

such as coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), coast goldenrod (*Solidago spathulata*), ice-plant (*Carpobrotus* sp.), and other mixed grasses and forbs. Much of the currently unoccupied habitat consists of non-native, invasive conifers including Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*) and Monterey cypress (*Cypress macrocarpa*). Habitat in the surrounding areas are similar, although there are large areas of unsuitable agricultural pasture lands.

The proposed project will permanently remove approximately 15 square feet of suitable but currently unoccupied habitat, and cause about 7 days of non-breeding season disturbance of all mountain beavers on about 0.25 acre of occupied habitat. There may also be 1 day of breeding season disturbance on the same 0.25 acre while fiber optic cables are pulled through the pipes and conduits. Mitigation for the HCP involves rehabilitation and maintenance of 1 acre of unoccupied and currently unsuitable habitat presently covered by non-native conifers. This rehabilitation work will cause disturbance for an additional 3 to 5 days during the non-breeding season and will affect all Point Arena mountain beaver associated with approximately 3 acres of occupied habitat.

As described in the HCP, the Applicant proposes the following measures to minimize and mitigate the anticipated project impacts: (A) All construction (except cable pulling) and habitat rehabilitation work will occur outside of the Point Arena mountain beaver breeding season (December 15 to June 30) and during daylight hours; (B) an 8-foot-high, 3/4-inch-wide plywood sound barrier will be placed between the construction and the occupied habitat; (C) vibratory compactors will only be used at the proposed manhole location; (D) areas altered by trenching will be restored as much as possible to a prework condition; (E) all activities including entry of personnel into the occupied habitats will be closely supervised by a biological monitor; and (F) material from cut conifers will be disposed off site.

Monitoring of the mountain beaver population at the entire Cable Station site will consist of two surveys per year, every other year, for 10 years. The methods for this monitoring will closely follow a methodology and a layout which have been in place on this site since 1992, and will thereby contribute to the only long-term monitoring program for this subspecies. In addition, counts of burrow openings in areas rehabilitated by non-native conifer removal will also occur on the same

schedule in order to assess the effectiveness of the mitigation.

The Service's Proposed Action consists of the issuance of an incidental take permit and implementation of the HCP, which includes measures to minimize and mitigate impacts of the project on Point Arena mountain beaver. One alternative to the taking of listed species under the Proposed Action is considered in the HCP. Under the No Action Alternative, no permit would be issued. However, this alternative would result in an economic burden to the Applicant and no Point Arena mountain beaver habitat rehabilitation would occur.

The Service has made a preliminary determination that the HCP qualifies as a "low effect" plan as defined by its Habitat Conservation Planning Handbook (November 1996). The Service determination that a habitat conservation plan qualifies as a low-effect plan is based on the following criteria: (1) Implementation of the plan would result in minor or negligible effects on federally listed, proposed, and candidate species and their habitats; (2) implementation of the plan would result in minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources; and (3) impacts of the plan, considered together with the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable similarly situated projects would not result, over time, in cumulative effects to environmental values or resources which would be considered significant. As more fully explained in the Screening Form for Low-Effect HCP Determinations, the Applicant's HCP for the Point Area Cable Station qualifies as a "low-effect" plan for the following reasons:

1. Approval of the HCP would result in minor or negligible effects to the Point Arena mountain beaver. The Service does not anticipate significant direct or cumulative effects to the Point Arena mountain beaver resulting from the proposed construction. No other federally listed, proposed, or candidate species are known or expected to occur within or immediately adjacent to the proposed construction.
2. Approval of the HCP would not have adverse effects on unique geographic, historic or cultural sites, or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
3. Approval of the HCP would not result in any cumulative or growth inducing impacts and, therefore, will not result in significant adverse effects on public health or safety.
4. The project does not require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, nor does it threaten to violate a Federal, State, local, or

tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

5. Approval of the HCP would not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

The Service therefore has made a preliminary determination that approval of the HCP qualifies as a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act, as provided by the Department of Interior Manual (516 DM2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1). Based on this preliminary determination, we do not intend to prepare further National Environmental Policy Act documentation. The Service will consider public comments in making its final determination on whether to prepare such additional documentation.

The Service provides this notice pursuant to section 10(c) of the Act. We will evaluate the permit application, the HCP, and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Act. If the requirements are met, the Service will issue a permit for the incidental take of the Point Arena mountain beaver from the proposed construction project. We will make the final permit decision no sooner than 30 days from the date of this notice.

Dated: August 19, 2002.

