

could and should be providing for migrating and wintering avian species.

**Habitat Protection:** Current support for the Service's Partners for Wildlife program will continue in order to ensure the program's growth and success. The Refuge will also continue to be an active partner in Colorado Wetlands Initiative Legacy project led by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

**Public Use:** Educating the public as to the nature and value of wetlands will focus on contrasting the intensely managed wetlands of Monte Vista NWR with the more natural aspects on the Alamosa NWR wetlands. To assure compliance with public use minimum standards, money will be targeted for projects through RONS (Refuge Operating Needs System) and MMS (Maintenance Management System). Currently, funding proposals are developed for projects that will improve the quality of visitor experiences.

**Hunting:** Current waterfowl and small game hunting will continue to be supported and encouraged. To the extent feasible, the hunting experience will be further tailored to meet the desires of hunters using the Refuges based on periodic questioning of waterfowl hunters and other public input. The limited amount of overnight use currently available in parking lots during waterfowl hunting seasons will be continued.

**Fishing:** The shallow water in Refuge wetlands does not support a viable fishery. Wetlands either dry up or freeze solid annually which eliminates all fish that have entered the system. Therefore, fishing is not allowed on the Refuges.

**Wildlife Observation:** Support for the Crane Festival will continue. On the Monte Vista NWR, public and scientific input will be sought regarding the seasonal expansion of the auto tour route, development of wildlife observation sites at Parker Pond, and development of wildlife observation decks along County Road 3E. Opinion and information will also be sought regarding the development of an observation deck adjacent to the Refuge Headquarters at the Alamosa NWR and near the proposed visitor center and education facility at the Monte Vista NWR.

**Wildlife Photography:** Photography will continue to be allowed, with no additional Refuge support provided to photographers.

**Interpretation:** A multi-purpose education and visitor center facility on the Monte Vista NWR is the highest educational priority for the Complex. Also, the Refuge staff will implement an interpretation program centered around the cultural resources found on the

Complex and around the Valley. Interpretation of past human use will focus on the theme that humans have always, and still depend upon natural resources for survival.

**Environmental Education:** Volunteer and/or contractor led environmental education programs for local schools will continue to be provided, both as Refuge field trips and classroom presentations.

**Universal Access and Design:** Developments will include new rest room facilities and wildlife observation blinds and/or platforms. Universally accessible hunting blinds will be built on both Refuges. All of these projects will follow the Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines.

**Cultural Resources:** Archaeological work on the Complex will be expanded to include work needed to determine the eligibility of four documented sites for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Management will also include a sample archaeological inventory of Refuge lands over a 15-year period.

**Elk Management:** The resident elk will be managed to discourage their use of Monte Vista NWR in large numbers with the intent to prevent habitat degradation.

Dated: August 29, 2003.

**John A. Blankenship,**

*Deputy Regional Director, Region 6, Denver, Colorado.*

[FR Doc. 03-31436 Filed 12-19-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4310-55-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

#### Draft Revised Recovery Plan for the 'Alalā (*Corvus hawaiiensis*)

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of document availability for review and comment.

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("we") announces the availability of a draft revised recovery plan for the 'Alalā, or Hawaiian Crow (*Corvus hawaiiensis*) for public review. This endemic Hawaiian bird, a member of the family Corvidae, is now believed to be extinct in the wild and survives only in captivity. The 'Alalā was listed as an endangered species in 1967 (32 FR 4001). The original recovery plan for the 'Alalā was published in 1982.

**DATES:** Comments on the draft revised recovery plan must be received on or before February 20, 2004 to receive our consideration.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the draft revised recovery plan are available for inspection, but appointment, during normal business hours at the following locations: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850 (telephone 808-792-9400) and Hawaii State Library, 478 S. King Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813. Requests for copies of the draft revised recovery plan and written comments and materials regarding this plan should be addressed to the Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, at the above Honolulu address. An electronic copy of the draft revised recovery plan is also available at: <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html#plans>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jay Nelson, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at the above Honolulu address.

#### 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 pronounce 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. We will consider all information presented during the public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised recovery plan. Comments may result in changes to the plan. Comments regarding recovery plan implementation will be forwarded to appropriate Federal or other entities so that they can take these comments into account during the course of implementing recovery actions. Individual responses to comments will not be provided.

