



# News Release

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## Oklahoma City & Water Utility Submit Habitat Conservation Plan for Second Atoka Reservoir Pipeline Construction

*Members of the public are invited to submit comments during 30-day public comment period*

Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma City Water Utilities Trust have developed a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the conservation of the American burying beetle (ABB) while allowing the construction of a major water supply pipeline to Atoka Reservoir. The pipeline will deliver needed drinking water to local Oklahoma communities, and the HCP will address potential impacts from its construction to the American burying beetle. The ABB is currently listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and has been proposed for downlisting to threatened.

“The Service is working closely with our partners, including municipal governments and utility companies, on collaborative efforts to conserve the American burying beetle,” **said Service Regional Director Amy Lueders**. “By working together on HCPs like this one, and through input from the public and other stakeholders, we are ensuring that needed infrastructure projects in Oklahoma continue to move forward while providing conservation measures for federally listed species like the beetle.”

HCPs are one of many tools under the ESA that allow for businesses, landowners, and state and local governments to continue their activities while supporting the conservation of federally listed species. The Atoka Pipeline HCP was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service along with an application for an incidental take permit under the ESA.

The pipeline would run alongside an existing water pipeline and through an existing easement along 78.4 miles of the ABB’s current range from Atoka Reservoir to Lake Stanley Draper in Oklahoma City. The requested permit would be in effect for eight years during expected construction.

The American burying beetle is a large, shiny black beetle with hardened protective wing covers marked by two scalloped-shaped orange patterns. The nocturnal beetle is active only in the summer and lives for only one year. They are scavengers that depend on carrion for their life cycle. The beetle buries a small carcass and lays eggs beside it so that the larvae may feed on that carcass until they mature.

Members of the public are invited to submit comments through October 13, 2020. Copies of the draft EA and HCP are available online: <https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/oklahoma/>. For additional information, contact Jonna Polk (Field Supervisor) by telephone at 918-581-7458, or by mail at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office, 9014 E. 21st St., Tulsa, Oklahoma 74129. Public comments may be submitted via email to [OKES\\_NEPA@fws.gov](mailto:OKES_NEPA@fws.gov).

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