

White House Report R4:03/26/07

Policy or Program Developments:

- **FWS - Interim Operational Plan (IOP) Biological Opinion – Administrative Record:** The FWS completed Endangered Species Act consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) on the Interim Operational plan (IOP) in November 2006. The opinion re-evaluated the effects of the IOP on the endangered Everglade snail kite, Cape Sable seaside sparrow, and wood stork, and concluded “no jeopardy.” The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians sued the Corps and FWS on the IOP. The South Florida Ecological Services Office produced the administrative record in February 2006 and withheld approximately 350 internal and deliberative documents. The Tribe plans to submit a motion compelling the release of these documents. As a result, the Director will be requested to submit a declaration describing the internal and deliberative nature of these documents and why they should not be released. The Service will have up to 10 days to respond to the Tribe’s motion, which could be submitted this week. The Solicitor’s Office is now drafting the declaration, which will be reviewed by the South Florida Ecological Services Office, and the Regional Office and then sent to the Washington Office as soon as possible.
- **FWS - Manatee Five-Year Review:** The FWS is completing the Five-Year Review for the manatee and anticipates releasing the document by April 16. The FWS, in coordination with the state, has consulted with leading scientists for the latest information on the status of the manatee in Florida and Puerto Rico. Ongoing conservation and management actions and protective measures based on the best available science have benefited the West Indian manatee population rangewide. In Florida, manatees are exhibiting positive growth rates and high adult survival rates along the entire east coast and in the northwest region; however, there is still uncertainty about the status of manatees in the southwest region of the state. There is no information on growth rates and adult survival rate for manatee population in Puerto Rico. However, the population is considered at least stable. Our recommendation in the Five-Year Review is that the West Indian manatee no longer meets the definition of an endangered species, but does meet the definition of threatened species, because of threats of potential warm water habitat loss, watercraft mortality, and the regulatory mechanisms associated with these threats. Therefore, the FWS believes the proper classification for the West Indian manatee is “threatened,” due to an improvement in population status and abatement of many threats associated with the species. Developing a reclassification proposal will involve significant coordination with agency partners and stakeholders before a reclassification action is undertaken. In addition, the FWS will propose a rulemaking under the MMPA to ensure that adequate manatee protection measures are in place to address unauthorized take from all causes. This action has a Delisting and Reclassification Priority number of 2.

Press Inquiries:

NBC Nightly News, (Miami, FL.) [Stephanie Himango] American crocodile reclassification. Setting up taping and interview at Turkey Point Power plant next week. Anticipate an early April airing.

WTKF Radio, (Raleigh, NC.) [John Smith/Ben Hill] Seeking interview with Dale on FWS opposition to Outlying landing field Site C. Working to set up interview with the Director. Will air once interview is conducted.

Associated Press (Raleigh, NC.) [Steve Harsoe] Asked about Indian job center closing. Referred to Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Ducks Unlimited Magazine (Memphis, TN.) [John Hoffman] Asked for Hurricane Rita photographs seen on Southeast FWS Internet site. Sent high resolution photos to use with Duck Hunt Club rebuilding story. Should publish May-June issue 07.

Drug Topics (Woodcliff Lakes, NJ.) [Paul Reid] SMARTxT Disposal initiative. Seeking background materials and logo on Sam Hamilton's (vice Dale Hall's) announcement. Sent graphics and materials. Unknown publishing date.

News Press (Ft. Myers, FL.) [Kevin Lollar] American Crocodile Reclassification to threatened. Arranged interview with Cindy Schulz, Ecological Services Supervisor, Vero Beach, FL. Unknown publishing date.

Sun Sentinel (New Bern, NC.) [Sue Book] Dale Hall and FWS opposition to Outlying Landing Field -- Site C. Positive story published and sent to D.C.

The Sportsman (Kingsport, TN.) [Scott Brown] Eastern cougar. Provided background information and set up reporter with Region 5 spokesperson, Diana Weaver. Unknown publishing date.

Associated Press Radio (Washington, D.C.) [Mira Lopez] American crocodile reclassification. Arranged an interview with Cindy Schulz, Ecological Services Supervisor, Vero Beach, FL. Unknown airing date.

The Tennessean (Nashville, TN.) [Anne Payne] SMARTxT Disposal initiative. Seeking detailed studies conducted in Tennessee. Continuing to research with Greg Masson, Contaminants, DC. Unknown publishing date.

Post and Courier (Charleston, SC.) [Bo Peterson] Wind power. Seeking interview on wind power. Set up with Nicholas Throckmorton. Unknown publishing date.

WCTI TV (New Bern, NC.) [Mike Licquia] Seeking statement from Dale Hall on FWS opposition to Outlying landing field Site C. Aired on Mar. 20, 1997.

Associated Press (West Palm Beach, FL.) [Brian Skoloff] American Crocodile. Tom MacKenzie did an interview on issue. Published on Mar 20, 2007, and printed around the country. Also picked up by CNN.com. Positive story.