The Hawaiian Crow, or 'Alalā, is an omnivorous, forest-dwelling bird endemic to dry and mesic forests on the island of Hawaii. Although 'Alalā were still abundant in the 1890's, their numbers decreased sharply throughout

the twentieth century despite legal protection conferred by the Territory of Hawaii in 1931, the Act in 1973, and the State of Hawaii Endangered Species Act in 1982. Progressive range reduction and population fragmentation have characterized the decline. By 1987, the wild 'Alalā population was reduced to a single bird in north Kona, and an unknown number in central Kona, on the west slope of Mauna Loa volcano, Hawaii. The last reproduction of birds in the wild was in 1996, and the wild population declined from 12 birds in 1992 to 2 birds (possibly 3) in 2002, and apparent extinction in the wild in 2003.

Today, the 'Allalā is believed to survive only in captivity. Small population size and inbreeding are the primary threats to the species at present, fertility and hatching success in captivity are currently low, and the incidence of congenital abnormalities is increasing.

Many factors contributed to the decline of 'Allalā in the wild. Destruction of most of the lowland forests restricted the bird's ability to follow seasonal fruiting up and down the mountains. The upland forests have been thinned and fragmented, and many fruiting plants lost, due to logging, ranching, and the effects of grazing by feral pigs, cattle, and sheep. Mongooses, cats, and rats prey on 'Allalā eggs and fledglings. Diseases carried by introduced mosquitoes may have caused the mortality of many 'Allalā, as they did other forest birds. The role of 'Io in this decline, however, is unknown, despite their known effect on released birds. However, 'Io densities are higher, and vulnerability of 'Allalā may be greater, in areas where ungulate grazing has reduced understory cover.

The overall objective of this plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of the 'Allalā so that its protection under the Act is no longer necessary. Recovery is contingent upon protecting and managing suitable habitat for reintroduction of 'Allalā. Recovery actions include measures to protect habitat where the taxa occurred and habitat where the species is not known to have occurred but which may be suitable, restoration of degraded habitat, removal of feral ungulates from habitat areas, predator control, captive propagation and reintroduction, development of strategies to reduce mortality of reintroduced 'Allalā by 'Io predation, and the development of means to address threats of avian disease. Key to recovery will be propagation of 'Allalā in captivity; removal of feral ungulates that degrade forest habitat, spread introduced nonnative plant species, and create

breeding sites for disease-carrying mosquitoes; control of introduced rodents; removal of feral cats that carry toxoplasmosis; and control of invasive plant species. Habitat management and restoration will increase foods available to released 'Allalā and provide better cover for escape in areas with 'Io.

Significant features of the 'Allalā's life history, behavior, ecological interactions, and habitat needs remain unknown. These unknowns, combined with the pressing need to successfully maintain and augment the last remaining population of the species in captivity, led us to develop a draft revised recovery plan that focuses primarily on actions to conserve the 'Allalā in the short-term while working within the framework of a broader long-term recovery strategy. This draft revised recovery plan is therefore presented in three sections: (1) An Introduction and Overview provides information on the biology of the species; (2) a Strategic Plan outlines the overall long-term goals and broad strategies which we anticipate shall remain effective throughout the recovery process for this species; and (3) a 5-year Implementation Plan which sets short-term goals for recovery efforts and research essential to conservation of the species. It is anticipated that new Implementation Plans will be prepared and published as addenda to the revised recovery plan every 3 to 5 years as we gain further knowledge of the 'Allalā and are better able to determine the parameters and techniques for the effective recovery of this species in the wild.

#### Public Comments Solicited

We solicit written comments on the draft revised recovery plan described. All comments received by the date specified above will be considered in developing a final revised recovery plan.

#### Authority

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

Dated: October 16, 2003.

#### David J. Wesley,

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

[FR Doc. 03-31467 Filed 12-19-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-M

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

#### Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for a Proposed Commercial Development in Palm Beach County, FL

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

Jupiter Island Development Company (Applicant) requests an incidental take permit (Permit) pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), as amended (Act). The Applicant anticipates taking one family of the threatened Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) incidental to the clearing of 0.85 acre of occupied habitat associated with the development of a commercial facility. The proposed commercial development would occur in section 31, Township 40 South, Range 43 East, in the town of Jupiter, Palm Beach County, Florida. A more detailed description of the mitigation and minimization measures to address the effects of the Project to the protected species are outlined in the Applicant's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), the Service's Environmental Assessment (EA), and in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.

The Service also announces the availability of an environmental assessment (EA) and HCP for the incidental take application. Copies of the EA and/or HCP may be obtained by making a request to the Regional Office (*see ADDRESSES*). Requests must be in writing to be processed. This notice also advises the public that the Service has made a preliminary determination that issuing the ITP is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended. The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on information contained in the EA and HCP. The final determination will be made no sooner than 60 days from the date of this notice. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10 of the Act and NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

If you wish to comment, you may submit comments by any one of several methods. You may mail comments to the Service's Regional Office (*see ADDRESSES*). You may also comment via the Internet to [david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov).