ADDRESSES: Comments and requests for information concerning either refuge may be addressed to: Refuge Manager, Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, 16450 NW 31st Place, Chiefland, Florida 32626–4874.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: It is the policy of the Fish and Wildlife Service to have all lands within the National Wildlife Refuge System managed in accordance with an approved comprehensive conservation plan. The plan guides management decisions and identifies refuge goals, objectives, and strategies for achieving refuge purposes. Public input into this planning process is encouraged. The plan will provide other agencies and the public with a clear understanding of the desired conditions of the refuge and how the Service will implement management strategies. Some of the issues to be addressed in the plan include the following:

(a) Public use management;

(b) Habitat management;

(c) Wildlife population management; and

(d) Cultural resource identification and protection.

Alternatives that address the issues and management strategies associated with these topics will be included in the environmental documents. A separate plan will be prepared for each refuge.

The Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge was established on April 10, 1979, under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Act to protect the lower Suwannee River ecosystem. The 52,935-acre refuge, which is predominantly wetlands, is bisected by 20 miles of Stephen Foster's famous Suwannee River and includes 26 miles of the Gulf Coast.

The Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge was established by Executive Order 5158 on July 16, 1929, as a breeding ground for migratory birds. The refuge supports one of the largest nesting colonies of pelicans, herons, egrets and ibis in north Florida, and consists of 12 islands ranging in size from 1 to 120 acres.

Dated: July 12, 1999.

Sam D. Hamilton,

Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 99–19053 Filed 7–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact, and Receipt of Applications for an Incidental Take Permit and an Enhancement of Survival Permit for a State-wide Conservation Plan for the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker on Private Lands in the State of Georgia

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior

ACTION: Notice

SUMMARY: The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) (Applicant) has applied for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) and an Enhancement of Survival Permit (ESP) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) and Section 10(a)(1)(A), respectively, of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended. The proposed action would involve approval of the Applicant's Conservation Plan (CP) which will be administered by the Applicant to eligible landowners, which is defined in the Applicant's CP, and involves two conservation options termed the Mitigated Incidental Take (MIT) and Safe Harbor Management Agreement (SHMA) options. The subject permits would authorize take of the red-cockaded woodpecker (Picoides borealis) (RCW), a federally listed endangered species, on private lands in Georgia that (1) are isolated, remnant groups of RCWs (for ITP issuance) or (2) are new RCW groups created above SHMA baselines (for ESP issuance). Under the authority of the issued permits from the Service, the Applicant would encourage eligible landowners to participate in the two RCW conservation options via ''Certificates of Inclusion'' (or CI). Eligible landowners can be issued a CI in one or both of the CP's options with the goal to provide landowners with land management flexibility that balances each landowner's economic expectations with RCW conservation and recovery. The proposed taking would be incidental to otherwise lawful activities including typical forest management actions, land development activities, and other actions on private land and other non-federal lands in Georgia. The mitigation and minimization measures outlined in the Applicant's CP to address the effects of the CP to protected species are described further in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.

This notice advises the public that the Service has opened the comment period on the permit applications, the draft environmental assessment (EA), and the preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The permit applications include the Applicant's CP (with appendices). This notice is provided pursuant to Section 10(a) of the Act and National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) regulations (40 CFR 1506.6) and advises the public that the Service has made a preliminary determination that issuing the ITP and ESP is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. The FONSI is based on information contained in the draft EA and CP. The final determination on this action will be made no sooner than 30 days from the date of this notice.

The Service will evaluate the application, associated documents, and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of NEPA regulations and Section 10(a) of the Act. If it is determined that the requirements are met, the requested permits will be issued for the incidental take of RCW groups subject to the provisions of the Applicant's CP. The final NEPA and permit determinations will not be completed until after the end of a 30-day comment period and will fully consider all comments received. The Service will also evaluate whether the issuance of the requested permits complies with Section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service Section 7 consultation. The resulting Section 7 biological opinion, in combination with the above types of evaluation requirements, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the requested permits.

DATES: Written comments on the permit applications, CP, and draft EA should be sent to the Service's Southeast Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**) and should be received on or before August 26, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Persons wishing to review the permit applications, CP, draft EA, and preliminary FONSI may obtain a copy by writing the Service's Southeast Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta, Georgia 30345 (Attn: Endangered Species Permits), or Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 52560, Fort Benning, Georgia 31995–2560. Documents will also be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours at the Regional Office. Written data or comments concerning the permit

