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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA's Fisheries Service Extend Comment Period on Proposed Policy to Improve Implementation of Endangered Species Act

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), the two federal agencies responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act (ESA), today announced a 30-day extension of the public comment period on a draft policy interpreting the phrase "significant portion of its range" (SPR) in the ESA's definitions of "endangered species" and "threatened species."

The public comment period on the draft policy will now close on March 8, 2012. Information about this policy and how it will improve administration of the ESA can be found at http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/spr.html.

Considering the complexity of the issues addressed in the draft policy and the level of public interest, FWS and NOAA Fisheries determined that additional time for public comment will be particularly valuable for this action. The draft policy and supporting materials are available for review, and comments can be submitted for consideration, at <http://www.regulations.gov> under the docket number [FWS-R9-ES-2011-0031]. Information already submitted does not need to be resubmitted.

The notice will publish in the *Federal Register* on February 07, 2012. Comments must be received on or before March 08, 2012. The Service will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means the agency will post any personal information provided through the process. The Service is not able to accept email or faxes.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. To find out more about the FWS Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>. To learn more about the NOAA Fisheries Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.nmfs.gov/pr>.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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