

## **Glossary of Terms**

**Action area:** All areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action.

**Adverse response:** A negative physical, behavioral, or physiological reaction of an individual or a change in a physical or biological feature of designated critical habitat to exposure to a stressor.

**Deconstruct the action:** Describe the process of breaking down a large, proposed action into subtasks to facilitate identification of specific changes to land, water, and/or air that the proposed action will cause. This includes describing the types of tools, equipment, and methods to accomplish those subtasks and can be performed using tables, charts, or diagrams to memorialize the results.

**Designated critical habitat:** Specific geographic areas, whether occupied by listed species or not, that are determined to be essential for the conservation and management of listed species, and that have been formally described in the Federal Register.

**Effects of the action:** All consequences to listed species or critical habitat that are caused by the proposed action, including the consequences of other activities that are caused by the proposed action. A consequence is caused by the proposed action if it will not occur *but for* the proposed action and, it is reasonably certain to occur later in time and may include consequences occurring outside the immediate area involved in the action. ([See 50 CFR 402.17](#)).

**Exposure:** Exposure occurs when a species or an essential physical or biological feature of designated critical habitat is subject to a consequence of a proposed action.

**Federal nexus:** Proposed actions that are authorized, funded, or carried out by a federal agency.

**Formal consultation:** A process between the Service and the Federal agency that commences with the Federal agency's written request for consultation under Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA and concludes with the Service's issuance of the biological opinion under Section 7(b)(3) of the ESA for proposed actions that will adversely affect listed species.

**Informal consultation:** An optional process that includes all discussions, correspondence, etc., between the Service and the Federal agency or the designated non-Federal representative prior to formal consultation, if required to determine if listed species may occur in the action area and what the effects of the action may be to such species. This phase is often used to develop modifications of the proposed action or alternatives to avoid adverse effects to listed species, which will then preclude the need for formal consultation.

**May affect, likely to adversely affect:** The appropriate determination when effects to a listed species or designated critical habitat are expected to result in an adverse response.

**Not likely to adversely affect/May affect, not likely to adversely affect:** The appropriate determination when effects to listed species or designated critical habitat are expected to be discountable, insignificant, or completely beneficial.

**No effect:** The appropriate conclusion when the action agency determines its proposed action will not affect a listed species or designated critical habitat. There will be no impacts, positive or negative, to listed species or designated critical habitat because listed resources will not be exposed to the action and its environmental consequences.

**Physical and biological feature:** A feature of designated critical habitat that occurs in specific areas and that is essential to support the life-history needs of the species, including but not limited to, water characteristics, soil type, geological features, sites, prey, vegetation, symbiotic species, or other features. A feature may be a single habitat characteristic, or a more complex combination of habitat characteristics. Features may include habitat characteristics that support ephemeral or dynamic habitat conditions. Features may also be expressed in terms relating to principles of conservation biology, such as patch size, distribution distances, and connectivity (previously referred to as primary constituent elements [PCE]; often abbreviated to PBF).

**Stressors:** A term used broadly to describe any change in the environment (physical, chemical, or biological alteration of resources) that may elicit a response from a species or features of critical habitat. A species may respond to a stressor when the stressor (1) impacts the resources the species requires to fulfill its life cycle or (2) directly interacts with the species itself (e.g., increase in vehicle traffic [stressor] results in crushing a species).