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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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News Release



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Environmental Approval Process for School Nears Completion Comment Period Opens for Habitat Conservation Plan

Environmental approval for the proposed Dutton Avenue School moved close to completion today as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) released a proposed habitat conservation plan (HCP) for public comment.

The [notice of availability](#) (PDF 56KB) for the project was published in the Federal Register, opening a 30-day public period that ends August 4. The HCP covers the 4.2 acres at 3255 and 3261 Dutton Avenue in Santa Rosa where the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) plans to build a school for about 150 students.

The permit issued for the HCP will provide SCOE with protection under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) for harm that may be caused to two endangered species, the Sonoma population of the California tiger salamander and the Sebastopol meadowfoam. To offset impacts to the species the SCOE will take protective steps during construction and will purchase credits in an authorized conservation bank nearby.

“The Service is pleased that we can expedite this project through the approval process,” said Susan K. Moore, field supervisor in the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office.

“We have been working closely for five years to help the Santa Rosa community meet its responsibilities under the ESA. Our goal is to help the community meet the law’s requirements as quickly and simply as possible.

“Recently we have taken several steps to facilitate the approval process for the Santa Rosa Plain,” Moore noted. Late last year the Service put in place a new programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that simplifies approval for most projects. It has also approved several new conservation banks, increasing options for landowners to meet their conservation responsibilities.

The SCOE HCP is another instance of facilitating approvals. A low effect HCP was proposed for the school project because it does not qualify under the PBO.

The full notice may be found at edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-15110.pdf (56KB). Comments may be mailed to: Mike Thomas, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, 2800 Cottage Way, W-2605, Sacramento, CA 95825 or faxed to 916-414-6713.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.