

Comment Period Open for Proposed Delisting of the Interior Least Tern

After a thorough review of the best available science, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to delist the interior least tern, removing the tern from the List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife. When the interior least tern was first listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1985, there were fewer than 2,000 birds and only a few dozen nesting sites scattered across a once-expansive range that covered America's Great Plains and Lower Mississippi Valley. Today there are more than 18,000 interior least terns at more than 480 nesting sites in 18 states, thanks to decades of innovative conservation efforts and diverse partnerships among local, state and federal stakeholders. States where tern colonies now occur are Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas.

The proposed rule and supporting documents, including a draft post-delisting monitoring plan, are available at <http://www.regulations.gov>, Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2018-0082. The Service will seek public review and comments on the proposed rule and draft monitoring plan. Comments are requested within 60 days or by 12/23/2019, and will be accepted by mail or electronically at <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter the docket number, and then click on the "Comment Now!" button. Please note that submissions merely supporting or opposing a potential delisting, without supporting documentation, will not be considered in making a determination.

Requests for a public hearing should be made in writing to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mississippi Field Office, 6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Jackson, MS, 39216 by 12/09/2019.

Draft Environmental Assessment for an Application for an Incidental Take Permit; Diamond Spring Wind Project Habitat Conservation Plan for the Endangered American Burying Beetle in Pontotoc and Johnston Counties, Oklahoma

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has received an application from Diamond Spring Wind, LLC for an ITP pursuant to the Endangered Species Act. The application includes a [habitat conservation plan](#) (HCP; 39 MB) for the American burying beetle (ABB) in Pontotoc and Johnston Counties, Oklahoma. The HCP and associated incidental take permit (ITP) would authorize incidental take resulting from activities covered by the HCP (e.g., construction, infrastructure, maintenance and habitat restoration). We also announce the availability of a [draft environmental assessment](#) (dEA; 1.5 MB) that has been prepared to evaluate the ITP application in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. We are making the permit application package, including the HCP and dEA, available for public review and comment for 30 days, until November 21, 2019.

For more information regarding the ABB, [go here](#)

Public Hearing Scheduled on Proposed Downlisting of the American Burying Beetle

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold a public hearing in Tulsa, Okla. Sept. 24, 2019, to engage the public in the proposed downlisting of the American burying beetle (ABB) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Public comment on the proposal, which would downlist the beetle from endangered to threatened, will also be extended 30 days until October 9, 2019. For more information see our [ABB page](#).

Revised Guidance for American Burying Beetle Mitigation Lands!

September 5, 2019 - This revision provides guidance for Federal and non-Federal proponents (conservation bankers, sponsors, mitigation landowners, federal agencies) involved in the establishment, management, and operation of American burying beetle (ABB) mitigation lands in Region 2 (proposed as Region 6 of Department of Interior Reorganization Plan) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Revisions are based on new climate projections, which indicate that southern portions of the ABB range may only support the species for 20-30 more years. This revised guidance promotes locating mitigation lands in more climate safe areas to provide long-term protection that contributes towards recovery of the species. Revisions include minor changes in the percentages of unfavorable or buffer habitat allowed in mitigation lands and changes in service areas to include northern portions of the species' historical range. Incentives are included that reduce mitigation recommendations by 50% when implemented in northern service areas.

[Link to the PDF](#)

American Burying Beetle Proposed Downlisting to Threatened is Available for Public Comment!

May 1, 2019 - The American burying beetle, one of nature's most unique creatures, appears to be more plentiful, thanks in part to the efforts of a wide array of partners across its range. Following the beetle's listing in 1989 as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and stakeholders implemented conservation and recovery efforts, and now the Service is proposing to downlist it from endangered to threatened. The Service is requesting comments or information from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning the proposed downlisting and 4(d) rule. Comments must be received within 60 days, on or before July 2, 2019. You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- *Electronically*: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-R2-ES-2018-0029-0001> You may submit a comment by clicking on "Comment Now!"
- *By hard copy*: Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to:

Public Comments Processing
Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2018-0029
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
MS: BPHC
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

We request that you send comments only by the methods described above. We will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide us.

