

on the OFHEO Web site at <http://www.ofheo.gov> in the "News Center & FOIA" section under "Reports."

In today's notice, OFHEO is soliciting comments to be considered on its revised plan. OFHEO will then submit its Strategic Plan pursuant to the statutory requirements.

Dated: August 5, 2003.

Armando Falcon, Jr.,

Director, Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

RIN 1018-AI39

Notice of Availability; Final Environmental Impact Statement on Double-Crested Cormorant Management

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of Final Environmental Impact Statement on double-crested cormorant management.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public of the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on double-crested cormorant management. The FEIS follows publication of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and a proposed rule, each of which had extensive public comment periods. The FEIS analyzes the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts related to double-crested cormorant management and provides the public with responses to comments received on the DEIS.

DATES: The period of availability for public review for the FEIS ends 30 days following publication of the EPA notice of availability in the **Federal Register**. After that date, we will publish a final rule and Record of Decision.

ADDRESSES: You can obtain a copy of the FEIS by writing to the Division of Migratory Bird Management, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MBSP-4107, Arlington, VA 22203; by emailing us at cormorants@fws.gov; or by calling us at 703/358-1714. We will also post the FEIS on our Web site at <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/cormorant/cormorant.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brian Millsap, Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management, at 703/358-1714.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On November 8, 1999, we published a

notice in the **Federal Register** (64 FR 60826) announcing our intent to prepare, in cooperation with the Wildlife Services program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS/WS), an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address "impacts caused by population and range expansion of the double-crested cormorant [DCCO] in the contiguous United States." The notice of intent also marked the beginning of a public scoping period. The purpose of scoping, which included 12 public meetings, was to identify significant issues to be addressed in the EIS. More than 900 people attended the public scoping meetings, with 239 providing oral comments, and over 1,450 people submitted written comments. Comments fell into two categories: issues of concern and suggested management options. Issues of concern included impacts on sport fishing, local economies, aquaculture/commercial fishing, bird species, ecological balance, vegetation, human health and safety, and private property. Management options that were suggested included controlling DCCO populations, not managing DCCOs, removing DCCOs from the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, hunting, focusing on non-lethal control, allowing State management of DCCOs, changing the permit policy, oiling eggs, giving APHIS/WS more authority, basing decisions on the best science, using population objectives, and increasing education efforts. The scoping period ended on June 16, 2000.

On December 3, 2001, we published a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the availability of the DEIS for public review (66 FR 60218). This was followed by a 100-day public comment period, which included 10 public meetings. The DEIS analyzed the predicted environmental impacts of six management alternatives for addressing problems associated with increasing DCCO populations. These management alternatives were: (1) No Action, or continue current cormorant management practices (Alternative A); (2) implement only nonlethal management techniques (Alternative B); (3) expand current cormorant damage management practices (Alternative C); (4) establish a new depredation order to address public resource conflicts (Alternative D — proposed action); (5) reduce regional cormorant populations (Alternative E); and (6) establish frameworks for a cormorant hunting season (Alternative F). The biological and socioeconomic resource categories

evaluated in relation to each alternative included DCCO populations, fish, other birds, vegetation, federally listed threatened and endangered species, water quality and human health, economic impacts (aquaculture and recreational fishing economies), fish hatcheries and environmental justice, property losses, and existence and aesthetic values.

We received 994 letters, faxes, and email messages commenting on the DEIS. Of the 994 letters received, 764 of these stated a preference for a specific alternative. These results were: 32.2 percent chose Alternative D (proposed action) as the best alternative; 25.8 percent chose Alternative E (population reduction); 16.9 percent chose Alternative A (No Action); 11.8 percent chose Alternative F (hunting); 11.8 percent chose Alternative B (non-lethal methods); and <1 percent chose Alternative C (increased local damage control). Our responses to significant comments can be found in Chapter 7 of the FEIS.

In response to concerns about the public resource depredation order being too broad in scope, we made two changes to the order which were subsequently described in a proposed rule published in the **Federal Register** on March 17, 2003 (68 FR 12653). These changes limit the public resource depredation order to 24 States (rather than the 48 originally proposed in the DEIS) and limit its applicability to land and freshwater (not saltwater). The 24 States were chosen based on locations of significant numbers of wintering, migrating, or breeding birds from the Interior and Southern DCCO populations. Saltwater areas were excluded because impacts have not been documented there.

