



News Release

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Arizona Ecological Services Field Office

www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SEEKS INPUT ON REVIEW OF PIMA COUNTY ENDANGERED SPECIES PLAN

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering Pima County's request for an Endangered Species Act incidental take permit associated with the Draft Pima County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSCP). A 90-day comment period has been initiated on the Service's draft Environmental Impact Statement of the permit request. A public meeting will be held on February 21, 2013 and the comment period closes March 15, 2013.

Pima County's MSCP is a part of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, a 13-year conservation planning effort by the county. It seeks to achieve a balance between long-term conservation of the diversity of natural vegetation communities and native species of plants and animals that make up an important part of the natural heritage and allure of Pima County, and the orderly use of land to promote a sustainable economy, health, well-being, customs, and culture of the growing population of Pima County.

Under the Endangered Species Act (Act) it is normally illegal to take (harm, harass, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect) threatened and endangered species. The Service may, under limited circumstances, issue permits to take federally-listed and candidate species, incidental to and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Issuing such an incidental take permit to a non-federal entity requires the development of, and commitment to, a habitat conservation plan that minimizes and mitigates the effects of incidental take on federally listed species.

Pima County has applied for a permit under the Act for incidental take of 44 species, including five animal and two plant species currently listed under the Act. The incidental take is anticipated to occur in the form of habitat modification as a result of actions undertaken or authorized by Pima County, including the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and certain private residential and commercial development. Pima County's primary mitigation approach under the draft MSCP is to acquire and manage conservation lands to maintain and enhance habitat for the covered species and local ecosystems.

The Service will determine whether the Pima County MSCP meets the requirements of the Endangered Species Act before issuing an incidental take permit. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Service has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This draft EIS, in part, formalizes the Service's review of the permit (an intra-Service section 7 consultation will also be conducted), and is available for public review as described above.

Downloadable copies of the draft MSCP, draft EIS and other information are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona> and <http://www.pima.gov/cmo/sdcp/MSCP/MSCP.html>. Printed or CD-ROM copy of these documents is available upon request to Ms. Julia Fonseca, Pima County Office of Sustainability and Conservation, 201 N. Stone, 6th floor, Tucson, AZ 85701, phone (520) 740-6460, or email mscp@pima.gov.

Written comments or data can be submitted to the Field Supervisor at the Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021. Comments will also be accepted by fax (603-242-2513) above, as well as by e-mail to PimaMSCP@fws.gov. Comments must be received by March 15, 2013.

A public meeting will be held Feb. 21, 2013, from 4:00- to 6:00 p.m. at the Pima County Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Conference Room at 3500 W. River Road in Tucson. An overview of the Pima County MSCP and the Act's habitat conservation planning process will be provided, and a questions and answers session will follow. Written comments will be accepted at the meeting.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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