The following related documents are available for review:

- [Proposed ABB 12 Month Finding and 4\(d\) Rule](#)
- [ABB SSA Report \(12 MB\)](#)
 - [Appendix A - GIS](#)
 - [Appendix B - Additional Climate Analysis](#)
 - [Appendix C - ABB SSA References](#)
- [Press Release \(500 KB\)](#) for the Proposed ABB 12 Month Finding and 4(d) Rule
- [Frequently Asked Questions and Answers \(450 KB\)](#) for the Proposed ABB 12 Month Finding and 4(d) Rule

For more information, check our Additional Information page:
https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/oklahoma/ABB_Add_Info.htm

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Second Amendment to the Industry Conservation Plan for the American Burying Beetle

March 14, 2019 - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the availability of a proposed amendment to the American Burying Beetle Industry Conservation Plan (ABB ICP). Originally approved in 2014, the ABB ICP provides the oil and gas industry in Oklahoma a streamlined Endangered Species Act permitting process for activities that may impact the American burying beetle (ABB). The ABB ICP authorizes take of 32,234 acres of potential ABB habitat. However, since its approval in 2014 the amount of take issued has been substantially lower (5,100 acres) than anticipated. Therefore, the Service is proposing to amend the ABB ICP by extending applications for five years (through May 20, 2024) so that industry can continue to utilize the ABB ICP while conserving the American burying beetle and its habitat. The amendment does not change the amount of take authorized under the 2014 ABB ICP and no additional acreage will be impacted as a result. For more information, visit the ICP webpage: <https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/oklahoma/ABBICP.htm>

During the 30-day public comment period, the Service is encouraging the public, industry and the scientific community to review and comment on the proposed amendment to the ABB ICP. To ensure consideration, we must receive written comments on or before close of business on April 15, 2019. You may obtain copies of the proposed ABB ICP amendment and related

documents at the ICP webpage. For further information on how to obtain or review copies of these documents, or how to provide comments, see the *Federal Register* notice at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/index.html>.

Service Announces Availability of the final Environmental Impact Statement for Issuance of an Incidental Take Permit Related to American Electric Power Conservation Plan for the American Burying Beetle

The USFWS has completed the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding issuance of an Incidental Take Permit for the ABB to AEP in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas. The final EIS addresses comments received during the public comment period of the draft EIS. The final EIS is available for public review in two parts, [Volume I \(Chapters 1-7\)](#) and [Volume II \(Appendices\)](#).

A Notice of Availability (NOA) was published in the Federal Register on October 19, 2018. Our decision is to issue a 30-year Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for implementation of the HCP, which authorizes incidental take of the American burying beetle under the Endangered Species Act. The ITP and Record of Decision will be finalized no sooner than 30 days from the publication date in the Federal Register. Further information can be found [here](#). The draft Record of Decision can be found [here](#).

American Electric Power's American Burying Beetle Habitat Conservation Plan can be found [here](#).

Conservation Efforts Lead to Recovery, Proposed Delisting of Oklahoma, Texas Songbird

Almost extinct in the 1980s, the black-capped vireo's dramatic recovery is a result of ESA-driven partnerships and conservation. Public comments on the proposed rule are due on or before February 13, 2017. For more information see <https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/ArlingtonTexas/bcvi.htm>

Latest Documentation for the American Burying Beetle

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has received an Application for an Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, for the American Burying Beetle, from American Electric Power, and Availability of Proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in Hughes, Okfuskee, and Seminole Counties, Oklahoma. The Supporting Documentation referenced in the Federal Register are listed below.

- [Text of the Federal Register Notice](#)
- [Official Notice in the Federal Register](#)
- [AEP Fixico POD to Weleetka HCP Low Effect Screening Form](#)
- [AEP Weleetka Draft HCP](#)