



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

## Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office

*Southern and Central California Coast*

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### ***Public Input Sought for Draft Fort Ord Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement in Monterey County***

##### **What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service taking?**

The Service is seeking input from the public on a draft habitat conservation plan and associated Environmental Impact Statement for Fort Ord in Monterey County, California. The Service will accept written comments during a 45-day public comment period.

##### **How can people submit their comments?**

The 45-day comment period ends Monday, December 16, 2019. Interested parties can submit their comments by U.S. mail, email, or fax on or before Monday, December 16, 2019.

*U.S. mail:* Send your comments to Stephen P. Henry, Field Supervisor, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, CA 93003.

*Facsimile:* Fax your comments to 805-644-3958.

*Email:* [fw8fortordhcp@fws.gov](mailto:fw8fortordhcp@fws.gov)

##### **What is the purpose of the draft habitat conservation plan?**

The draft habitat conservation plan outlines a collaborative and comprehensive strategy that will allow the Service to work with the Fort Ord Reuse Authority to balance residential, commercial, and recreational development with the conservation and protection of rare wildlife, plants, and their habitats in the plan area. The proposed plan would describe measures designed to avoid, minimize, and offset the effects of future commercial, residential, and recreational development to ensure the conservation and protection of the following species:

Federally threatened

California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*)

California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*)

Western snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*)

Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens* var. *pungens*)

Federally endangered

Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*)

Monterey gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*)

Yadon's piperia (*Piperia yadonii*)

State endangered

seaside bird's beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *littoralis*).

### **What does a habitat conservation plan do?**

A habitat conservation plan is required as part of an application for an incidental "take" permit. "Take" is defined under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct." "Incidental take" is defined by the ESA as take that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity. The habitat conservation plan describes the anticipated effects of the proposed take, how those impacts will be minimized or offset, and how the habitat conservation plan will be funded.

### **How would this plan help these species?**

Working together with Fort Ord Reuse Authority and the local community, the draft plan finds a balance between economic growth through residential, commercial, and recreational development and habitat management that avoids and minimizes effects to listed species and contributes to their recovery.

Each covered activity implemented under the draft Fort Ord Habitat Conservation Plan would implement measures to avoid and minimize project impacts to covered species and to natural communities that provide habitat for these species. Species and habitat impacts that cannot be avoided would be offset by the preservation and management of existing high-quality habitat and restoration of degraded habitat. These preserved and restored areas would protect habitat and species populations in perpetuity and would be managed and monitored in perpetuity to assure that biological goals and objectives of the habitat conservation plan are met.

### **Who are the applicants for the incidental take permit, and how much land does the habitat conservation plan cover?**

The Fort Ord Reuse Authority represents 13 entities that are jointly applying for an incidental take permit. They include: Fort Ord Reuse Authority, California Department of Parks and Recreation, Regents of the University of California (Santa Cruz Campus), County of Monterey, City of Marina, City of Seaside, City of Del Rey Oaks, City of Monterey, Board of Trustees of California State University (on behalf of the Monterey Bay Campus), Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, Marina Coast Water District, and Fort Ord Regional Habitat Cooperative.

The former Fort Ord Army Base encompasses approximately 28,000 acres. Permitted activities would occur on those portions of the base that have been or will be transferred out of federal ownership, totaling approximately 13,000 acres. The remainder of the former base remains in federal ownership with the majority of the conserved lands being held by the Bureau of Land Management.

**What would be the length of the proposed permit under the habitat conservation plan?**

The requested permit term under the habitat conservation plan is 50 years after the plan becomes effective.

**What is an environmental impact statement?**

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for certain actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. An EIS is used as a tool for decision-making by describing the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action, in this case the issuance of an incidental take permit that would address development and use of the former Fort Ord in accordance with the habitat conservation plan. The EIS also analyzes two alternatives to the proposed action.

**What type of information is the agency seeking during the public comment process?**

The Service welcomes public input on the draft habitat conservation plan and its associated EIS. The public is invited to comment on the proposed covered activities, minimization, and mitigation measures. The Service will consider all of the relevant information we receive as we process the incidental take permit application.

For more information about Habitat Conservation Plans, visit:

<https://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/hcp.pdf>

**What happens next?**

The Service will consider and address public comments as we prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement. We will conduct a review of this project according to the requirements of NEPA and ESA and their regulations, other relevant federal laws, regulations, policies, and guidance, and our procedures for compliance with applicable regulations. We will consider the incidental take permit application and determine whether the permit should be issued.