prevention of any appreciable spread of raccoon rabies in the eastern United States. While the prevention of any appreciable spread of raccoon rabies in the eastern United States represents a major accomplishment in rabies management, the V–RG vaccine has not been effective in eliminating raccoon rabies from high-risk spread corridors. This fact prompted WS to evaluate rabies vaccines capable of producing higher levels of population immunity against raccoon rabies to better control the spread of this disease.

Since 2011, WS has been conducting field trials to study the immunogenicity and safety of an experimental oral rabies vaccine, a human adenovirus type 5 rabies glycoprotein recombinant vaccine called ONRAB (produced by Artemis Technologies Inc., Guelph, Ontario, Canada). The field trials began in portions of West Virginia, including U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service National Forest System lands.

Beginning in 2012, WS expanded field trials into portions of New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Vermont, and new areas of West Virginia, including National Forest System lands, in order to further assess the immunogenicity of ONRAB in raccoons and skunks for raccoon rabies virus variant.

WS is now proposing to further expand ONRAB vaccine distribution to enhance rabies management in the United States to protect human and animal health and reduce social costs. The proposed expanded use of ONRAB is necessary as a higher level of population immunity in raccoons is desired in order to maximize the effectiveness of ORV programs, and the RABORAL V–RG vaccine has not produced sufficient levels of population immunity in skunks (primarily striped skunks) in the wild at the current dose.

WS has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) in which we analyze the proposed expanded use of ONRAB vaccine-baits throughout the ORV distribution zone in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service. This EA will supersede the 2012 EA ''Field Trial of an Experimental Rabies Vaccine, Human Adenovirus Type 5 Vector in New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Vermont, and West Virginia'' and the subsequent supplemental EAs issued in 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018.

We are making the EA available to the public for review and comment. We will consider all comments that we receive on or before the date listed under the heading **DATES** at the beginning of this notice. The EA may be viewed on the *Regulations.gov* website or in our reading room (see **ADDRESSES** above for instructions for accessing *Regulations.gov* and information on the location and hours of the reading room). In addition, paper copies may be obtained by calling or writing to the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

The EA has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 2nd day of July 2019.

Kevin Shea,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 2019–14536 Filed 7–8–19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS–2018–0064]

Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment; Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Conservation Program

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its sub-agency, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), are making available a draft environmental assessment for a conservation program pursuant to the Endangered Species Act to benefit the southwestern willow flycatcher, a small, neotropical migrant bird found in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. The draft environmental assessment examines the environmental effects associated with the selection of the program alternatives and conservation measures that USDA and APHIS propose to implement. We are making the draft environmental assessment available to the public for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before August 8, 2019.

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

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to *http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2018-0064.*
- *Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:* Send your comment to Docket No. APHIS–2018–0064, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A–03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737–1238.

Supporting documents and any comments we receive on this docket may be viewed at *http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2018-0064* or in our reading room, which is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 799–7039 before coming.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Kai Caraher, Biological Scientist, PHP, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 150, Riverdale, MD 20737–1231; (301) 851–2345; *Kai.Caraher@usda.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Saltcedar, also known as tamarisk (*Tamarix* species), is an invasive plant widely established in riparian areas in the western United States. This non-native weed, which can take the form of a shrub or small tree, was introduced into the United States in the latter 19th century. Although saltcedar is an invasive plant, native animals have adapted to its presence.

In 1986, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) began research into the potential for biological control of saltcedar. From 1998 to 2000, ARS conducted open field release trials of tamarisk leaf beetles (*Diorhabda* species) to determine the conditions under which releases could succeed. These field trials took place after ARS consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) permitted the releases after it completed additional environmental risk analyses and provided the public an opportunity to comment on the documents.

In 2005, APHIS initiated a biological control program for saltcedar defoliation in the northern United States using the tamarisk leaf beetle as the biological control agent in limited locations

outside of the habitat of the southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL, *Empidonax traillii extimus*). Greater than anticipated natural dispersion and intentional human-assisted movement of the beetle into SWFL habitat caused defoliation of saltcedar trees, hampering the flycatcher's nesting success.