Additionally, we changed the order so that it applied only to State fish and wildlife agencies, federally recognized Tribes, and APHIS/WS, and we expanded allowable control techniques to include egg oiling, egg and nest destruction, cervical dislocation, shooting, and CO₂ asphyxiation. APHIS/WS was added since it is the chief Federal wildlife damage control agency and has considerable expertise in managing DCCOs. Control techniques were selected to include all effective and humane techniques. As stated in the proposed rule, these modifications do not constitute significant changes to the DEIS analysis and are addressed, as needed, in the FEIS.

Following publication of the proposed rule, the public had 60 days to provide comments. This comment period led to additional modifications to the proposed action, including the addition

of another month for allowing roost control under the aquaculture depredation order (October to April). In compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, we completed informal consultation and, subsequently, added conservation measures to protect bald eagles, wood

storks, piping plovers, and interior least terns. These changes are considered in the FEIS analysis and will be discussed in greater detail in the final rule. Like the DEIS, the FEIS analyzed the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts we predict would be associated with six DCCO management alternatives. The first chart

below summarizes the impacts of DCCOs under the No Action alternative (*i.e.*, the status quo), as detailed in the FEIS. The second chart below summarizes effects on the FEIS resource categories that we predicted would occur as a result of implementing the proposed action.

Alternative A: no action	
Other bird populations	Suspected conflicts and in some cases confirmed conflicts associated with habitat destruction and nest site competition; significance localized.
Fish	Suspected and in some cases confirmed conflicts; significance localized.
Vegetation/habitat	Destruction of vegetation confirmed; significance localized.
Threatened and endangered species	Suspected but not confirmed conflicts with Atlantic salmon and various Pacific salmonids; very likely, however, that other factors are more important than DCCOs in the decline of salmon.
Water quality and human health	Accused of being a source of groundwater contamination but this is not confirmed; can cause direct, open water contamination.
Aquaculture	Confirmed economic impacts on aquaculture production.
Recreational fishing economies	Correlative evidence that DCCOs are a factor behind economic declines in communities dependent on recreational fishing; not confirmed.
Fish hatcheries and justice	Confirmed depredation of hatchery stock with significance localized; effect on ability to provide hatchery fish to low-income groups not confirmed.
Property losses	Confirmed conflicts with some property interests; significance localized.
Existence and aesthetic values	Effect on values differs with perspective; DCCOs may appeal to some individual's sense of aesthetics, while not appealing to others.
Proposed action alternative D: public resource depredation order	
DCCO populations	No significant impact to regional or continental populations; estimated annual take of 159,635.
Other bird populations	Local disturbances likely, but can be managed to avoid significant impacts; will help overall.
Fish	Will help reduce predation in localized situations.
Vegetation/habitat	Will help reduce impacts in localized situations.
Threatened and endangered species	No adverse impacts with implementation of conservation measures.
Water quality and human health	Will help reduce impacts in localized situations
Aquaculture	Will help reduce depredation.
Recreational fishing economies	Not likely to benefit.
Fish hatcheries and environmental justice	Will help reduce depredation.
Property losses	Could help to indirectly reduce losses.
Existence and aesthetic values	Effects on values differs with perspective.

Dated: August 1, 2003.
Steve Williams,
Director.
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
 [CO-200-1020-AC-241A]

Notice of Amendment of Meeting Date, Front Range Resource Advisory Council (Colorado)

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of amendment of public meeting date.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the Federal Advisory

Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Front Range Resource Advisory Council (RAC), will meet as indicated below.

DATES: The meeting originally published in the July 8, 2003, **Federal Register** for August 12 and 13, 2003, has been changed and will be held on August 13 only. The meeting will be held on August 13 at the Holy Cross Abbey Community Center, 2951 E. Highway 50, Canon City, Colorado from 9:15 a.m. to 4 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The 15 member Council advises the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, on a variety of planning and management issues associated with public land management in the Front Range Center, Colorado. The planned agenda topic is for the Council to discuss the Sustaining

Working Landscapes Initiative Overview and provide comments and advice to the BLM Colorado State Director through the Center Manager.

All meetings are open to the public. The public is encouraged to make oral comments to the Council between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. or written statements may be submitted for the Councils consideration. Depending on the number of persons wishing to comment and time available, the time for individual oral comments may be limited. Summary minutes for the Council Meeting will be maintained in the Front Range Center Office and will be available for public inspection and reproduction during regular business hours within thirty (30) days following the meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Attn: Ken Smith, 3170 East Main Street,