



NEWS RELEASE

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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SECRETARY BABBITT, POTLATCH CORPORATION ANNOUNCE MAJOR CONSERVATION PLAN FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Potlatch Corporation Chairman and CEO John M. Richards today announced an unprecedented habitat conservation plan for the red-cockaded woodpecker, an endangered bird found on Potlatch timberland in Arkansas.

Potlatch, with the fourth largest population of the species remaining on privately owned lands, is the first large industrial timber company to submit a habitat conservation plan for the red-cockaded woodpecker. The plan contains innovative habitat management and protection commitments and far exceeds minimum requirements of the private landowner guidelines drafted to implement the Endangered Species Act.

Surrounded by a stand of loblolly pines at a red-cockaded woodpecker colony near Warren, Arkansas, Babbitt cited the public-private cooperative partnership that made the unique conservation plan possible.

"This is a welcome partnership that sets a precedent for the protection and management of this endangered species," Babbitt said. "By developing this habitat conservation plan, Potlatch has gone beyond what others have done to address the needs and survival of the red-cockaded woodpecker. In this time of passionate discussion about the future of the Endangered Species Act, this is a true success story of a public-private partnership forged to achieve compatible goals."

"The Potlatch Habitat Conservation Plan is part of the continued Potlatch corporate-wide effort to practice responsible environmental management of our timberlands," Richards said. "Our partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has created a plan that truly strikes a balance. It protects an endangered species while enabling our foresters to continue appropriate forest management to support our wood and paper products operations. At Potlatch, we are proud to have set new standards for red-cockaded woodpecker protection on large industrial forestland."

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The Potlatch habitat conservation plan impacts more than 15,000 acres of the red-cockaded woodpecker's southern pine forest habitat on Potlatch-owned land in Bradley and Calhoun counties. Within this area, the habitat conservation plan officially designates 7,128 acres that will be managed for the direct benefit, protection, and maintenance of the existing groups of birds. The plan will be applicable to any future red-cockaded woodpecker colonies that are established on the more than 230,000 acres of Potlatch pine forests.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has conducted an on-site environmental assessment and will accept public comment on the plan as part of its formal approval process. Potlatch has made the plan available to conservation leaders and interested parties in Arkansas. Upon completion of the public comment period and approval of the plan, the Fish and Wildlife Service will issue to Potlatch Corporation an "incidental take" permit that would expire in 30 years.

"We are extremely proud of the example that Potlatch has set in the forest products industry with this habitat conservation plan," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Regional Director Noreen Clough. "The company has publicly committed to a conservation program that far exceeds the minimum red-cockaded woodpecker management guidelines for private landowners. This is a demonstration of their faith in their own ability to make a difference for this endangered bird and in the ability of the act to accommodate their company's mission. Habitat conservation plans are a win-win proposition for people and for wildlife."

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Director Steve N. Wilson said, "Potlatch Corporation again demonstrates its commitment to environmentally responsible land ownership. We in Arkansas are fortunate to have them as stewards of so much land."

Wendell A. Neal, a consulting biologist and former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, said, "It is really important to note that Potlatch worked within the process provided by Congress in the 1982 amendments to the Endangered Species Act. This is the first large industrial forest landowner that has applied for a permit for the red-cockaded woodpecker."

Declared an endangered species in 1970, the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) was once a very common bird in the pinelands of the South. It ranged from east Texas to Florida and north to Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland. Potlatch began informal protection of the species in 1976 through identification of woodpecker groups and maintenance of cavity trees and habitat. At that time, 23 groups of the bird were known to exist on Potlatch lands. Today, the number is 44. The Potlatch population represents the fourth largest population of the species remaining on privately owned lands.

Red-cockaded woodpecker cavity trees are distinguished by the dripping pine resin that leaves a candle-wax appearance on the tree near the bird's cavity entrance hole. Potlatch paints a bright orange band around each known cavity tree to signal the existence of a woodpecker colony.

Doyle Gill, a Potlatch forester, led the development of the unique habitat conservation plan in conjunction with Neal and the field biologist from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Jackson, Mississippi. The group developed an innovative and far-reaching plan that calls for monitoring red-cockaded woodpecker groups for the 30-year life of the plan, allows dormant cavities to be maintained for 5 years, and requires annual environmental reports to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition, Potlatch foresters will install restrictor plates to protect cavity entrances from destructive enlargement by larger woodpeckers and will implant artificial cavities in replacement trees where needed.

The company's employees and independent logging contractors will receive red-cockaded woodpecker recognition training and review that helps them to identify cavities and protect surrounding habitat. Additionally, Potlatch is sharing information with students, educators, bird enthusiasts, hunting clubs, and others who enjoy recreational activities in the Potlatch forests.

Potlatch has been recognized for its conservation efforts such as the landmark Potlatch Land Exchange and Sale completed in 1994. The largest addition of private lands to Arkansas' national wildlife refuges, the refuge's new area consists of more than 55,000 acres of internationally recognized wetlands in the hardwood bottomlands of the White and Cache rivers.

Potlatch owns about 500,000 forested acres in Arkansas. In addition to its Arkansas operations, Potlatch Corporation, a Fortune 1000 company headquartered in San Francisco, has wood and paper products operations located in Idaho, Minnesota, and Nevada.



FACTS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

POTLATCH HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FOR THE RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER

- o Potlatch is the first large timber and paper company to develop a habitat conservation plan for the red-cockaded woodpecker.
- o Potlatch has the second largest concentration of red-cockaded woodpecker groups on privately owned timber industry land and has the fourth largest population of red-cockaded woodpeckers remaining on private lands.
- o The red-cockaded woodpecker is identified by the small red streak on the side of the adult male's head. When the bird is alarmed, the red feather appears much like the feather once called the "cockade" of a Colonial soldier's head gear.
- o The bird is approximately 7" long. Red-cockaded woodpeckers roost in holes, or cavities, that they create in living southern pines. All red-cockaded woodpeckers have their own cavities for roosting and nesting.
- o The red-cockaded woodpecker was put on the endangered species list in 1970. Potlatch began an informal protection of the species in 1976 through identification of red-cockaded woodpecker groups and maintenance of cavity trees and habitat.
- o Twenty-three colonies, or groups, of red-cockaded woodpeckers were known to exist on Potlatch land in 1976. There are 44 known colonies today.
- o Potlatch has designated more than 15,000 total acres of land that will be influenced by the habitat conservation plan, with an average of 356 acres of all-age pine surrounding each of the 44 known red-cockaded woodpecker colonies. The plan will be applicable to any future red-cockaded woodpecker colonies that are established on the more than 230,000 acres of Potlatch pine forests.
- o More than 7,000 acres of this designated Potlatch-owned land will be directly managed for the benefit of the red-cockaded woodpecker.

- o The Potlatch habitat conservation plan controls the height of small hardwood and pine trees near red-cockaded woodpecker groups to maintain the birds' access to their cavities.
- o Potlatch will monitor red-cockaded woodpecker colonies at 3-year intervals for the life of the plan, with dormant cavities being maintained for 5 years.
- o Potlatch foresters will implant artificial cavities to replace cavities damaged by natural disaster.
- o Non-Potlatch-owned timber purchased by Potlatch will be examined closely for red-cockaded woodpecker activity.
- o The Potlatch Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Conservation Plan was developed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, follows the Endangered Species Act process, and is subjected to public comment. After the plan's approval, the Fish and Wildlife Service will issue to Potlatch an "incidental take" permit.
- o Potlatch employees receive red-cockaded woodpecker training and review that helps them to identify red-cockaded woodpecker cavities and protect surrounding habitat.