 550 Florida scrub jay family groups across 15,000 acres, 11-13 nesting pairs of bald eagles, and 6.3 miles of sea turtle nesting beaches.

Alternative B expands refuge management actions on needs of threatened and endangered species. The refuge would aggressively manage for Florida scrub jays, restoring and maintaining 19,000-20,000 acres in optimal condition to support 900 family

groups. Habitat management activities would support the number of nesting pairs of bald eagles to expand to 20, with increased protection of nest sites, development of artificial nesting platforms, and increased cultivation of future nest areas and nesting trees.

Alternative C focuses refuge management actions on the needs of migratory birds. Current management activities for threatened and endangered species would remain the same or would be decreased. The refuge would manage intensively for waterfowl, increasing the acres of impounded wetlands managed to over 16,000 acres and annually supporting targets of 250 breeding pairs of mottled duck, 60,000 lesser scaup, 25,000 dabbling ducks, and 38,000 diving ducks. The refuge would also intensively manage for shorebirds, increasing to over 5,000 acres managed in impounded wetlands.

Alternative D, the Service's proposed alternative, takes a more landscape view of the refuge and its resources, focusing refuge management on wildlife and habitat diversity. The refuge would support 500-650 Florida scrub jay family groups with 350-500 territories in optimal conditions across 15,000-16,000 acres. With active management, the refuge would support 11-15 nesting pairs of bald eagles; maintain 6.3 miles of sea turtle nesting beaches; and maintain 100 acres of habitat for the southeastern beach mouse, while the refuge population would serve as a source for reintroduction of the beach mouse to other sites. Manatee-focused management would be re-established on the refuge. The refuge would manage 15,000-16,000 acres in impounded wetlands with a waterfowl focus and would support targets of 250 breeding pairs of mottled ducks, 60,000 lesser scaup, 25,000 dabbling ducks, and 38,000 other diving ducks. Visitor services, programs, and messages would be focused on wildlife and habitat diversity, while also including threatened and endangered species and migratory birds.

The actions outlined in the draft plan and in two included step-down plans provide direction and guidance for management of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Successful implementation will depend on coordination and partnerships between the public, the Service, and other governmental agencies.

After the review and comment period for the draft plan and environmental assessment, all comments will be analyzed and considered by the Service. All comments from individuals become part of the official public record. Requests for such comments will be

handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and other Service and Departmental policies and procedures.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1963, to protect migratory birds through an agreement with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, as an overlay of John F. Kennedy Space Center. The over 140,000 acres of beaches and dunes, estuarine waters, forested and non-forested wetlands, impounded wetlands, and upland shrub lands and forests of the refuge support over 500 wildlife species and over 1,000 plant species, including a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, and neotropical migratory birds.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ron Hight, Refuge Manager, or Cheri Ehrhardt, Natural Resource Planner, at 321/861-0667.

Authority: This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105-57.

Dated: August 9, 2006.

Cynthia K. Dohner,
Acting Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Receipt of Applications for Endangered Species Permits

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The public is invited to comment on the following applications to conduct certain activities with endangered species.

DATES: We must receive written data or comments on these applications at the address given below, by January 26, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Documents and other information submitted with these applications are available for review, subject to the requirements of the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act, by any party who submits a written request for a copy of such documents to the following office within 30 days of the date of publication of this notice: Fish and Wildlife Service, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta, Georgia

30345 (Attn: Victoria Davis, Permit Biologist).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Victoria Davis, telephone 404/679-4176; facsimile 404/679-7081.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The public is invited to comment on the following applications for permits to conduct certain activities with endangered and threatened species. This notice is provided under section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). If you wish to comment, you may submit comments by any one of the following methods. You may mail comments to the Fish and Wildlife Service's Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES** section) or via electronic mail (e-mail) to victoria_davis@fws.gov. Please include your name and return address in your e-mail message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the Fish and Wildlife Service that we have received your e-mail message, contact us directly at the telephone number listed above (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section). Finally, you may hand deliver comments to the Fish and Wildlife Service office listed above (see **ADDRESSES** section).

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. However, we will not 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.

Applicant: Joanne M. Potts, University of Saint Andrews, Saint Andrews, Fife, Scotland, TE139405-0.

The applicant requests authorization to take (capture, radio tag/collar, examine, measure, release, recapture) the Key Largo woodrat (*Neotoma floridana smalli*) and Key Largo cotton mouse (*Peromyscus gossypinus allapaticola*) while developing efficient and reliable methods for long-term monitoring of the Key Largo woodrat's population size. Although the Key Largo cotton mouse is not the target species,

it may be incidentally captured. The proposed activities would occur on the Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (Monroe County, Florida) and the Key Largo Hammocks Botanical Reserve (Dade County, Florida).

Applicant: FTN Associates, Ltd., Dennis E. Ford, Little Rock, Arkansas, TE139474-0.

The applicant requests authorization to take (capture, identify, release) the American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*) while conducting long-term monitoring of the population at the Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center in Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas.

Applicant: Steven Bradford Cook, Cookeville, Tennessee, TE140151-0.

The applicant requests authorization to take (capture, temporarily hold, release) the Nashville crayfish (*Orconectes shoupi*) while developing a macro and micro habitat model. The proposed activities would occur in the Mill Creek Watershed, Davidson and Williamson Counties, Tennessee.

Dated: December 1, 2006.

Cynthia Dohner,
Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. E6-22135 Filed 12-26-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for Construction of a Single-Family Home in Charlotte County, FL

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Carmen and John Wilson (Applicants) request an incidental take permit (ITP) for a duration of one year, pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The Applicants anticipate removal of about 0.23 acre of Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) (scrub-jay) foraging, sheltering, and possibly nesting habitat, incidental to lot preparation for the construction of a single-family home and supporting infrastructure in Charlotte County, Florida (Project). The Applicants' Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) describes the mitigation and minimization measures proposed to address the effects of the Project to the scrub-jay. These measures are outlined in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.