

Such designation would not be beneficial to this species. In other proposed rules we determined that critical habitat was prudent for nine species that occur on Lanai as well as on Kauai, Niihau, Maui, or Kahoolawe (65 FR 66808; 65 FR 79192). The remaining 17 species historically found on Lanai no longer occur on this island. However, these species do occur on other islands, so proposed prudency determinations will be made in future rules addressing plants on those islands.

This proposed rule also proposes designation of critical habitat for 18 plant species. Ten critical habitat units, covering 1,953 hectares (4,826 acres), are proposed for designation on the island of Lanai.

Section 4(b)(5)(E) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), requires that a public hearing be held if it is requested within 45 days of the publication of a proposed rule. In response to a request from a government agency of the State of Hawaii, the Service will hold a public hearing on the date and at the address described in the **DATES** and **ADDRESSES** sections above.

Anyone wishing to make an oral statement for the record is encouraged to provide a written copy of their statement and present it to the Service at the hearing. In the event there is a large attendance, the time allotted for oral statements may be limited. Oral and written statements receive equal consideration. There are no limits to the length of written comments presented at the hearing or mailed to the Service. Legal notices announcing the date, time, and location of the public hearing will be published in newspapers concurrently with the **Federal Register** notice.

Comments from the public regarding the accuracy of this proposed rule are sought, especially regarding:

- (1) The reasons why critical habitat for any of these species is prudent or not prudent;
- (2) The reasons why any particular area should or should not be designated as critical habitat for any of these species;
- (3) Specific information on the amount and distribution of habitat for any of these species;
- (4) Land use practices and current or planned activities in the subject areas and their possible impacts on proposed critical habitat;
- (5) Any economic or other relevant impacts resulting from the proposed designations of critical habitat, including any impacts on small entities or families; and
- (6) Economic and other potential values associated with designating

critical habitat for the 18 plant species such as those derived from non-consumptive uses (e.g., hiking, camping, birding, enhanced watershed protection, increased soil retention, "existence values", and reductions in administrative costs).

Reopening of the comment period will enable the Service to respond to the request for a public hearing on the proposed action. The comment period on this proposal now closes on April 2, 2001. Written comments should be submitted to the Service office listed in the **ADDRESSES** section.

Author

The primary authors of this notice are Christa Russell and Michelle Stephens (see **ADDRESSES** section).

Authority: The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: February 13, 2001.

Rowan W. Gould,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-AG13

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Reopening of Public Comment Period on Proposed Critical Habitat for Wintering Piping Plovers

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; reopening of public comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provide notice that the public comment period on the proposed rule to designate critical habitat for wintering piping plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) is hereby reopened. Comments submitted during the prior comment periods need not be resubmitted as they will be incorporated into the public record and will be fully considered in the final determination on the proposal.

DATES: The original comment period, scheduled to close on September 5, 2000, was extended until November 24, 2000. The comment period is now reopened and will close on March 1, 2001. Comments from all interested parties must be received by the closing date. Any comments that are received

after the closing date may not be considered in the final decision on this proposal.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Ecological Services Field Office, c/o TAMUCC, Box 338, 6300 Ocean Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412; by facsimile at (361) 994-8262; or by email at winterplovercomments@fws.gov. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Allan Strand, Acting Field Supervisor, at the above address (telephone 361/994-9005).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) is a small North American shorebird that breeds in the Great Plains, Great Lakes, and upper Atlantic Coast states, and its winter areas include the lower Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States. The piping plover on its wintering areas is listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed critical habitat for wintering piping plovers on July 6, 2000 (65 FR 41782), and published extensions of the comment period on August 30, 2000 (65 FR 52691), and October 27, 2000 (65 FR 64414). The proposal includes 146 areas along the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. This includes approximately 2,734 kilometers (1,699 miles) of shoreline along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts and along margins of interior bays, inlets, and lagoons.

Section 4(b)(2) of the Endangered Species Act requires that we designate or revise critical habitat based upon the best scientific and commercial data available and after taking into consideration the economic impact, and any other relevant impact, of specifying any particular area as critical habitat. We may exclude an area from critical habitat if we determine that the benefits of excluding the area outweigh the benefits of including the area as critical habitat, provided such exclusion will not result in the extinction of the species. Consequently, we have prepared and made available a draft economic analysis concerning the proposed critical habitat designation, which is available for review and comment at the above Internet and mailing addresses.

Public Comments Solicited

Pursuant to regulations at 50 CFR 424.16(c)(2), we may extend or reopen a public comment period on a proposal to designate critical habitat upon finding that there is good cause to do so. Since the close of the original comment period on proposed designation of critical habitat for wintering piping plovers, we have received a number of comments which provide information relevant to the proposed designation. In the interest of considering the best scientific and commercial information available in making our final determination on the proposal, we find

that good cause exists to reopen the public comment period on this proposed action.

We solicit comments on all aspects of the critical habitat proposal, including the draft economic analysis. Our final determination on the proposed critical habitat will take into consideration comments and any additional information received by the date specified above. All previous comments and information submitted during the comment period need not be resubmitted. Written comments may be submitted to the Field Supervisor at the above address.

Author

The primary author of this notice is Steve Spangle, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103.

Authority: The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: February 15, 2001.

Frank S. Shoemaker, Jr.,

Acting Regional Director, Region 2, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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