



# News Release

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**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)** [www.fws.gov/southwest/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/)

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## **Service Proposes Amending Industry Conservation Plan for the American Burying Beetle**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing an amendment to the American Burying Beetle Industry Conservation Plan (ABB ICP). Originally approved in 2014 to provide the oil and gas industry in Oklahoma a streamlined Endangered Species Act (ESA) permitting process for activities that may impact the beetle, the plan was amended in 2016 to extend the enrollment period through May 20, 2019. The current proposed amendment would provide industry with an additional five years to sign up under the ABB ICP.

Since approval of the ABB ICP, more than 5,100 of the approved 32,234 acres authorized for permitted “take” of the beetle have been issued through the ABB ICP. “Take” is defined by the ESA as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill trap, capture or collect, or to attempt to engage in such conduct. In the interest of providing industry with greater certainty while continuing to ensure ABB conservation, the Service is proposing to amend the ABB ICP to extend it through May 20, 2024. Publication of the notice begins a 30-day comment period.

In addition to extending the ABB ICP timeframe, the amendment proposes to: extend the construction period for permitted projects until May 20, 2030, and extend operations and maintenance coverage for activities including maintenance of rights-of-way and repairing pipelines until May 20, 2039. The proposed amendment does not change the number of acres of take authorized under the 2014 ABB ICP, and no additional acreage will be impacted. The Service is also announcing the availability of an environmental assessment on the amendment.

“The Service is working closely with our partners, including the oil and gas industry, on efforts to conserve the American burying beetle,” said Amy Lueders, the Service’s Southwest Regional Director. “By extending the deadline to enroll in the ABB ICP, we are ensuring oil and gas projects in Oklahoma continue to move forward while limiting their impacts on the beetle.”

The ICP covers take of the ABB that is incidental to activities associated with oil and gas exploration and the construction, operation, maintenance, repair and decommissioning of oil and gas pipelines and related well fields in 45 Oklahoma counties. The ICP allows oil and gas operators to proceed with projects in covered counties while conserving the ABB and its habitat.

Under the ICP, restoration activities for the ABB include replacing topsoil, relieving soil compaction, reestablishing vegetation and inspecting and removing invasive species. Additionally, mitigation is provided through off-site conservation and management of ABB habitat in perpetuity.

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 at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Oklahoma/ABBICP>. 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>.

America's fish, wildlife, and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We are working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [and download photos from our Flickr page](#).*

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