DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-AB36

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Determination of Endangered Status for Wilkesia hobdyi (Dwarf Illau), a Hawaiian Plant

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) determines a Hawaiian plant, Wilkesia hobdyi (dwarf iliau). to be endangered under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). This species is known from three small populations with a total of about 400 individuals. Three additional, unconfirmed observations, which may be of this species, have been reported. The known populations and the unconfirmed sightings are all from the nearly vertical rock outcrops on the Na Pali Coast of western Kauai, Hawaiian Islands. The greatest immediate threats to the survival of this species are browsing and habitat disturbance by feral goats. Goat predation and the concomitant habitat disturbance accelerates erosion of the habitat and facilitates the encroachment of competing species of naturalized plants. This rule implements the protection provided by the Act for this plant.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 22, 1992.

ADDRESSES: The complete file for this rule is available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Office, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, room 6307, P.O. Box 50167, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Derral R. Herbst, at the above address (808/541-2749 or FTS 551-2749; FAX 808/541-2758.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Wilkesia hobdyi was discovered by Robert W. Hobdy on Polihale Ridge, Kauai, in 1968. He sent a specimen of the plant to the late Dr. Harold St. John, a botanist who was affiliated with the Bishop Museum herbarium. St. John described the plant as a new species and named it in Hobdy's honor (St. John 1971). This population is believed to comprise between 250 and 300 plants (Hawaiian Heritage Program (HHP) 1991a). In 1982, a population of about 100 individuals of the species was discovered on the adjacent Kaaweiki ridge (HHP 1991b). A third population. estimated to be between 10 to 50 individuals, was discovered on a cliff face in Waiahuakua Valley in 1988 (HHP 1991d). Today, only these three populations, estimated to comprise between 360 to 450 individuals, are known. All populations occur on Stateowned land, on the island and county of Kauai, Hawaii. Two of the populations are in the Puu Ka Pele Forest Reserve, growing on the north-facing, nearly vertical rock outcrops near the summits of the adjacent Polihale and Kaaweiki ridges. The third population grows on a cliff face in Waiahuakua Valley, on the boundary between the Hono O Na Pali Natural Area Reserve and the Na Pali Coast State Park, approximately ten miles (18 kilometers) northeast of the other two populations. Three additional, unconfirmed observations, which may be of this species, have been reported. The observations were made from a distance with binoculars. The first observation was made by the State botanist during a survey of the Na Pali Coast in 1979, and was in the Nualolo-Aina Valley (HHP 1991e). The population comprised about ten plants (Carolyn Corn, State Botanist, pers. comm., 1990). The plants were not seen during a follow-up survey of the area five years later, and the observer stated that the species may be a good indicator plant for the presence of grazing animals (C. Corn, pers. comm. 1992). The second observation was that of a single plant on a cliff wall in Milolii Valley (HHP 1991c; C. Corn. pers. comm. 1990). The sighting was made during a botanical survey of the Na Pali Coast in 1980, and the plant was not seen during a subsequent survey in 1989 (C. Corn, pers. comm. 1990). The third observation, made on March 6, 1991, was of an estimated 30 to

40 plants seen by binoculars on Haeleele Ridge, the ridge south of Polihale Ridge (Joel Lau, HHP, pers. comm., 1991). The known populations and the unconfirmed sightings are all from the nearly vertical rock outcrops on the Na Pali Coast of western Kauai. Hawaiian Islands. There are at least two other species of plants in this area that from a distance superficially resemble *Wilkesia hobdyi*. It is not known how it was determined that the observations were of *W. hobdyi*.

Wilkesia hobdyi, a member of the sunflower family (Asteraceae), is a shrub about 2 feet (60 centimeters (cm)) tall, which branches from the base. The tip of each branch bears a tuft of narrow leaves which are about ½ inch (in) (1.3 cm) wide and about 3 to 6 in (7.5 to 15 cm) long. The leaves, which are in whorls, are joined together into a short sheathing section at their bases. The flower heads are in clusters of about 10 to 18 in (25 to 45 cm) long. Each head is cream colored and about ¾ in (2 cm) in diameter (Carr 1982, 1990; St. John 1971).

The greatest immediate threats to the survival of this species are habitat disturbance and browsing by feral goats. The goats browse on the plant and their activity in the area accelerates erosion and facilitates the encroachment of competing, naturalized plants. Although the low number of individuals and their restricted habitat could be considered a potential threat to the survival of the species, the plant appears to have vigorous reproduction and should survive indefinitely if goats were eliminated from its habitat. A cooperative effort between Federal and State agencies is needed to protect the remaining plants and to provide for the species' recovery.

Federal action on this plant began as a result of section 12 of the Act, which directed the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to prepare a report on plants considered to be endangered, threatened, or extinct in the United States. This report, designated as House Document No. 94-51, was presented to Congress on January 9, 1975. Wilkesia hobdyi was listed as "endangered" in that document. On July 1, 1975, the Service published a notice in the Federal Register (40 FR 27823) of its acceptance of the Smithsonian report as a petition within the context of section 4(c)(2) (now section 4(b)(3)) of the Act.

and giving notice of its intention to review the status of the plant taxa named therein. As a result of that review, on June 16, 1976, the Service published a proposed rule in the Federal Register (41 FR 24523) to determine endangered status pursuant to section 4 of the Act for approximately 1,700 vascular plant species, including Wilkesia hobdyi. The list of 1.700 plant taxa was assembled on the basis of comments and data received by the Smithsonian Institution and the Service in response to House Document No 94-51 and the July 1, 1975, Federal Register publication.

General comments received in relation to the 1976 proposal are summarized in an April 26, 1978, Federal Register publication (43 FR 17909). In 1978, amendments to the Act required that all proposals over 2 years old be withdrawn. A 1-year grace period was given to proposals already over 2 years old. On December 10, 1979, the Service published a notice in the Federal Register (44 FR 70796) withdrawing the portion of the June 16, 1976, proposal that had not been made final, slong with four other proposals that had expired. The Service published an updated notice of review for plants on December 15, 1980 (45 FR 82479), and September 27, 1985 (50 FR 39525). In these notices, Wilkesia hobdyi was treated as a category 1 candidate for Federal listing. Category 1 taxa are those for which the Service has on file substantial information on biological valuerability and threats to support preparation of listing proposals.

Section 4(b)(3)(B) of the Act requires the Secretary to make findings on certain pending petitions within 12 months of their receipt. Section 2(b)(1) of the 1982 Amendments further requires all petitions pending on October 13. 1982, be treated as having been newly submitted on that date. The latter was the case for Wilkesia hobdyi because the Service had accepted the 1975 Smithsonian report as a petition. On October 13, 1983, the Service found that the petitioned listing of Wilkesia hobdyi was warranted, but precluded by other pending listing actions, in accordance with section 4(b)(3)(B)(iii) of the Act; notification of this finding was published on January 20, 1984 [49 FR 2485). Such a finding requires the petition to be recycled, pursuant to section 4(b)(3)(C)(i) of the Act. The finding was reviewed in October of 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, and 1988.

On October 2, 1989, the Service published in the Federal Register (54 FR 40444) a proposal to list *Wilkesia hobdyi* as endangered. This proposal was based primarily on information supplied by a status report and a monograph of the Hawaiian tar-weed complex by Gerald Carr, information from the files of the Hawaiian Heritage Program, and observations by botanists. The Service now determines Wilkesia hobdyi to be endangered with the publication of this rule.

Summary of Comments and Recommendations

In the October 2, 1969, proposed rule (54 FR 40444) and associated notifications, all interested parties were requested to submit factual reports or information relevant to a final listing decision. The public comment period ended on December 1, 1988. Appropriate State agencies, county governments, Federal agencies, scientific organizations, and other interested parties were contacted and requested to comment. A newspaper notice inviting public comment was published in "The Garden Island" on October 23, 1989. Fourteen letters of comment, including one from a Federal agency, three from State agencies, seven from organizations, and three from individuals, were received and are discussed below. A public hearing was requested by Mr. Ralph Dachler on November 15, 1989. On January 9, 1990, the Service published a notice (55 FR 761) extending the initial comment period to Pebruary 5, 1990, to accommodate the requested public hearing which was to be held in Lihne. Kauai, January 25, 1996. Due to a conflict in schedules, the Service changed the date of the hearing from the original January 25, to February 23, and extended the comment period to March 5, 1990. This notice was published in the Federal Register (55 FR 2541) on January 25, 1990. A newspaper notice announcing the public hearing and the extension of the comment period was published in "The Garden Island" on February 2, 1990. Eleven people attended the public hearing, six presented gral comments; their testimony is included in the following summary.

Three respondents acknowledged receipt of the proposed rule but had no comments; of the remaining 11 letters, 9 supported the listing of *Wilkesia*, and 2 opposed it. Additional information included in the letters has been incorporated into this final rule. Comments of similar content were grouped into a number of general issues for discussion. These issues and the Service's response to each are discussed below.

Issue 1: Number of populations: Two respondents stated that more

populations of *Wilkesia* holdyi exist than were discussed in the proposed rule, and that there is a good possibility that more or perhaps many more populations await discovery. The proposed rule indicated that only two populations of the species were known, those of Polihale and the adjacent Kaaweiki Ridges.

Service Response: At the time the proposed rule was written, only two populations of the dwarf iliau were known: however, a third population comprising 10 to 50 plants was subsequently discovered in Waiahuakua Valley (HHP 1991d), and three additional, anconfirmed observations, which may be of this species, have been reported. All of the observations were made from a distance with binoculars. This information has been included in this final rule. One responder stated that there probably were not many additional unknown populations of the plant (Joel Lan, in litt., 1989). The numbers of plants and populations of this species is sufficiently small that, given it**s threats, it must still be** considered endangered.

issue 2: Threat by goats: Two responders maintained that the Service's claim that the dwarf ilian is threatened by a large goat population is erroneous. They note that the goat population in the Na Pali area was much higher at the turn of the century than it is now, and the heavier use of the area by goats at that time did not lead to the extinction of the dwarf ilian. They further state that the goats do not seek out ilian as a source of food, and in fact may be beneficial as they devour many of the introduced weed species that otherwise present wildlive damage and competition potentials.

Service Response: In the State Division of Forestry and Wildlife's document "Rare endemic plants of the Hawaiian Islands" (St. John 1981). Wilkesia hobdyi is identified as endangered and feral grazing animals are listed as one of the threats to the species. Further, the State botanist observed a population of about ten plants in Nualolo-Aina Valley during a survey of the Na Pali Coast in 1979; the plants were not seen during a follow-up survey of the area five years later, and the botanist believes that the species may be a good indicator plant for the presence of grazing annuals (C. Corn. pers. comm. 1992). The Hawaii Plant **Conservation Center (HPCC) accession** data also identifies the activities of feral goats to be a major threat to this species, and states that, on one occasion, 30 goats were seen in the area of the Polihale population of W. hobdyi

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(HPCC 1991). Based on meetings with, and information provided by several botanists in Hawaii in June 1969, the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) has identified W. hobdyi as a priority B species, which means that it could possibly go extinct in the wild within the next 10 years. The Center also identified very heavy goat predation as a threat to W. hobdvi (CPC 1990). Nine of the letters of comment or oral testimony given at the public hearing address the goat problem: all contain information that indicates that goats are the major threat to this plant. For example, Gerald Carr, a botanist at the University of Hawaii and an authority on the genus, states in his letter of comment that he has visited the Polihale population of the dwarf iliau on a number of occasions and has noted damage to the dwarf ilian from goats grazing at the site. He stated that during a visit to the population on Kaaweiki Ridge in 1985, virtually every plant he saw of the dwarf iliau was severely damaged by goat grazing. Marjorie Ziegler of the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, Inc., identified goat browsing as a major threat to the species in her letter of comment, and noted that goat activity in some portions of the plant's habitat has increased because of a recent 3-year period of closed hunting seasons for goats on most public lands on Kauai. Her letter, along with several others, cited the importance of goat activities other than browsing as a threat to the species. Trampling by goats, for example, loosens soil and rocks causing erosion of the habitat, a major threat to this species. These activities also enhance the encroachment of competing. naturalized plants. Plants such as molasses grass (Melinus minutifloro) compete with Wilkesia hobdyi for space, water, and sutrients, and are a potential fire hazard.

Issue 3: State regulations: Concern was expressed by three individuals during their testimony that state regulations might make the propagation or cultivation of Wilkesia more difficult if it were listed as endangered. State regulations prohibit possessing endangered plants or collecting their propagules. Permits to collect or possess endangered plants may be issued by the state to enhance the propagation or survival of the species, but it is difficult and burdensome to obtain these permits.

Service Response: Hawaii Administration Rules 13-124-4(a) allows for "Permits to * * * possess * * any endangered or threatened species of wildlife or plants" to be issued "to enhance the propagation or servival of the species." If it is felt that the State permit requirements are so stringent as to be detrimental to the propagation or survival of the species, then perhaps the State may need to reassess its policy and consider amending it. The Service believes that existing State policies should not delay nor prevent the protection that listing would convey.

Issue 4: Two responders encouraged the Service to designate critical habitat for the species.

Service Response: As discussed in the "Critical Habitat" section of this rule. critical habitat is not being designated at this time as such a determination would result in no known benefit and may be detrimental to the species. The publication of descriptions and maps required when critical habitat is designated would increase the degree of threats to this plant from take or vandalism and, therefore, could contribute to its decline and increase enforcement problems. The listing of a species as endangered publicizes the rarity of the plant and, thus, can make it more desirable to researchers, curiosity seekers, or collectors of rare plants. Although only a few plants are accessible to humans because of the ruggedness of the terrain, human activity at the edges of the cliffs could dislodge rocks or soil which could damage the plants below.

Summary of Factors Affecting the Species

After a thorough review and consideration of all information available, the Service has determined that Wilkesia hobdyi should be classified as an endangered species. Procedures found at section 4 of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1533) and regulations (50 CFR part 424) promulgated to implement the listing provisions of the Act were followed. A species may be determined to be an endangered or threatened species due to one or more of the five factors described in section 4(a)(1). The five factors and their application to Wilkesia hobdyi St. John (dwarf iliau) are as follows:

A. The Present or Threatened Destruction, Modification, or Curtailment of Its Habitat or Range

The habitat of *Wilkesia* is subject to disturbance by feral goats. The high, steep ocean cliffs on which the plant grows have always been subject to erosion by wind and water. However, the activity of the goats on the narrow cliff ledges, which has resulted in the destruction of the natural vegetation, dislodged stones, and loosened the soil has accelerated the rate of erosion and allowed the ingression of aggressive weedy species such as molasses grass. This non-native, naturalized vegetation competes with Wilkesia for space, water, and nutrients, and is a potential fire hazard, especially during the dry season.

B. Overutilization for Commercial, Recreational, Scientific, or Educational Purposes

Not known to be a factor.

C. Disease or Predation

Browsing by feral goats probably is the greatest present threat to this species. Large herds of feral goats inhabit the cliffs upon which the plants grow and are responsible for much damage both through their predation on the plant and the concomitant habitat disturbance which favors the introduction and spread of exotic vegetation, and an increase in erosion. The large goat herds result from specific game management practices aimed at maintaining high goat population levels for hunting.

D. The Inadequacy of Existing Regulatory Mechanisms

Wilkesia hobdyi grows within the boundaries of the State-owned Pou ka Pele and Na Pali Kona Forest Reserves. and in the Hono O Na Pali Natural Area Reserve. State regulations prohibit the removal, destruction, or damage of plants found on these State lands. However, these regulations are difficult to enforce due to limited personnel. Hawaii's Endangered Species Act (HRS, sect. 195D-4(a)) states that "Any species of aquatic life, wildlife or land plant that has been determined to be an endangered species pursuant to the (Federal) Endangered Species Act shall be deemed to be an endangered species under the provisions of this chapter

* * *" Further, the State may enter into agreements with Federal agencies to administer and manage any area required for the conservation. management, enhancement, or protection of endangered species (sect. 195D-5(c)). Funds for these activities could be made available under section 5 of the Federal Act (State Cooperative Agreements). Listing of this plant therefore reinforces and supplements the protection available to the species under State law. The Federal Act also offers additional protection to the species, because it is a violation of the Act for any person to remove, cut, dig up, damage, or tlestroy an endangered plant in an area not under Federal jurisdiction in knowing violation of any State law or regulation or in the course of any violation of a State criminal trespass law.

E. Other Natural or Manmade Factors Affecting Its Continued Existence

The small number of extant plants, and their restricted distribution makes *Wilkesia hobdyi* more vulnerable to certain threats. A single man-caused or natural environmental disturbance could destroy a significant percentage of the known individuals or populations of the species. The limited gene pool and reduced genetic variability resulting from the small population size may result in depressed reproductive vigor, although the plant appears to be adequately reproducing itself.

The Service has carefully assessed the hest scientific and commercial information available regarding the past, present, and future threats faced by this species in determining to make this rule final. Based on this evaluation, the preferred action is to list Wilkesia hobdyi as endangered. Only about 400 individuals remain in the wild, and these face threats from browsing and habitat degradation by feral goats; erosion; competition from encroaching naturalized, non-native plants; and the potential threat from fires. Because this taxon is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, it fits the definition of endangered as defined by the Act. Critical habitat is not being designated for this species for reasons discussed in the "Critical Habitat" section of this rule.

Critical Habitat

Section 4(a)(3) of the Act, as amended, requires that to the maximum extent prudent and determinable, the Secretary designate critical habitat at the time the species is determined to be endangered or threatened. The Service finds that designation of critical habitat for Wilkesia hobdyi is not presently prudent. Such a determination would result in no known benefit and may be detrimental to the species. All production are on State land, and, due to the cliff terrain on which it grows, all but a few individual plants are inaccessible to man. The State has been notified of the location and importance of protecting this species' habitat. The publication of description and maps required when critical habitat is designated would increase the degree of threats to this plant from take or vandalism and, therefore, could contribute to its decline and increase enforcement problems. The listing of a species as endangered publicizes the rarity of the plant and, thus, can make it more desirable to researchers, curiosity seekers, or collectors of rare plants. Although only a few plants are

accessible to humans because of the ruggedness of the terrain, human activity at the edges of the cliffs could dislodge rocks or soil which could damage the plants below. Protection of this species' habitat will be addressed through the recovery process. Therefore, the Service finds that designation of critical habitat for *Wilkesia hobdyi* is not prudent at this time, because such designation would increase the degree of threat from vandalism, collecting, or other human activities and because it is unlikely to aid in the conservation of this species.

Available Conservation Measures

Conservation measures provided to species listed as endangered or threatened under the Act include recognition, recovery actions, requirements for Federal protection, and prohibitions against certain activities. **Recognition through listing encourages** and results in conservation actions by Federal, State, and private agencies, groups, and individuals. The Act provides for possible land acquisition and cooperation with the States, and requires that recovery actions be carried out for all listed species. The protection required of Federal agencies and the prohibitions against certain activities involving listed plants are discussed, in part, below:

Section 7(a) of the Act, as amended, requires Federal agencies to evaluate their actions with respect to any species that is proposed or listed as endangered or threatened, and with respect to its critical habitat, if any is being designated. Regulations implementing this interagency cooperation provision of the Act are codified at 50 CFR part 402. Section 7(a)(2) of the Act requires Federal agencies to insure that activities they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of such a species or to destroy or adversely modify its critical habitat. If a Federal action may affect a listed species or its critical habitat, the responsible Federal agency must enter into formal consultation with the Service. No Federal involvement with Wilkesia hobdyi is anticipated.

The Act and its implementing regulations found at 50 CFR 17.61, 17.62, and 17.63 for endangered plant species set forth a series of general prohibitions and exceptions that apply to all endangered plants. With respect to *Wilkesia hobdyi* all trade prohibitions of section 9(a)(2) of the Act, implemented by 50 CFR 17.61 apply. These prohibitions, in part, make it illegal for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to import or export; transport in interstate or foreign commerce in the course of a commercial activity; sell or offer for sale this species in interstate or foreign commerce; or to remove and reduce to possession any such species from areas under Federal jurisdiction; maliciously damage or destroy any such species on any area under Federal jurisdiction; or remove, cut, dig up, damage or destroy listed plants on any other area in knowing violation of any State law or regulation or in the course of any violation of a State criminal trespass law. Certain exceptions apply to agents of the Service and State conservation agencies. The Act and 50 CFR 17.62 and 17.63 also provide for the issuance of permits to carry out otherwise prohibited activities involving endangered plant species under certain circumstances. It is anticipated that few, if any, trade permits would ever be sought or issued because the species is not common in cultivation nor in the wild. Requests for copies of the regulations on plants and inquiries regarding them may be addressed to the Office of Management Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, room 432-ARLSQ. Arlington, Virginia 22203-3507 (703/358-2104, FAX 703/358-2281).

National Environmental Policy Act

The Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, as defined under the authority of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, need not be prepared in connection with regulations adopted pursuant to section 4(a) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. A notice outlining the Service's reasons for this determination was published in the Federal Register on October 25, 1983 (48 FR 49244).

References Cited

- Carr, G.D. 1982. Unpublished status survey of Wilkesia hobdyi St. John (Hobdy's iliau). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 24 pp.
- Carr, G.D. 1990. Wilkesia: in Wagner, W.L., D.R. Herbst, and S.H. Sohmer, Manual of the flower plants of Hawaii. University of Hawaii Press and Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu. Bishop Mus. Spec. Publ. 83:292-308.
- Center for Plant Conservation. 1990. Priority A and B taxa from Hawaii as of 18 December 1990. Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. Unpubl. report 41 pp.
- Hawaii Heritage Program. 1991a. Element Occurrence Record for *Wilkesia hobdyi*. PDAST9W020.001, dated June 10, 1991, Honolulu. Unpubl. 2 p.
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- Hawaii Heritage Program. 1991e. Element Occurrence Record for Wilkesia hobdyn. PDAST9W020.005, dated June 10, 1991. Honolulu. Unpubl. 2 p.
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- St. John, H. 1971. The status of the genus Wilkesia (Compositae), and discovery of a second Hawaiian species. Occas. Pap. B. P. Bishop Museum 24(8):127–138.
- St. John (C.A. Corn. ed.). 1981. Rare endemic plants of the Hawaiian Islands. Hawaii.

Department of Land and Natural Resources. Honolulu, 74 unnum. pp.

Author

The primary author of this final rule is Dr. Derral R. Herbst, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Office. 300 Ala Moana Boulevard. room 6307, P.O. Box 50167, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850 (808/541-2749 or FTS 551-2749).

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 17

Endangered and threatened species. Exports. Imports, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, and Transportation.

Regulation Promulgation

PART 17-[AMENDED]

Accordingly, part 17, subchapter B of chapter L title 50 of the Code of Federal

Regulations. is hereby amended as set forth below:

1. The authority citation for part 17 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1361–1467: 18 U.S.C. 1531–1544: 16 U.S.C. 4201–4245: Public Law 99–625. 100 Stat. 3500, unless otherwise noted.

2. Amend § 17.12(h) adding the following, in alphabetical order under the family Asteraceae, to the List of Endangered and Threatened Plants:

§ 17.12 Endangered and threatened plants.

(h) • • •

| | Species | | | | | Status | When listed | Critical | Special |
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Dated: June 2, 1992.

Bruce Blanchard,

Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service. [FR Doc. 92–14228 Filed 6–19–92; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-4
