



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) <http://southwest.fws.gov>

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Contacts: Allison Arnold 512-490-0057 x242
Tom Buckley 505-248-6455

Service Will Evaluate the Environmental Impact of Oncor Electric's Proposed HCP on Ten Federally Listed Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announced today that they intend to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the impacts of, and alternatives to, the proposed issuance of an Endangered Species Act (Act) section 10(a)(1)(B) permit to Oncor Electric Delivery Company (Oncor). This permit will allow the incidental take of ten federally listed species from activities associated with maintenance and repair of existing facilities and new facilities within Oncor's service area.

The Service also announces that a public comment period begins today and ends December 1, 2009. A series of public scoping meetings will be held from September 28 to October 28, 2009 in locations within Oncor's service area. Visit the Service's southwest region website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/index.html> to view or download the Federal register notice for information on how to comment, and for meeting times and locations.

Oncor proposes to apply for an incidental take permit through development and implementation of an Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The proposed HCP will include measures necessary to minimize and mitigate the impacts of potential taking of federally listed species and their habitats during routine maintenance and repair of existing Oncor facilities, and installation and operation of new Oncor facilities within their 106 county service area. This includes siting and constructing transmission lines to facilitate delivery to electric customers of the electric output from renewable energy technologies in Texas.

Under the Act, the term "take" means to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct." The Service may, under specified circumstances, issue permits that allow the take of federally listed species, provided the following criteria are met: (1) the taking will be incidental; (2) the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impact of such taking; (3) the applicant will develop a draft HCP and ensure that adequate funding for the plan will be provided; (4) the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild; and (5) the applicant will carry out any other measures that we may require as being necessary or appropriate for the purposes of the habitat conservation plan.

The purpose of issuing this permit is to allow Oncor to maintain the efficiency of its operations, while preserving protected species and their habitat. Adoption of a multispecies habitat conservation approach, rather than a species-by-species/project-by-project approach, will reduce the

costs of implementing mitigation measures, and eliminate cost and time-consuming efforts associated with processing individual incidental take permits for each project within Oncor's service area. In addition, the multispecies habitat conservation plan approach is designed to minimize and mitigate potential impacts to species on a coordinated landscape level basis that provides increased benefits to – and in some cases prevents contact with – the covered species. The Service expects that Oncor will request permit coverage for a period of 30 years.

This HCP will include four plants (large-fruited sand verbena, Texas poppy-mallow, Navasota ladies'-tresses, and Pecos sunflower), one invertebrate (American burying beetle), one amphibian (Houston toad), three birds (golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo, and red-cockaded woodpecker), and one mammal (Louisiana black bear).

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 www.fws.gov.

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