

**ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT SCREENING FORM
FOR SAFE HARBOR AGREEMENTS**

I. Project Information

A. Project name: Bluff Lake Safe Harbor Agreement

B. Affected species: Mountain Yellow-legged Frog (*Rana muscosa*) and Unarmored Threespine Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*)

C. Project size: 60 acres

D. Brief project description including conservation elements of the plan:

This Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) is between The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and will have a 30-year permit duration. The purpose of this SHA is for the TWC to maintain and manage 20 acres and 0.46 mile of stream within a 60-acre area for the federally endangered mountain yellow-legged frog and unarmored threespine stickleback at Bluff Lake, San Bernardino County, California. TWC seeks to provide for the long-term recovery of mountain yellow-legged frogs and unarmored threespine stickleback in the wild through the management and maintenance of suitable habitat that can accommodate active reestablishment efforts. Based on the SHA, the Service proposes to issue a 10(a)(1)(A) recovery permit to TWC that allows for incidental take of mountain yellow-legged frog and unarmored threespine stickleback for covered activities, including recreation and nonnative species removals.

II. Does the SHA fit the criteria of a NEPA Categorical Exclusion (516 DM 2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1)?

Yes, the SHA follows the Service's Safe Harbor Agreement final policy and regulations. The SHA is expected to provide a net conservation benefit to the mountain yellow-legged frog and unarmored threespine stickleback and enhance recovery of the species through implementation of management actions, including efforts to minimize the potential impact of recreation and removal of nonnative species and allowing for the reestablishment of these species at Bluff Lake and Siberia Creek. These species do not currently occur at the site.

A. Are the effects of the SHA less than significant on the rangewide population of federally listed, proposed, or candidate species or other wildlife and their habitats covered under the SHA?

Yes, this project would not negatively impact the range of mountain yellow-legged frog or unarmored threespine stickleback. The SHA allows for reestablishment of these species at Bluff Lake, which would result in an expansion of the range for these species.

B. Are the effects of the SHA minor or negligible on other environmental values or resources (e.g., air quality, geology and soils, water quality and quantity, socio-economic, cultural resources, recreation, visual resources, etc.)?

Yes, air quality, geology and soils, water quality and quantity, and visual resources would not be affected. Other values and resources, such as recreational opportunities, would also not be affected since the measures proposed in the SHA involve public education and best management practices that do not change the current allowed recreation use of the area.

C. Would the impacts of this SHA, considered together with the impacts of other past, present and reasonably foreseeable similarly situated projects not result, over time, in cumulative effects to environmental values or resources which would be considered significant?

No significant cumulative effects are expected to occur as a result of implementing the SHA and issuing the enhancement of survival permit. Management activities will occur at a small scale and low intensity, and will be focused in a small area. For these reasons, any minor effects resulting from implementing the SHA will not accumulate into significant effects at the local or regional scale. Potentially returning the property to the baseline condition would not result in a cumulative effect to any of the resources considered in this assessment.

III. Do any of the exceptions to categorical exclusions apply to this SHA? (from 516 DM 2.3, Appendix 2)

None of the exceptions to categorical exclusions apply to this SHA.

Would implementation of the SHA:

A. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety?

No adverse effects on public health or safety are anticipated. The SHA does not significantly change public use of the area.

B. Have adverse effects on such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of Natural Landmarks?

No, there are no such areas at Bluff Lake and no significant changes to the area are proposed.

C. Have highly controversial environmental effects?

No, the proposed action does not involve significant changes to the area beyond allowing for the potential recovery of two federally listed species.

D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?

No, there are no significant changes to use of the area.

E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?

No, future actions will be reviewed on their own merits for meeting requirements under the Endangered Species Act, its implementing regulations, and other laws.

F. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?

No, approval and implementation of the SHA is not directly related to other actions with significant cumulative environmental effects.

G. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?

No, the SHA would not affect listing or eligibility of any property listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Use of the site will not change significantly due to implementation of the SHA.

H. Have adverse effects on listed or proposed species, or have adverse effects on designated critical habitat for these species?

There is no designated critical habitat at the site and none would be affected. The proposed action is expected to be beneficial to federally listed species by allowing for an increase in the range of mountain yellow-legged frog and unarmored threespine stickleback. They don't currently occur at the site and without the SHA, reestablishment efforts would not occur.

I. Have adverse effects on wetlands, floodplains or be considered a water development project thus requiring compliance with either Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?

No, the proposed action focuses on maintaining wetlands.

J. Threaten to violate a Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?

No, the SHA will be carried out in accordance with all applicable laws.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT

Based on the analysis above, Bluff Lake meets the qualifications for a SHA, and the implementation of this SHA represents a class of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, this action is categorically excluded from further NEPA documentation as provided by 516 DM 2, Appendix 1 and 516 DM 6, Appendix 1.

Other supporting documents: Bluff Lake Safe Harbor Agreement

Concurrence:

Scott Sobiech
Field Supervisor
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Date