

gnatcatcher. This alternative would result in the permanent loss of 5.91 acres of habitat that currently supports 2 pairs of gnatcatchers within the 28.9-acre project site. This alternative would permanently preserve 20.0 acres of habitat for the gnatcatcher.

Under the reduced project alternative, on-site open space (lot A) would increase from 7.8 acres to approximately 13.8 acres through the elimination of 25 residential lots. Although this alternative reduces the impacts to occupied coastal sage scrub, the applicant has determined it to be financially infeasible.

Under the no project alternative, the Service would not issue an incidental take permit to Kennedy Development. Kennedy Development would not construct the proposed residential development on the site and would not establish and manage preserves for the coastal California gnatcatcher. The extension of Mission Gate Drive would likely still occur due to proposed development on the adjacent property. Present disturbance of the project area would continue in the form of trespassing in gnatcatcher-occupied habitat, illegal dumping, erosion, and periodic fire. Considering that the area is zoned for residential use, it is likely that the area would eventually be developed for another residential development.

We provide this notice pursuant to section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (40 CFR 1506.6). All comments that we receive, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be made available to the public. We will evaluate the permit application, Environmental Assessment, associated documents, and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act. If we determine that the requirements are met, we will issue a permit for the incidental take of the gnatcatcher and the thread-leaved brodiaea. We will make a decision on permit issuance no sooner than 60 days from the date of this notice.

Dated: January 7, 2002.

Miel R. Corbett,

Acting Manager, Region 1, California/Nevada Operations Office, Sacramento, California.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Issuance of Permit for Marine Mammals

On October 13, 2000, a notice was published in the **Federal Register** (65 FR 60971), that an application had been filed with the Fish and Wildlife Service by Monterey Bay Aquarium for a permit (PRT-032027) to take Southern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris nereis*) for the purpose of rehabilitation and release, enhancement, and scientific research.

Notice is hereby given that on December 18, 2001, a Letter of Authorization (LOA-032027) and a permit (MA032027-0) were issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service, as authorized by the provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, *as amended* (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and subject to certain conditions set forth therein.

Documents and other information submitted for these applications are available for review by any party who submits a written request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 700, Arlington, Virginia 22203, telephone (703) 358-2104 or fax (703) 358-2281.

Dated: December 21, 2001.

Monica Farris,

Senior Permit Biologist, Branch of Permits, Division of Management Authority.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-070-1310-EJ]

Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Planning Amendments on the Powder River Basin Oil and Gas Project

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Cooperating Agencies—United States Forest Service, Agriculture; State of Wyoming, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Plan Amendments on the Powder River Basin Oil and Gas Project in Johnson, Sheridan, Campbell and Converse Counties, Wyoming.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability of the Powder River Basin Oil and Gas Project DEIS which

evaluates, analyzes, and discloses to the public direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts from continued development of oil and gas resources in the Project Area in Sheridan, Campbell, Johnson, and Converse Counties, Wyoming. The DEIS also considers amendments to the BLM's Buffalo Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Platte River RMP and the Forest Services' Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG) Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) as a result of the impacts of this development. The Forest Service and the State of Wyoming are Cooperating Agencies.

The DEIS analyzes a proposal by companies to drill and develop wells on their leased acreage within the Powder River Basin Project Area (approximately 8 million acres) in northeastern Wyoming. The lands analyzed include all of the BLM Buffalo Field Office, the northern portion of Converse County of the Casper Field Office, and the TBNG within the four counties.

DATES: Comments on the DEIS will be accepted for 90 days following the date that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes its Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. The BLM will notify all parties on the project mailing list of the dates when comments will be accepted. The BLM asks that those submitting comments on the DEIS make them as specific as possible and should refer to page numbers and chapters in the document. Comments are more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies. Comments that contain only opinions or preferences will not receive a formal response, however, they will be considered and included as part of the BLM decisionmaking process.

Future notification of public meetings (anticipated during March 2002) or other public involvement activities concerning the proposed project and resource management plan amendment, will be provided through public notices, news media releases, the Wyoming BLM homepage at www.wy.blm.gov and/or mailings. These notifications will provide at least 15 days notice of public meetings or gatherings and 30 days notice of written comment requests.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the DEIS should be sent to the Bureau of Land Management, Paul Beels (Project Manager), 1425 Fort Street, Buffalo, Wyoming 82834. A copy of the DEIS has been sent to affected Federal, State, and local government agencies and to those persons who responded to the BLM that they wished to receive a copy of the DEIS. Copies of the DEIS are available