

rule will become effective on the date it establishes, and EPA will not take further action on this proposal. If EPA receives comments that oppose this action, we will withdraw the Direct Final Rule, and it will not take effect. EPA will then respond to public comments in a later final rule based on this proposal and after consideration of all comments. You may not have another opportunity for comment. If you want to comment on this action, you must do so at this time. For additional information, please see the direct final rule published in the "Rules and Regulations" section of this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Dated: July 27, 2017.

Cecil Rodrigues,

Acting Regional Administrator, U.S. EPA Region III.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

[Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2016-0077; 4500030113]

RIN 1018-BB34

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; 6-Month Extension of Final Determination on the Proposed Endangered Status for Texas Hornshell (*Popenaias popeii*)

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; reopening of the comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce a 6-month extension of the final determination of whether to add the Texas hornshell (*Popenaias popeii*), a freshwater mussel species from New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico, to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. We are also reopening the comment period on the proposed rule to list the species, for an additional 30 days. We are taking this action to extend the final determination based on substantial disagreement regarding the status of Texas hornshell in Mexico. We will submit a final listing determination to the **Federal Register** on or before February 10, 2018.

DATES: The comment period on the proposed rule that published August 10, 2016 (81 FR 52796), is reopened. We will accept comments received or

postmarked on or before September 11, 2017. If you comment using the Federal eRulemaking Portal (see **ADDRESSES**), you must submit your comments by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

(1) *Electronically:* Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter FWS-R2-ES-2016-0077. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Comment Now!"

(2) *By hard copy:* Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2016-0077; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Chuck Ardizzone, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office, 17629 El Camino Real #211, Houston, TX 77058; on the Internet at <https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/TexasCoastal/>; by telephone 281-286-8282; or by facsimile 281-488-5882. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On August 10, 2016, we published a proposed rule (81 FR 52796) to list the Texas hornshell as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife under the Act is located in title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 17.11(h). The publication of this proposed rule complied with a deadline established in a court-approved settlement agreement (Endangered Species Act Section 4 Deadline Litigation, No. 10-377 (EGS), MDL Docket No. 2165 (D.D.C. May 10, 2011)). That proposal had a 60-day comment period, ending October 11, 2016. We reopened the comment period for 30 days on May 30, 2017 (82 FR 24654), in order to hold two public hearings on the proposed rule. For a description of previous Federal actions concerning the Texas hornshell, please refer to the August 10, 2016, proposed listing rule (81 FR 52796).

We also solicited and received independent scientific review of the information contained in the proposed rule from peer reviewers with expertise in Texas hornshell or similar species ecology and identified threats to the species, in accordance with our July 1, 1994, peer review policy (59 FR 34270).

Section 4(b)(6) of the Act and its implementing regulations at 50 CFR 424.17(a) require that we take one of three actions within 1 year of a proposed listing: (1) Finalize the proposed rule; (2) withdraw the proposed rule; or (3) extend the final determination by not more than 6 months, if there is substantial disagreement regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of the available data relevant to the determination.

Since the publication of the proposed rule, there has been substantial disagreement regarding the interpretation of the limited surveys that exist for Texas hornshell in Mexico. This situation has led to a significant disagreement regarding the current conservation status of the species in Mexico. Therefore, in consideration of the disagreements surrounding the Texas hornshell's status, we are extending the final determination for 6 months in order to solicit information that will help to clarify these issues. With this 6-month extension, we will make a final determination on the proposed rule no later than February 10, 2018.

Information Requested

We will accept written comments and information during this reopened comment period on our proposed listing rule for Texas hornshell that was published in the **Federal Register** on August 10, 2016 (81 FR 52796). We will consider information and recommendations from all interested parties. We intend that any final action resulting from the proposal be as accurate as possible and based on the best available scientific and commercial data.

Due to the scientific disagreements described above, we are particularly interested in new information and comments regarding the status of and threats to any Texas hornshell population in Mexico.

If you previously submitted comments or information on the August 10, 2016, proposed rule (81 FR 52796), please do not resubmit them. We have incorporated previously submitted comments into the public record, and we will fully consider them in the preparation of our final determination. Our final determination concerning the proposed listing will take into consideration all written comments and any additional information we receive.

