

discouraging individuals from digging plants that have not yet reproduced, as well as discouraging dealers from purchasing roots of young plants. Likewise, as of August 30, 1999, the U.S. Forest Service—Eastern Region has also directed that permits for the collection of wild ginseng on National Forest lands (including Shawnee National Forest, Illinois; Hoosier National Forest, Indiana; Huron and Manistee National Forests, Michigan; Chippewa and Superior National Forests, Minnesota; Mark Twain National Forest, Missouri; Wayne National Forest, Ohio; Alleghany National Forest, Pennsylvania; Green Mountain National Forest, Vermont; Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia; Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Wisconsin) be restricted to plants at least 5 years of age. Our ultimate objective is to prevent the extirpation from the wild of this valuable natural resource and the resultant negative economic impact this would have on citizens who depend on this plant as a source of income.

The issuance of a “non-detriment” finding by the Scientific Authority is required by both the Endangered Species Act and the CITES treaty as one of the prerequisites that must be met before any export permit can be issued for an Appendix-II species. As such, the non-detriment finding is one of several administrative determinations that comprise the decision-making process for the issuance of CITES permits. Prior to 1994, we issued multi-year findings on exports of American ginseng through a Notice in the **Federal Register** as an informational matter. For the past several years, we issued our findings on an annual administrative basis. New biological information available to us precludes the issuance of a multi-year non-detriment finding. The Service consulted with the ginseng program coordinators from all States where harvest of wild ginseng is allowed, prior to the Office of Scientific Authority issuing its 1999 finding.

The responsibility for inspection of all plant import and exports, including shipments of ginseng, rests with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Policies on the inspection and clearance of plant shipments, including ginseng, are made by APHIS. We work closely with APHIS, and continue to work closely in the enforcement and implementation of the new permit condition.

Public Comments Solicited

In anticipation of the ginseng harvest season for 2000 and beyond, we are

seeking information from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, the trade industry, or any other interested party on the status of ginseng populations in the wild. We particularly seek biological and trade information concerning the impact of ginseng harvest and international trade on wild populations of the species, the current conservation status of the species throughout its range, or other relevant data concerning any threat to the species. Such information may lead us to modify current restrictions on the export of wild American ginseng during the 2000 harvest season, and beyond.

Author: The primary author of this notice is Dr. Javier Alvarez, Office of Scientific Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mail Stop ARLSQ-750, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Dated: September 30, 1999.

Jamie Rappaport Clark,

Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Great Lakes Panel Meeting and Ruffe Control Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of meetings.

SUMMARY: This notice announces meetings of the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Task Force Great Lakes Panel Committee and the Ruffe Control Committee. The meeting topics are identified in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

DATES: The Great Lakes Panel will meet 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, October 19, 1999, and 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Wednesday, October 20, 1999. The Ruffe Control Committee will meet from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 28, 1999, and 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Friday, October 29, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The Great Lakes Panel meeting will be held at Metcalfe Federal Office Building, 77 W. Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois and the Ruffe Control Committee meeting will be held at the Best Western Inn, 6285 Saginaw Road, Bay City, Michigan.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sharon Gross, Executive Secretary, Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force at 703-358-2308 or by e-mail at: sharon_gross@fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. I), this notice announces meetings of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Great Lakes Panel Committee and the Ruffe Control Committee. The Task Force was established by the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990.

The Great Lakes Panel, comprised of representatives from Federal, State, and local agencies and from private environmental and commercial interests, provides the following:

(a) Identify priorities for the Great Lakes Region with respect to aquatic nuisance species;

(b) Make recommendations to the Task Force regarding programs to carry out zebra mussel programs;

(c) Assist the Task Force in coordinating Federal aquatic nuisance species program activities in the Great Lakes region;

(d) Coordinate, where possible, aquatic nuisance species program activities in the Great Lakes region that are not conducted pursuant to the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (as amended, 1996);

(e) Provide advice to public and private individuals and entities concerning methods of controlling aquatic nuisance species; and

(f) Submit an annual report describing activities within the Great Lakes region related to aquatic nuisance species prevention, research, and control.

The focus of this meeting will be to: review Panel activities for the past year, hear updates of ongoing activities, and review the Great Lakes Action Plan.

Topics to be covered at the Ruffe Control Committee meeting will include: the status of existing ruffe populations, a detailed review of each of the eight components of the ruffe control plan, an evaluation of the bait harvest prohibitions currently in place on Lake Superior, and other topics.

Minutes of the meeting will be maintained by the Executive Secretary, Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, Suite 851, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22203-1622, and will be available for public inspection during regular business hours, Monday through Friday.

Dated: October 1, 1999.

Hannibal Bolton,

Acting Co-Chair, Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, Acting Assistant Director—Fisheries.

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