

News Release



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region
134 Union Boulevard
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For Immediate Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Extends Public Comment Period on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Revised Habitat Conservation Plan for the Nebraska Public Power District's R-Project Transmission Line

DENVER – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is announcing a 30-day public comment period extension for the R-Project Transmission Line Draft Revised Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and revised draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). This is associated with Nebraska Public Power District's permit application for the incidental take of the American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*). The initial public comment period began on February 9, 2024, with an end date of April 9, 2024. **The new end date to provide comments is now May 9, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. (ET).**

During the public comment period, the Service is seeking feedback on the effect on the human environment of the potential action, including the issuance of a permit authorizing incidental take of a covered species in association with covered activities, and revised HCP implementation. The Service is extending the public comment period in response to requests from the public for more time to review and comment on information following public meetings. Input received during the public comment period will be incorporated into the final SEIS.

Submitting Comments

You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- **Online:** <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments to [Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2014-0048](#).
- **U.S. Mail:** Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2014-0048; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: PRB/3W; 5275 Leesburg Pike;

Falls Church, VA 22041–3803.

Find Documents

The draft SEIS and revised HCP, as well as any comments and other materials received, are available for public inspection online in Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2014-0048 at

<https://www.regulations.gov>.

A recording of the virtual public meeting held by the Service on March 7, 2024, and a copy of the virtual presentation slides, is available at <https://www.fws.gov/project/r-project-transmission-line>.

A recording of the virtual public meeting, the presentation slides, and the Regulations.gov website can also be accessed at the following public libraries.

- North Platte Public Library, 120 W 4th St, North Platte, NE 69101;
- Thomas County Library, 501 Main St, Thedford, NE 69166; and
- Taylor Public Library, 106 William St., Taylor, NE 68879.

In addition, a hardcopy of the following documents will be made available for viewing in the public libraries above:

- [Draft SEIS](#)
- [Draft SEIS Appendices](#)
- [Draft HCP with Appendices](#)
- [Draft Migratory Bird Conservation Plan](#)
- [2019 Final EIS](#)

For more information contact Jeff Runge, by phone at (308) 216-0384 or by email at jeff_runge@fws.gov. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TTD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

Background

The Nebraska Public Power District is proposing a 226-mile long, 345-kilovolt transmission line that would cross portions of the sandhills in north-central Nebraska. The R-Project starts at the Gerald Gentleman Substation near Sutherland, Neb.; goes north to a substation located in Thomas County near Thedford; then extends east to another substation in Holt County, where it will connect to the Western Area Power Administration's existing Fort Thompson to Grand Island line located on the eastern border of Holt County.

The activities involved during the construction, operation and maintenance of the transmission line may result in take of the federally threatened American burying beetle, and therefore the Nebraska Public Power District applied for an incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act. The permit previously issued by the Service in 2019 was remanded by the U.S. District Court in 2020, and the Nebraska Public Power District has prepared a revised HCP in support of its new application for an incidental take permit.

The Nebraska Public Power District worked with the Service to incorporate new information obtained since the court's 2020 remand of the previously issued permit. The draft SEIS evaluates impacts related to the proposed issuance of the incidental take permit and the associated revised HCP implementation, including a risk evaluation for whooping cranes, potential impacts on cultural and historic resources, and potential effects from renewable energy projects related to the R-Project.

The Service hosted two in-person meetings in February 2024 and one virtual public meeting in March 2024. Input received during the public comment period will be incorporated into the final supplemental environmental impact statement. No additional public meetings will be held during this public comment period extension.

Additional Resources

[Notice of Availability](#)

[News Release](#) - February 9, 2024, Notice of Availability

[Virtual Meeting Recording](#)

[Virtual Meeting Presentation](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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