You may submit your comments and materials concerning the proposed rule by one of the methods listed in **ADDRESSES**. We request that you send comments only by the methods described in **ADDRESSES**.

If you submit information via <http://www.regulations.gov>, your entire submission—including any personal identifying information—will be posted on the Web site. If your submission is made via a hardcopy that includes personal identifying information, you may request at the top of your document that we withhold this information from public review. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. We will post all hardcopy submissions on <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Comments and materials we receive, as well as supporting documentation we used in preparing the proposed rule, will be available for public inspection on <http://www.regulations.gov>, or by appointment, during normal business hours, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**). You may obtain copies of the proposed rule on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> at Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2016-0077, or by mail from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

Authority

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

Dated: August 4, 2017.

Stephen Guertin,

Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 32

[Docket No. FWS-HQ-NWRS-2017-0005; FXRS1265090000-178-FF09R26000]

RIN 1018-BB75

2017–2018 Refuge-Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Regulations

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, propose to increase the hunting activities available at nine National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), open one NWR to sport fishing for the first time, and add pertinent refuge-specific regulations for other NWRs that pertain to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting, and sport fishing for the 2017–2018 season.

DATES: We will accept comments received or postmarked on or before September 11, 2017.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- *Electronically:* Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, type in FWS-HQ-NWRS-2017-0005, which is the docket number for this rulemaking. Then click on the Search button. On the resulting screen, find the correct document and submit a comment by clicking on “Comment Now!”

- *By hard copy:* Submit by U.S. mail or hand delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-HQ-NWRS-2017-0005; Division of Policy, Performance, and Management Programs; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: BPHC; Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

We will not accept email or faxes. We will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide us (see Request for Comments, below, for more information). For information on specific refuges’ public use programs and the conditions that apply to them or for copies of compatibility determinations for any refuge(s), contact individual programs at the addresses/phone numbers given in Available Information for Specific Refuges under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Katherine Harrigan, (703) 358-2440.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 closes NWRs in all States except Alaska to all uses until opened. The Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) may open refuge areas to any use, including hunting and/or sport fishing, upon a determination that the use is compatible with the purposes of the refuge and National Wildlife Refuge System mission. The action also must be in accordance with provisions of all laws applicable to the areas, developed in coordination with the appropriate State fish and wildlife agency(ies), consistent with the principles of sound fish and wildlife management and administration, and otherwise in the public interest. These requirements ensure that we maintain the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

We annually review refuge hunting and sport fishing programs to determine whether to include additional refuges or whether individual refuge regulations

governing existing programs need modifications. Changing environmental conditions, State and Federal regulations, and other factors affecting fish and wildlife populations and habitat may warrant modifications to refuge-specific regulations to ensure the continued compatibility of hunting and sport fishing programs and to ensure that these programs will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of refuge purposes or the Refuge System’s mission.

Provisions governing hunting and sport fishing on refuges are in title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations in part 32 (50 CFR part 32). We regulate hunting and sport fishing on refuges to:

- Ensure compatibility with refuge purpose(s);
- Properly manage fish and wildlife resource(s);
- Protect other refuge values;
- Ensure refuge visitor safety; and
- Provide opportunities for quality fish- and wildlife-dependent recreation.

On many refuges where we decide to allow hunting and sport fishing, our general policy of adopting regulations identical to State hunting and sport fishing regulations is adequate in meeting these objectives. On other refuges, we must supplement State regulations with more-restrictive Federal regulations to ensure that we meet our management responsibilities, as outlined in the Statutory Authority section, below. We issue refuge-specific hunting and sport fishing regulations when we open wildlife refuges to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting, or sport fishing. These regulations may list the wildlife species that you may hunt or fish, seasons, bag or creel (container for carrying fish) limits, methods of hunting or sport fishing, descriptions of areas open to hunting or sport fishing, and other provisions as appropriate. You may find previously issued refuge-specific regulations for hunting and sport fishing in 50 CFR part 32. In this rulemaking, we are also proposing to standardize and clarify the language of existing regulations.

Statutory Authority

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 [Improvement Act]) (Administration Act), and the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460k–460k–4) (Recreation Act) govern the administration and public use of refuges.

Amendments enacted by the Improvement Act built upon the