Ken McDermond,

Deputy Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office, Sacramento, California.
[FR Doc. 02-21603 Filed 8-23-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Draft Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement and Habitat Conservation Plan for the Natomas Basin, Sacramento County, CA

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The City of Sacramento, Sutter County, and the Natomas Basin Conservancy (the "applicants") have applied to the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for 50-year incidental take permits for 22 covered species pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The applications address the potential for "take" of covered species associated with various activities within the Natomas Basin, a 53,537-acre area in the

Sacramento region. These activities (the "covered activities") include 15,517 acres of planned land development, and development and management of mitigation lands. A conservation program to minimize and mitigate for the covered activities would be implemented as described in the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (Plan), which would be jointly implemented by the applicants.

The permit applications, available for public review, include the Plan which describes the proposed program and mitigation, and an accompanying Implementing Agreement (legal contract).

The Service also announces the availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIR/EIS) that addresses the environmental effects associated with issuing the permits and implementing the Plan. The analysis provided in the Draft EIR/EIS is intended to accomplish the following: inform the public of the proposed action and alternatives; address public comments received during the scoping period; disclose the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the proposed action and each of the alternatives; and indicate any irreversible commitment of resources that would result from implementation of the proposed action.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before October 22, 2002.

Public meetings are scheduled as follows:

1. September 23, 2002, First Session: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Second Session: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Sacramento, California;
2. September 25, 2002, First Session: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Second Session: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Yuba City, California.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to the Field Supervisor, Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, 2800 Cottage Way, W-2605, Sacramento, California 95825. Written comments may be sent by facsimile to (916) 414-6711.

The public meetings will be held at the following locations:

1. Sacramento—1231 I Street, First Floor;
2. Yuba City—Whitaker Hall, 44 Second Street.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Vicki Campbell, Chief, Conservation Planning Division, at the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office (*see ADDRESSES*); telephone: (916) 414-6600.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Availability of Documents

Individuals wishing copies of the applications, Draft EIR/EIS, Plan, and

Implementing Agreement should immediately contact the Service by telephone at (916) 414-6600 or by letter to the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office (*see ADDRESSES*). Copies of the Draft EIR/EIS, Plan, and Implementing Agreement also are available for public inspection, during regular business hours, at the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office; the City of Sacramento Planning and Building Department, 1231 I Street, Room 300, Sacramento, California; State Library, 914 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, California; Central Library, 828 I Street, Sacramento, California; South Natomas Library, 2901 Truxel Road, Sacramento, California; and Sutter County Library, 750 Forbes Avenue, Yuba City, California.

Comments

Written comments will be received at the public meetings. Written comments also may be received after the public meetings, until the close of the comment period [*see DATES*]. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

Background Information

Section 9 of the Act and Federal regulation prohibit the "take" of animal species listed as endangered or threatened. Take is defined under the Act as harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect listed animal species, or attempt to engage in such conduct (16 U.S.C. 1538). However, under limited circumstances, the Service may issue permits to authorize "incidental take" of listed animal species. "Incidental take" is defined by the Act as take that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity. Regulations governing permits for threatened species and endangered species, respectively, are at 50 CFR 17.32 and 50 CFR 17.22.

The applicants are seeking permits for take of the following federally listed species: the threatened giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*), threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*), threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), endangered vernal pool tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardii*), threatened Colusa grass (*Neostapfia colusana*), endangered Sacramento Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia viscida*), and threatened slender Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia tenuis*). The proposed permits would also authorize future incidental take of the currently unlisted Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), Aleutian Canada goose (*Branta*

canadensis leucopareia), bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*), tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*), northwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata marmorata*), white-faced ibis (*Plegadis chihi*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), western spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus hammondi*), midvalley fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta mesoallensis*), Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop (*Gratiola heterosepala*), legumere (*Legumere limosa*), delta tule pea (*Lathyrus jepsonii* ssp. *jepsonii*) and Sanford's arrowhead (*Sagittaria sanfordii*), should any of these species become listed under the Act during the life of the permit. Collectively, the 22 listed and unlisted species are referred to as the "covered species" in the Plan.

The applicants propose to minimize and mitigate the effects to covered species associated with the covered activities by participating in the Plan. The purpose of this basin-wide conservation program is to promote biological conservation in conjunction with economic and urban development within the Natomas Basin. Through the payment of development fees, one-half acre of mitigation land would be established for every acre of land developed within the various permit areas (a total of 7,759) acres of mitigation land to be acquired based on 15,517 acres of urban development). The mitigation land would be acquired and managed by the Natomas Basin Conservancy. In addition to the requirement to pay mitigation fees, the Plan also includes take avoidance and minimization measures.

The Draft EIR/EIS considers four alternatives in addition to the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, no section 10(a)(1)(B) permits would be issued for take of listed species associated with the covered activities; the applicants would address the potential for take of listed species on a case-by-case basis. The Increased Mitigation Ratio Alternative would double the extent of required mitigation land relative to the Plan. The Habitat-Based Mitigation Alternative would prescribe mitigation based on the value of habitat to be disturbed, rather than on a general ratio applied to all lands to be disturbed. The Reserve Zone Alternative would prioritize specific areas within the Natomas Basin for acquisition, in contrast to the general acquisition strategy described in the Plan. The Reduced Potential for Incidental Take Alternative would result in reduced urban development covered by the

permits, and would therefore reduce the potential for incidental take associated with urban development.

