



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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News

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FINDS ESA LISTING OF YELLOW-BILLED LOONS TO BE “WARRANTED BUT PRECLUDED”

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service announced today that it has determined that listing the yellow-billed loon as a threatened or endangered species is warranted under the Endangered Species Act, but an immediate proposal to list this species is precluded by other higher priority listing actions. Listing a species as “warranted, but precluded” means the proposal to list is delayed while the Service works on listing proposals for other higher priority species.

A “warranted but precluded” finding requires subsequent annual reviews of the finding until such time as either a listing proposal is published, or a “not warranted” finding is made based on new information.

Yellow-billed loon populations are vulnerable due to a combination of low starting population size, low reproductive rate, and very specific breeding habitat requirements.

The species is listed in the Red Book by the Russian Federation as a category 3 species (rare, sporadically distributed species), is considered a Bird of Conservation Concern in the U.S., and is one of the State of Alaska’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy species.

The Service considered the best available data about factors that could affect yellow-billed loon populations, including subsistence harvest, oil and gas development and other contaminants, climate change, fishing bycatch, and marine pollution in wintering habitat in Asia. Subsistence harvest surveys indicated a substantial level of harvest of yellow-billed loons relative to their population, although exact harvest numbers are uncertain. The full text of the decision can be found at:

http://federalregister.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2009-06012_PI.pdf

In 2006, the Service, working with a variety of Native, state and federal partners, developed a conservation agreement to protect the yellow-billed loon in northern and western Alaska. This agreement represents a cooperative effort among the partnering resource agencies to take measures necessary to conserve the species and its habitats in Alaska. In so doing, the partnering agencies hope that current or potential threats in these areas can be avoided, eliminated, or reduced. The Yellow-billed Loon Conservation Agreement is available at: <http://alaska.fws.gov/mbsp/mbm/loons/species/Yellow-billed-loon.htm>, or can be requested from: the Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office at 907/456-0203.

The Conservation Agreement partners will continue collaborating to collect and refine information about the yellow-billed loon to help guide future management. For example, BLM has proactively worked with loon experts and the Service to identify appropriate protections for the species and its habitat. Those protections were incorporated into their Records of Decision for NPR-A, and in the commitments they made in the Conservation Agreement.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov