

Room 4154, Bethesda, Maryland 20892, (301) 435-1721.

The meetings will be closed in accordance with the provisions set forth in sections 552b(c)(4) and 552b(c)(6), Title 5, U.S.C. Applications and/or proposals and the discussions could reveal confidential trade secrets or commercial property such as patentable material and personal information concerning individuals associated with the applications and/or proposals, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Nos. 93.306, 93.333, 93.337, 93.393-93.396, 93.837-93.844, 93.846-93.878, 93.892, 93, 893, National Institutes of Health, HHS)

Date: February 23, 1996.

Susan K. Feldman,

*Committee Management Officer, NIH.*

[FR Doc. 96-4745 Filed 2-29-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4140-01-M

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

#### Endangered and Threatened Species Permit Application

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Availability.

Notice of Availability of the Final Joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the proposed issuance of an incidental take permit for the endangered Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) in Western Riverside County, California. The Record of Decision will be published no sooner than 30 days from this notice.

**SUMMARY:** This notice advises the public that the Final Joint EIS/EIR on the application to incidentally take SKR is available for public review. The Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA) has applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for a 30-year Incidental Take Permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act. Publication of the Record of Decision and issuance of the permit will occur no sooner than 30 days from this notice. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10 of the Act and the National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Pete Sorensen, Endangered Species Division, Chief, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad Field Office, 2730 Loker Ave. West, Carlsbad, California 92008, (619) 431-9440.

Individuals wishing copies of this Final EIS/EIR should immediately

contact the RCHCA at (909) 275-1100. Documents will be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday) at the RCHCA, 4080 Lemon Street, 12th Floor, Riverside, California, 92501. Documents will also be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours (8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday) at the Service Office at the above referenced address and telephone. A letter announcing availability of the Final Joint EIS/EIR has been sent to all agencies and parties who previously received notice of availability of the Draft EIS/EIR, and/or who requested a copy of the Draft EIS/EIR or commented on the Draft EIS/EIR.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The Service listed the SKR as an endangered species, on October 31, 1988 (53 FR 38485), under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). Under the Act, no person may harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect the species, or attempt to engage in such conduct (16 USC 1538). The Service, however, may issue permits to conduct activities involving endangered species under certain circumstances, including carrying out scientific purposes, enhancing the propagation or survival of the species, or incidentally taking the species in connection with otherwise lawful activities. Regulations governing permits are in 50 CFR 17.22, 17.23, and 17.32.

The RCHCA presently has a short-term 10(a)(1)(B) permit from the Service to incidentally take SKR's in connection with various proposed public and private projects in the western portion of Riverside County. Under the program established through this interim permit, SKR habitat in public and private ownership is being acquired and managed for the long-term benefit of the species. Acquisition of private lands is funded in part from mitigation fees collected by the RCHCA as developments proceed. As intended when the interim permit was granted in August 1990, the RCHCA is applying to the Service for a 30-year incidental take permit for the same purposes. The area covered by the proposed 30-year permit will include much of the historical range of the SKR in Riverside County and will allow development to proceed on 15,000 acres of occupied SKR habitat. The permit application was received on April 14, 1995, and was accompanied by the Long-term SKR Habitat Conservation Plan that details

proposed measures to minimize, monitor, and mitigate impacts of the proposed take of SKR.

The applicants propose to minimize and mitigate the impacts of take by ensuring that the seven proposed Core Reserves are established by completing the acquisitions and securing the remaining agreements necessary to conserve the remaining private lands in those reserves. The habitat within the reserves will be conserved by restricting any take within the Core Reserves. To help manage the reserves the non-wasting endowments or equivalent annual funding sources will be established in the amount of \$6,000,600. Through cooperative agreements with BLM, the Core Reserves will be expanded to 15,000 acres of occupied SKR habitat.

The funding for the implementation of the plan will be provided through a combination of local, Federal and State contributions. Federal and State agencies will provide \$2.5 million in land acquisition funding and "in lieu" land management services, and a matching fund of \$1.6 million towards financing the plan. BLM will provide 10,700 acres of Federal land for exchange, which will then be sold to purchase an additional 2,500 acres of occupied SKR habitat adjacent to the current reserves. The State will provide partial management for the state lands at San Jacinto/Perris Core Reserve and through a cooperative effort with RCHCA try to reduce or eliminate the balance of management funds required for this reserve.

The underlying purpose or goal of the proposed action is to develop a program designed to ensure the continued existence of the species, while resolving potential conflicts that may arise from otherwise lawful private and public improvement projects.

##### Development of the Final EIS/EIR

This draft Joint EIS/EIR has been developed cooperatively by the Service, Carlsbad Field Office (lead agency); and the RCHCA.

In the development of this Final Joint EIS/EIR, the Service has initiated action to assure compliance with the purpose and intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended. Scoping activities were undertaken preparatory to developing the Draft EIS/EIR with a variety of Federal, State, and local entities. A Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS/EIR was published in the Federal Register on March 2, 1993.

The RCHCA's preparation of the long-term HCP has been on-going since the short-term permit was authorized. In

March 1993, the Service and the RCHCA initiated a joint scoping process for the preparation of a combined EIS/EIR in anticipation of the Service receiving a permit application for a 30-year Section 10(a) permit for incidental take SKR. The scoping process was initiated in accordance with NEPA to solicit comments on issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS/EIR. Because of the extended two-year scoping process, the Draft Scoping Report was prepared to update public knowledge of the scoping process. This report summarized the 2-year scoping process, identified the scoping issues raised by interested parties at public meetings and in written statements, and outlined the issues and alternatives to be addressed in the Draft EIS/EIR. The availability of the Draft Scoping Report was published in the Federal Register on March 24, 1995.

A Notice of Availability of a Draft EIS/EIR and receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for SKR in Western Riverside County, California was published in the Federal Register August 4, 1995.

Potential consequences, in terms of adverse impacts and benefits associated with the implementation of each alternative, were described in the Draft EIS/EIR. The Service received 39 letters of comment on the Draft EIS/EIR that primarily focused on the following subject areas: (1) The range of alternatives in the document; (2) inadequate analysis of effects to SKR, effects on local General Plans, effects on local economic conditions, cumulative effects, and growth-inducing effects; (3) mitigation measures for effects to SKR; (4) population viability analysis model; and (5) analysis of funding requirements, sources and assurances.

The Responses to Comments document for the FEIS/EIR contains copies of all comments received and responses to all comments received. Issues and potential consequences remain constant from the Draft to the Final EIS/EIR.

#### Alternatives Analyzed in the Final EIS/EIR

Four alternatives were considered for analysis in the Final EIS/EIR: (1) Proposed Action/Project (approve and implement the Long-term SKR HCP); (2) Expanded Conservation/Protection (conserve additional SKR habitat); (3) Existing Reserves/Public Lands (focus of SKR habitat already protected); and (4) a No Project/No Action Alternative (assume no regional program). Issuance of the permit with the mitigating, minimizing, and monitoring measures outlined in the Proposed Action/Project

alternative is the Service's preferred action and is discussed above. Key issues addressed in the Final EIS/EIR are identified as the effects that implementation of various alternatives would have upon: (1) The endangered SKR; (2) other wildlife and their habitats; (3) land uses and general plans; (4) provision of public facilities, services and utilities; and (5) social and economic conditions. In addition, a second assessment of funding was prepared in response to comments on the Draft EIS/EIR.

Each alternative was evaluated for its potential to result in significant adverse impacts, and the adequacy or inadequacy of the proposed measures to avoid, minimize, and substantially reduce the effects.

Dated: February 22, 1996.  
Thomas Dwyer,  
*Deputy Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.*  
[FR Doc. 96-4496 Filed 2-29-96; 8:45 am]  
BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

#### Extension of the Public Comment Period for the "Black-footed Ferret Survey Guidelines for Oil and Gas Activities in Wyoming for Compliance With the Endangered Species Act"

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of extension of comment period.

**SUMMARY:** The Fish and Wildlife Service is extending the comment period for review of the draft "Black-footed Ferret Survey Guidelines For Oil And Gas Activities In Wyoming For Compliance With The Endangered Species Act."

**DATES:** Comments on the draft guidelines must be received on or before March 15, 1996, to ensure they receive consideration by the Service.

**ADDRESSES:** Persons wishing to review the draft guidelines may obtain a copy by contacting the Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4000 Morrie Avenue, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001. Written comments and materials regarding the draft guidelines should be sent to the Field Supervisor at the Cheyenne address given above. Comments and materials received are available on request for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Chuck Davis (see **ADDRESSES** above), at telephone 307/772-2374.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) published a Notice of Availability of the draft "Black-footed Ferret Survey Guidelines for Oil and Gas Activities in Wyoming for Compliance with the Endangered Species Act" which appeared in the Federal Register on January 30, 1996 (61 FR 3051). It established a public comment period ending on February 29, 1996. Requests for extending the comment period have been received from persons that have indicated that 30 days is not sufficient time to review and comment on the Guidelines. The comment period is, therefore, extended to march 15, 1996.

##### Public Comments Solicited

The Service solicits written comments on the draft guidelines described above. All comments received by the date specified in the **DATES** section above will be considered prior to approval of the guidelines.

Dated: February 23, 1996.  
Terry T. Terrell,  
*Deputy Regional Director, Denver, CO.*  
[FR Doc. 96-4806 Filed 2-29-96; 8:45 am]  
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#### Bureau of Land Management

[UT-054-1040-00-24-1A]

##### Land Closure; Utah

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management.  
**ACTION:** Notice of closure and restriction on public land.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that, effective immediately and until further notice, the last 1,000 feet of the road leading to the warm springs, near Gandy Utah, located in the SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of Sec. 31, T. 15 S., R. 19 W. S.L.B.M., Utah, is closed to all vehicular traffic. Personnel that are exempt from the closure include any federal, state, or local officer, or member of any organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of an official duty, or any person authorized by the Bureau. Foot traffic will be allowed.

The purpose of the closure is to protect the riparian and wildlife values associated with the spring and to reduce erosion caused by vehicle travel on this section of road.

The authority for this closure is the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 43 Subpart 8364.1.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Rex Rowley, House Range Resource Area Manager, P.O. Box 778 Fillmore, UT 84631 or Phone 801-743-6811.