applications, CP, or EA should be submitted to the Regional Office. Comments or requests for the documentation must be in writing to be processed. Please reference permit number TE014977–0 in such comments, or in requests for the documents discussed herein. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public, subject to the requirements of the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Lee Andrews, Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at either address listed above (see **ADDRESSES**) or telephone (706) 544–6428.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Georgia state-wide RCW CP is intended to establish mechanisms to allow incidental take of: (1) MIT option RCW groups that will minimize and mitigate loss of isolated RCW groups and (2) SHMA option RCW groups that represent population expansions resulting from voluntary RCW habitat development and maintenance. The Applicant's CP estimates that there are approximately 11 private landowners and 19 groups of RCWs occupying the habitat of those landowners that will be initially eligible for incidental take under the MIT option. However, it is important to note that all incidental take proposed under the Applicant's CP may or may not ever occur. While landowners will be permitted to carry out activities under this plan that could result in the incidental taking of RCWs, they may choose not to do so or not to do so for many decades. The Applicant and the Service believe that the implementation of this program will result in maintenance of the RCW population levels on private lands in Georgia and an increase in the amount of available and potentially-suitable RCW habitat. Further, all translocation of RCW groups will be to other suitable private or state lands.

The geographic scope of the Applicant's CP is the entire State of Georgia but would only authorize incidental take on specific lands enrolled in the CP for which a respective CI has been signed. Lands potentially eligible for inclusion in the CP include (1) all privately-owned lands and public lands owned by cities, counties, and municipalities where isolated, remnant groups of RCWs exist and (2) lands covered under the SHMA option of the CP. Priority will be placed on developing CIs with landowners where loss of RCW groups is likely due to isolation from other RCW populations and where development of SHMA CIs would enroll land that has potential to benefit RCWs, particularly land with abandoned or inactive clusters or land that is near existing RCW populations.

Landowners with RCWs on their property will apply to GDNR for inclusion under the permit. If a RCW group meets the criteria of isolation and non-viability described in the Applicant's CP, the landowner will be eligible to participate under the MIT option ITP. These landowners will select from several mitigation alternatives to minimize and mitigate the effects of incidental take, and, once all mitigation criteria have been met, the landowner will be allowed to commence with RCW habitat alterations. Any landowner with potentially suitable RCW habitat can participate in SHMA option.

The duration of the ITP is 30 years and it would allow incidental take of up to 19 RCW groups; the ESP will be valid for 99 years and would allow incidental take of up to 38 RCW groups. This CP may be amended in the future to cover a higher level of incidental take if additional RCW groups are located that are eligible for coverage in the CP, although it is unlikely that additional landowners will significantly add to the number of those already identified as eligible. Landowners who are identified as having RCWs in the future will have the option, if eligible under the CP, to be included through CP modification with Service approval, or landowners may elect to pursue the development of landowner-specific conservation plans.

The proposed RCW conservation options complement the ongoing development of an overall conservation strategy for RCW populations in Georgia by representatives from the Service, U.S. Forest Service, GDNR, and private industry. Implementation of this plan should alleviate many of the concerns about endangered species conservation efforts on private lands by providing private landowners with relief from potential regulatory burdens while promoting voluntary enhancement and restoration of RCW habitat. RCW groups determined to be isolated from other RCW populations will be used for augmentation of or translocation to non-federal mitigation sites. Among the minimization measures proposed by the Applicant are no take of RCWs during the breeding season, consolidation of small, isolated RCW populations at identified sites capable of supporting a viable RCW population, and measures to improve current and potential habitat for the species.

Several alternatives to the proposed action were evaluated by Service. The alternative of the Service paying landowners for desired management practices was evaluated and could be accomplished without incidental take occurring. However, such a program would be expensive, and funding is not currently available. An alternative where RCW mitigation would occur on federal lands was investigated but determined to be inappropriate, because federal lands are already mandated to recover the species. A no action alternative was also explored, but this alternative would not increase the probability of isolated RCW group survival nor would it alleviate landowner conflicts. Instead, the incentive proposed here, although it authorizes future incidental take, is expected to attract sufficient interest among Georgia landowners to generate significant benefits for the RCW. The Applicant's CP was developed in an adaptive management framework to allow changes in the program based on new scientific information including, but not limited to, biological needs and management actions proven to benefit the species or its habitat.

The CP was prepared by GDNR and sent to the Service for authorization of the CP's ITP and ESP as per Section 10(a)(1)(B) and Section 10(a)(1)(A), respectively, of the Act. Section 10(a)(1)(B), a 1982 Act amendment, was created to help resolve land use conflicts resulting from the presence of listed species on private land by issuance of a permit authorizing take for those species. As specified by the ESA, permitted take must be ''incidental to, and not the purpose of, the carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity.'' In order to obtain an ITP, the applicant must submit, in part, a conservation plan specifying ''the impact which will likely result from such taking; what steps the applicant will take to minimize and mitigate such impacts; and the funding that will be available to implement such steps; what alternative actions to such taking the applicant considered and the reasons why such alternatives are not being utilized; and such other measures the Secretary {of the U.S. Department of the Interior} may require as being necessary or appropriate for purposes of the plan.'' These requirements are addressed in this document. Section 10(a)(1)(A) authorizes ESPs related to the Service's recently-implemented Safe Harbor policy (**Federal Register**, Vol. 64, No. 116, 32717–32726).