In August 2001, (66 FR 43267), two water agencies, Reclamation District No. 1000 (RD 1000), and Natomas Central Mutual Water Company (Natomas Mutual), decided to join the City of Sacramento and Sutter County as applicants for permits and participated in drafting the Plan. At this time, RD 1000 and Natomas Mutual have chosen not to submit an application for an incidental take permit. They may decide to apply at a later time and commit to the terms of the Plan, and through issuance of a permit by the Service, join as full permittees at a future date. It should be noted that because of RD 1000 and Natomas Mutual's previous participation as potential applicants, and the possibility that they may decide to apply for a permit at some future date, the description of and analysis of the two water agencies as permittees has remained in both the Plan and the EIR/EIS. Should the water agencies apply for a permit in the future, then additional notification and documentation may be needed pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Service invites the public to comment on the Plan and Draft EIR/EIS during a 60-day public comment period. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act and Service regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (40 CFR 1506.6). The Service will evaluate the application, associated documents, and comments submitted thereon to prepare a Final EIR/EIS. A decision on the permit applications will be made no sooner than 30 days after the publication of the Final EIR/EIS.

Dated: August 19, 2002.

Steve Thompson,

Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office, Sacramento, California.

[FR Doc. 02-21680 Filed 8-23-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Pinedale Anticline Working Group and Task Groups; Notice

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Interior.

ACTION: Pinedale Anticline Working Group and Task Groups—notice of establishment.

SUMMARY: This notice is published in accordance with section 9(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (Pub. L. 92-463). Following

consultation with the General Services Administration, notice is hereby given that the Secretary of the Interior has established the Pinedale Anticline Working Group and Task Groups. The purpose of the Committee and Subcommittees will be to advise the Bureau of Land Management, Pinedale Field Office Manager, regarding recommendations on matters pertinent to the Bureau of Land Management's responsibilities related to the Pinedale Anticline Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Members of the Working Group and Task Groups will be comprised of a representative from the State of Wyoming, a representative from the Town of Pinedale (Wyoming), a representative from the oil/gas operators, a representative from the Sublette County (Wyoming) Government, a representative from environmental groups, a representative from the affected landowners, a representative of the local livestock operators, and two members from the public-at-large.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Priscilla E. Mecham, Pinedale Field Office Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 432 East Mill Street, P.O. Box 768, Pinedale, Wyoming 82941, Phone: (307) 367-5300. The certification of establishment is published below.

Certification

I hereby certify that the establishment of the Pinedale Anticline Working Group and Task Groups is necessary and in the public interest in connection with the Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities to manage the lands, resources, and facilities administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Dated: August 15, 2002.

Gale A. Norton,

Secretary of the Interior.

[FR Doc. 02-21683 Filed 8-23-02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CA-310-1820-AE]

Notice of Public Meeting: Northwest California Resource Advisory Council

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), and the Federal

Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Northwest California Resource Advisory Council will meet as indicated below.

DATES: The meeting will be held Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 23 and 24, 2002, at the Weaverville Victorian Inn, 1709 Main St., Weaverville, California. On Oct. 23, the meeting begins at 10 a.m. Council members will participate in a field tour to BLM-managed areas in Trinity County. On Oct. 24, the meeting begins at 8 a.m. in the Victorian Inn Conference Room. Time for public comments has been set for 1 p.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lynda J. Roush, Field Manager, BLM Arcata Field Office, 1895 Heindon Rd., Arcata, CA 95521, or telephone (707) 825-2300; or BLM Public Affairs Officer Joseph J. Fontana, telephone (530) 252-5332.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The 12-member council advises the Secretary of the Interior, through the BLM, on a variety of planning and management issues associated with public land management in Northwest California. At this meeting, agenda topics include a proposal for development of a Weaverville Community Forest, an overview of fire and fuels projects, and review of a grant proposal for the Chappie-Shasta Off Highway Vehicle Area near Redding, California. Members will also hear reports from managers of the BLM's Arcata, Redding and Ukiah field offices.

All meetings are open to the public. Members of the public may present written comments to the council. Each formal council meeting will have time allocated for public comments. Depending on the number of persons wishing to speak, and the time available, the time for individual comments may be limited. Individuals who plan to attend and need special assistance, such as sign language interpretation and other reasonable accommodations, should contact the BLM as provided above.

Dated: August 19, 2002.

Joseph J. Fontana,

Public Affairs Officer.

[FR Doc. 02-21606 Filed 8-23-02; 8:45 am]

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