After tamarisk leaf beetles were discovered in SWFL habitat, APHIS terminated its saltcedar biological control program in 2010 and canceled release permits because of concern about the potential adverse effects to SWFL. APHIS reinitiated consultation with USFWS on these actions, in compliance with section 7(a)(2) of the ESA and 16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2), and USFWS concurred with APHIS' determination that these actions were not likely to adversely affect the SWFL.

On September 30, 2013, the Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit against USDA, APHIS, ARS, the Department of the Interior (DOI), and USFWS alleging that the APHIS saltcedar biological control program violated the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and the ESA. On May 3, 2016, the Court granted the plaintiff's second of five claims, finding that APHIS did not comply with the ESA section 7(a)(1), which requires Federal agencies to consult with DOI and ''utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of [the ESA] by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered species and threatened species listed pursuant to [16 U.S.C. 1533]'' 16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(1). On June 19, 2018, the Court ordered USDA and APHIS to publish proposed conservation program alternatives in compliance with ESA section 7(a)(1), solicit public comments on the proposed alternatives, then publish a draft environmental assessment for public comment, and complete review of all public comments, and issue final decision and final environmental assessment, or an environmental impact statement (EIS) should it be appropriate.

On October 26, 2018, APHIS published in the **Federal Register** (83 FR 54080–54082, Docket No. APHIS–2018–0064) a notice [1] informing the public of APHIS' intent to conduct a scoping process and prepare an environmental assessment (EA). We solicited comments for 30 days ending on November 26, 2018. We received 23 comments by that date. After reviewing the comments, APHIS prepared the draft EA to examine the environmental effects of possible program alternatives, including conservation measures available to USDA and APHIS as well as a ''no action'' alternative. The EA will be used for planning and decisionmaking and to inform the public about the environmental effects of the various conservation actions.

We are announcing the availability of the draft EA that considers the potential environmental effects of the proposed conservation measures. We are requesting public comments on the listed conservation program alternatives to ensure that additional potential alternatives and environmental issues overlooked by USDA and APHIS in the draft EA can be identified and examined before it is finalized. Based on the comments that we receive, we may determine that we should prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) instead of an EA. In that case, we would notify the public of our intent to prepare an EIS in a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Proposed Programmatic Alternatives

The Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1508.25) require the scope of analysis to include a no action alternative in comparison to other reasonable courses of action. Under the no action alternative, APHIS would evaluate the current USDA programs benefitting the SWFL and would not develop any new conservation programs for the species.

Under the proposed conservation program alternative, APHIS would assist existing conservation programs, contribute funding, monitor beetle impacts, and evaluate participation in additional current or future projects with the potential to benefit the flycatcher. APHIS received conservation program suggestions during the notice of intent comment period. These measures include:

- Expanding the educational campaign to include discouraging human-aided distribution of the tamarisk leaf beetle near known flycatcher nesting sites;
- Funding the construction, installation, and maintenance of cowbird traps in flycatcher-occupied riparian habitat to reduce nest parasitism; and
- Funding additional development and testing of a tamarisk leaf beetle repellent by Montana State University.

The EA will be prepared in accordance with: (1) NEPA, (2) CEQ's regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA's regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 372). In addition to publishing this notice in the **Federal Register**, APHIS will send the draft EA to 15 Tribal governments, the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service and Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, the USFWS–Ecological Services and the National Wildlife Refuge System, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Park Service, 7 States, and dozens of individuals from non-governmental groups (conservation and academic researchers). APHIS requests that Federal, State, Tribal, or local government entities who manage areas, or have jurisdictional control over sites or actions under consideration as part of this conservation program, contribute to this environmental risk analysis and development of the final NEPA documents.

Done in Washington, DC, this 2nd day of July 2019.

Kevin Shea,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 2019–14538 Filed 7–8–19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

[1] To view the notice and the comments we received, go to *https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=APHIS-2018-0064.*

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS–2016–0031]

Environmental Impact Statement; Fruit Fly Cooperative Control Program: Record of Decision

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's record of decision for the final programmatic environmental impact statement titled ''Fruit Fly Cooperative Control Program.''

DATES: An official of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Plant Protection and Quarantine signed the record of decision on April 22, 2019.

ADDRESSES: You may read the final environmental impact statement and record of decision in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be