

News Release
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Public invited to comment on draft habitat conservation plan and environmental assessment for National Grid

The international company National Grid has applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an incidental take permit addressing impacts to the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly and state-protected frosted elfin butterfly during its gas and electric operations in eastern and central New York.

The Service announces the draft environmental assessment of [National Grid](#)'s permit application and its related habitat conservation plan. The plan would cover a 50-year period of maintenance and construction activities associated with the company's facilities.

The [Endangered Species Act](#) makes it illegal to harm or kill federally threatened and endangered species, such as the [Karner blue butterfly](#). An [incidental take permit](#) allows for otherwise legal activities with those risks to continue, while the landowner implements conservation measures designed to minimize those risks and mitigate the impacts.

[Habitat conservation plans](#) are required before an incidental take permit can be issued. They provide frameworks for partnerships between the public and private sectors in species conservation. These plans identify a project's impact to threatened and/or endangered species; the steps the applicant will take to avoid, reduce or compensate for such impacts; what alternative actions were considered; and how the conservation plan will be funded.

The Karner blue butterfly is listed as endangered due to the species' decline across its historic range. The butterfly has lost habitat as a result of land development and lack of natural disturbance, such as wildfire and grazing by large mammals. Such disturbance helps maintain the butterfly's habitat by setting back encroaching forests and encouraging lupine and flowering plant growth.

The Service is accepting written comments on the draft plan and environmental assessment through December 19, 2011. After the comment period ends, the Service will make a final determination on whether the application meets the permit issuance requirements.

Send comments to robyn_niver@fws.gov or to Robyn Niver, 3817 Luker Road, Cortland, NY 13045. Comments sent through U.S. mail should be postmarked no later than ZZZ to be considered.

More resources:

- [Draft assessment and plan](#)
- Habitat conservation plan handout ([PDF](#)) and brochure ([PDF](#)).
- [More information on the Karner blue butterfly](#)