

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

News Release



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region
134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado 80228

For Immediate Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Public Comment on Environmental Impacts of Proposed Transmission Line in Nebraska

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GRAND ISLAND, NE – Tomorrow, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will assess the natural and human effects of issuing a permit to authorize the take of the federally endangered American burying beetle. The NOI initiates a 60-day comment period for the public to review and comment on any of the topics to be addressed in the EIS. Comments can be provided electronically by accessing <http://www.regulations.gov/>. The comment period will end December 29, 2014.

The Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) has requested that the Service issue this permit because the construction, operation, and maintenance of its proposed 220-mile long, 345 kV transmission line is likely to impact the American burying beetle. As a requirement of permit application, NPPD is preparing a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to identify avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for the American burying beetle.

Beyond analyzing the impacts on the American burying beetle, the EIS will also consider the effects on a broad range of other resources. These include other fish and wildlife species, geology and mineral resources, soil and water resources, air quality, land ownership and use, recreation, transportation, socioeconomics, visual resources, noise, cultural and paleontological resources, hazardous materials, and public health and safety. The Service is also interested in learning about the presence of archaeological sites, buildings and structures, historic sites, sacred and traditional areas, and other historic preservation concerns in the proposed project area. The Service also seeks information about the direct, indirect, or cumulative effects that implementation of the HCP could have on any of these resources, as well as the beetle. The Service is also seeking information about other reasonable alternatives to the proposed HCP and permit issuance that should be considered and their potential effects.

The Service is holding three public scoping meetings where information about the EIS, HCP and American burying beetle will be provided. Any interested party or organization is welcome to provide comments at the meetings. The public scoping meetings will be held at the following locations:

- American Legion—November 18, 2014, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., 657 G Street, Burwell, NE 68823;
- Village Municipal Offices—November 19, 2014, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., 1200 First Street, Sutherland, NE 69165; and
- Thomas County Fairgrounds—November 20, 2014, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., 83861 Highway 83, Thedford, NE 69166.

A copy of the draft NOI can be found at <http://www.regulations.gov/>, <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/ne.html>, or by contacting:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Nebraska Ecological Services Field Office
9325 South Alda Road
Wood River, Nebraska 68883

Alternatively, copies can be requested by phone: 308–382–6468.

Comments on the NOI can be provided electronically by accessing <http://www.regulations.gov/>.

Public domain photos of the American burying beetle can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1oWYUiB>.

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 <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/>. Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/USFWSMountainPrairie>, follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSMtnPrairie>, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtnpairie/>