

**Great Plains Wind Energy Development  
Request for Incidental Take of Federally Protected Species  
Under the Endangered Species Act  
Questions and Answers**

**Q – What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service taking?**

A – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is announcing to the public that the agency intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a proposed application for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) issued under Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act).

**Q – Why is the Service taking this action?**

A – The (draft) EIS will evaluate the impacts of, and alternatives to, the proposed issuance of an incidental take permit, supported by a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), to the Applicant(s). The Service is providing this notice to (1) describe the proposed action; (2) advise other federal and state agencies, potentially affected tribal interests, and the public of the Service's intent to prepare an EIS; (3) announce the initiation of a 90-day public scoping period; and (4) obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues and possible alternatives to be included in the EIS.

**Q – Who is requesting this ITP?**

A – The ITP is voluntarily being sought by a group of wind energy industry companies formed in 2009: the Wind Energy Whooping Crane Action Group (WEWAG). Member companies include Acciona North America; Allete; Alternity Wind Power; BP Wind Energy; Clipper Wind Energy; Competitive Power Ventures, Inc.; enXco; Duke Energy Renewables; EDP Renewables North America; Element Power; Iberdrola Renewables; Infinity Wind Power; MAP Royalty; NEXTEra Energy Resources; Own Energy; RES Americas; Terra-Gen Power, LLC; Trade Wind Energy; and Wind Capital Group. Additional companies may become involved as the planning process proceeds.

**Q – What is an Incidental Take Permit?**

A – Section 9 of the Act and its implementing regulations prohibit the take of animal species listed as endangered or threatened. The definition of take under the Act includes the following activities: To harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect listed animal species, or attempt to engage in such conduct (16 U.S.C. 1538). Section 10 of the Act, 16 U.S.C. 1539, establishes a program whereby persons seeking to pursue activities that are otherwise legal, but could give rise to liability for take of federally protected species may receive an ITP, which provides incidental take authorization to the permittee.

**Q – How can an ITP be obtained?**

**A** – To obtain an ITP, the applicant must submit a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) containing measures which would minimize incidental take, including avoidance of incidental take, and mitigate the effects of any incidental take to the maximum extent practicable; and ensure that the taking is incidental to, and not the purpose of, an otherwise lawful activity. This HCP must be reviewed and approved by the Service.

**Q – What will an EIS do?**

**A** – The Service will write an EIS that will consider the impacts of the proposed action (the issuance of an ITP under the Endangered Species Act, as supported by an HCP), no action (no HCP/no Section 10 permit), and a reasonable range of alternatives that accomplish the purpose and need of the proposal. A detailed description of the proposed action and alternatives will be included in the EIS. The alternatives to be considered for analysis in the EIS may include, but not be limited to, modified lists of covered species, differing land coverage areas, a variety of structures for the conservation program, and activities which may be covered. The EIS will also identify potentially significant impacts on biological resources, land use, air quality, water quality, water resources, economics, and other environmental/historical resources that may occur directly or indirectly as a result of implementing the proposed action or any of the alternatives. Various strategies for avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating the impacts of incidental take will also be considered.

**Q – Where will this wind energy corridor be?**

**A** – The proposed Permit Area is defined as a 200-mile wide corridor determined by defining the center line of the whooping crane migration based on the database of confirmed whooping crane observations from the Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Program and buffering that line by 100 miles on either side. This corridor spans the Gulf Coast of Texas north to the Canadian border and encompasses such cities as Houston, TX; Oklahoma City, OK; Wichita, KS; Bismarck, ND; Grand Island, NE; and Aberdeen, SD. In addition, the permit area includes the current and a large part of the historic range of the lesser prairie-chicken which extends the covered area beyond the 200-mile wide whooping crane migration corridor to include parts of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas.

**Q – What species might be affected that are on the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife?**

**A** – Species currently considered for inclusion under the permit include the following: the endangered whooping crane (*Grus americana*); endangered interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*); endangered piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*); and lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*), a candidate species.

**Q – Will the public be able to comment on this action?**

**A** – Yes. This notice will publish in the *Federal Register* on July 14, 2011. Comments must be received within 90 days, on or before October 12, 2011. For information on how and where to

submit comments, visit the Service's web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/> to download a copy of the notice.

Public scoping meetings will be held in the following cities between August, 2011 and September, 2011: Glendive, MT; Bismarck, ND; Pierre, SD; Kearney, NE; Great Bend, KS; Woodward, OK; Amarillo, TX; Austin, TX; Corpus Christi, TX; Clovis, NM; and Pueblo, CO.

The scoping meetings will provide the public with a general understanding of the background and activities that may be covered by the proposed HCP, possible alternative proposals under consideration for the draft EIS, and the Service's role and the process to be taken to develop the draft EIS for the draft HCP.

Meeting locations and times can be obtained by calling the Service's toll-free information hotline for the Environmental Impact Statement on the Great Plains Wind Energy Habitat Conservation Plan at 1-800-815-8927.

The dates and locations will also be announced two weeks prior to each event on the Southwest Regional Office's web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest> and noticed in local newspapers at least 14 days prior to the meeting dates. Persons needing reasonable accommodations in order to attend and participate in the public meetings should contact Laila Lienesch at 505-248-6494 or [laila\\_lienesch@fws.gov](mailto:laila_lienesch@fws.gov) no later than one week before the public meeting.

**Q – Where can more information be obtained?**

**A** – Please contact Laila Lienesch at 505-248-6494 or [laila\\_lienesch@fws.gov](mailto:laila_lienesch@fws.gov), Amelia Orton-Palmer at 303-236-4211 or [amelia\\_orton-palmer@fws.gov](mailto:amelia_orton-palmer@fws.gov), or Marty Tuegel at 505-248-6651 or [marty\\_tuegel@fws.gov](mailto:marty_tuegel@fws.gov). Individuals who are hearing impaired or speech impaired may call the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8337 for TTY assistance.