The Service continues to critically evaluate any potential or real biological costs and conservation benefits of current RCW management and research programs. This ensures continuation of

activities proven to directly benefit or contribute to species conservation and recovery. Currently acceptable management activities may be modified or eliminated based upon research findings and/or evaluation of the biological costs versus the conservation benefits. The 1985 Red-cockaded Woodpecker Recovery plan is currently undergoing revision to reflect advances in red-cockaded woodpecker management in the last 12 years. All interested agencies, organizations, and individuals are urged to provide comments on the permit applications and NEPA documents. All comments received by the closing date will be considered in finalizing NEPA compliance and permit issuance or denial. The Service will publish a record on its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: July 21, 1999.

H. Dale Hall,

Deputy Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 99–19087 Filed 7–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Technology Transfer Act of 1986

AGENCY: United States Geological Survey, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of proposed cooperative research and development agreement (CRADA) negotiations.

SUMMARY: The United States Geological Survey (USGS) is contemplating entering into a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) with Alden Research Laboratory, Inc. to jointly perform environmental hydraulics research at the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center.

INQUIRES: If any other parties are interested in similar activities with the USGS, please contact: Dr. Mufeed Odeh, 413–863–8994 Ext. 43.

BUREAU CLEARANCE OFFICER: John Cordyack 703–648–7313.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice is to meet the USGS requirement stipulated in the Survey Manual.

Dated: July 14, 1999.

Byron K. Williams,

Acting Chief Biologist

[FR Doc. 99–19055 Filed 7–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–Y7–M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WO–320–9–1990–00 24–1A]

Extension of Currently Approved Information Collection, OMB Approval Number 1004–0114

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is announcing its intention to request extension of approval to collect certain information from the owners of unpatented mining claims, mill sites, and tunnel sites to allow the BLM to record such claims and sites, determine the land status at the time of location, collect annual maintenance and location fees, process annual waiver from such fees, process annual affidavits of labor or notices of intent to hold a mining claim or site, process requests for deferments from assessment work, process transfers of interest, and generally adjudicate such claims and sites for compliance with the 1872 Mining Law, as amended and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended.

DATES: Comments on the proposed information collection must be received by September 27, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be mailed to: Regulatory Management Team (420), Bureau of Land Management, 1849 C Street, NW., Room 401 LS, Washington, DC 20240. Comments may be sent via Internet to: *WOComment@blm.gov*. Please include ''Attn: 1004–0114'' and your name and return address in your Internet message.

Comments may be hand-delivered to the Bureau of Land Management Administrative Record, Room 401, 1620 L Street, NW., Washington, DC.

Comments will be available for public review at the L Street address during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.), Monday through Friday.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Roger A. Haskins, (202) 452–0355, roger__haskins@blm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In accordance with 5 CFR 1320.8(d), BLM is required to provide 60-day notice in the **Federal Register** concerning a proposed collection of information to solicit comments on (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information of those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. BLM will analyze any comments sent in response to this notice and include them with its request for extension of approval from the Office of Management and Budget under 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*

Recording Claims

Under sections 314 (a) and (b) of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1744), owners of unpatented mining claims, mill sites, and tunnel sites located on federal lands must notify BLM of the location of the claim or site within 90 days after it has been filed under State law. Under the implementing regulations at 43 CFR 3833.1–2, the claim owner must provide the name or number of the claim, the name and address of the claim owner(s), the type of claim, the date of location, and a description of the claim or mineral survey.

Maintenance Fee Waiver

Under 30 U.S.C. 28f (Pub. L. 105–277, 112 Stat. 2681–235), owners of unpatented mining claims, mill sites, and tunnel sites must pay an annual maintenance fee of $100 per claim or site, unless the fee is waived. The fee is in lieu of the requirement to perform and record annual assessment work. Under BLM's implementing regulations at 43 CFR 3833.1–7, owners of no more than ten mining claims can annually apply for and obtain from BLM a maintenance fee waiver by submitting the following information: (1) The mining claim and names and BLM serial numbers, (2) a declaration of owning no more than ten claims and sites, (3) a declaration of having complied with the assessment work requirements, (4) the names and addresses of all owners of the claims and sites, and (5) the owners' signatures. BLM uses Form 3830–2 to simplify the collection of the required information. Any interested member of the public may request and obtain, without charge, a copy of Form 3830–2 by contacting the person identified under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.**

Annual Assessment Work

Under section 314(a) of FLPMA and 30 U.S.C. 28f, owners of unpatented mining claims, mill sites, and tunnel sites who qualify for a waiver of the