

recovery activities and future updates to the recovery plan.

Large-scale loss and fragmentation of native shrub steppe habitats, primarily for agricultural development, likely played a primary role in the long-term decline of the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit. By 2001, the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit was imminently threatened by its small population size, loss of genetic diversity, and inbreeding depression, coupled with a lack of suitable protected habitats in the wild. To varying degrees, these influences continue to impact the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife began a captive breeding program for the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit in 2001 and an intercross breeding strategy in 2003. Due to severe inbreeding depression in the purebred captive animals, intercross breeding was conducted to facilitate genetic restoration of the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, and is considered essential for recovery efforts. Intercross breeding was accomplished through carefully controlled matings between the founding purebred Columbia Basin animals and pygmy rabbits of the same taxonomic classification from a discrete population in Idaho. The last known wild subpopulation of pygmy rabbits within the Columbia Basin was extirpated by early 2004, although other wild subpopulations may still exist on lands that have not yet been surveyed.

In March of 2007, 20 captive-bred, intercrossed pygmy rabbits were reintroduced to habitats historically occupied by the species in the Columbia Basin of central Washington. Through monitoring it was determined that these captive-bred animals experienced very high mortality over the first several weeks following their release, and none are believed to have survived. Following the development and implementation of appropriate adaptive management measures, reintroduction efforts were resumed in the summer of 2011. The new measures that have been implemented include additional releases of the captive-bred intercrossed pygmy rabbits, the capture and translocation of wild pygmy rabbits from populations outside of the Columbia Basin for inclusion in the reintroduction program, initiation of partially controlled field-breeding efforts, and improved protective measures during releases. As these new measures have been implemented, the need for continuing captive breeding efforts has steadily diminished, and captive breeding operations at the three cooperating facilities were discontinued by the end of July 2012.

The recovery plan prescribes a phased approach for recovery: (1) Removal or abatement of imminent threats to the population and potentially suitable shrub-steppe habitats in the Columbia Basin; (2) reestablishment of an appropriate number and distribution of free-ranging subpopulations over the near term; and (3) establishment and protection of a sufficiently resilient, free-ranging population that would be expected to withstand foreseeable long-term threats. This recovery strategy is oriented to dynamic adaptive management of the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit and its habitat, consistent with the Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation process, which calls for an iterative process of biological planning, conservation design, conservation delivery, and monitoring and research. The biological planning and conservation design set forth in this recovery plan lay out the criteria for recovery and identify localities for implementing actions, while the recovery actions describe a process for implementing conservation on the ground, outcome-based monitoring to assess success, and ongoing assumption-driven research to test biological hypotheses important to management. To facilitate this strategy, specific near-term (i.e., 2012 to 2021) and more general long-term objectives and criteria have been established. In addition, revised implementation schedules will be developed, as necessary, to reflect the knowledge gained, accomplishments met, potential future constraints encountered, and consequent refinements to near-term recovery objectives, criteria, and/or actions as recovery progresses.

**Authority:** The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Dated: December 11, 2012.

**Richard R. Hannan,**

*Acting Regional Director, Pacific Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R6-ES-2013-N009; FF06E16000-123-FXES11130600000D2]

#### Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Enhancement of Survival Permit Application; Draft Black-Footed Ferret Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement and Environmental Assessment; Reopening of Public Comment Period

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability; reopening of comment period.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), are reopening the public comment period for an application from the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Implementation Coordinator for an enhancement of survival permit under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). The documents available for public review are a draft programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement (Agreement) to reintroduce the federally endangered black-footed ferret on properties of voluntary participants across the species' range to further recovery of this species and a draft environmental assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If you have previously submitted comments, please do not resubmit them, because we have already incorporated them in the public record and will fully consider them in our final decision.

**DATES:** Written comments must be submitted by February 22, 2013.

**ADDRESSES:** Send comments by U.S. mail to Kimberly Tamkun, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center, P.O. Box 190, Wellington, CO, 80549-0190, or via email to [FerretSHA@fws.gov](mailto:FerretSHA@fws.gov). You also may send comments by facsimile to (970) 897-2732. The draft Agreement and EA are available on the Black-Footed Ferret Recovery Program Web site at <http://www.blackfootedferret.org/>. You also may review copies of these documents during regular business hours at the National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center (Ferret Center), 19180 North East Frontage Road Carr, CO, 80612-9719. If you do not have access to the Web site or cannot visit our office, you may request copies by telephone at (970) 897-2730 ext. 238 or by letter to the Ferret Center.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Pete Goyer, Black-footed Ferret Recovery

Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (970) 897-2730 ext. 224; [pete\\_gober@fws.gov](mailto:pete_gober@fws.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On December 19, 2012, we published a **Federal Register** notice (77 FR 75185) announcing the availability of the draft Agreement and EA for public review for 30 days, pursuant to the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). We are providing the public more time to review these documents by reopening the public comment period for another 30 days in response to requests from the American Farm Bureau Federation, U.S. Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester from Montana, U.S. Senators Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran from Kansas, and Congressman Tim Huelskamp from Kansas. We agree with the requesters that the additional time is needed to review the documents due to the scope and complexity of the Agreement and because the holidays occurred during the first comment period.

For background and more information on the draft Agreement and EA, see our December 19, 2012, notice (77 FR 75185). For information on where to view the documents and how to submit comments, please see the **ADDRESSES** section above.

#### Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

#### Authority

We provide this notice under section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.22) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4371 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

Dated: January 15, 2013.

#### Michael Thabault,

*Acting Regional Director—Ecological Services, Mountain-Prairie Region, Denver, Colorado.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Indian Affairs

#### Renewal of Agency Information Collection for Energy Resource Development Program Grants

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs is seeking comments on the renewal of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval for the collection of information for grants under the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development Office's Energy and Mineral Development Program authorized by OMB Control Number 1076-0174. This information collection expires April 30, 2013.

**DATES:** Submit comments on or before March 25, 2013.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on the information collection to Catherine Freels, U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, 800 S. Gay Street, Suite 800, Knoxville, Tennessee 37929; email: [Catherine.Freels@bia.gov](mailto:Catherine.Freels@bia.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Catherine Freels, (865) 545-4315, extension 23.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Abstract

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, 25 U.S.C. 3503 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide grants to Indian tribes as defined in 25 U.S.C. 3501(4)(A) and (B).

The Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) administers and manages the energy resource development grant program under the Energy and Minerals Development Program (EMDP). Congress may appropriate funds to EMDP on a year-to-year basis. When funding is available, IEED may solicit proposals for energy resource development projects from Indian tribes for use on Indian lands as defined in 25 U.S.C. 3501. The projects may be in the areas of exploration, assessment, development, feasibility, or market studies. Indian tribes that would like to apply for an EMDP grant must submit an application that includes certain information, and must assist IEED by providing information in support of any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses.

## II. Request for Comments

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) requests your comments on this collection concerning: (a) The necessity of this information collection for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (hours and cost) of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) Ways we could enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) Ways we could minimize the burden of the collection of the information on the respondents.

Please note that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and an individual need not respond to, a collection of information unless it has a valid OMB Control Number.

It is our policy to make all comments available to the public for review at the location listed in the **ADDRESSES** section. Before including your address, phone number, email address or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

## III. Data

*OMB Control Number:* 1076-0174.

*Title:* Energy and Mineral Development Program Grant Solicitation.

*Brief Description of Collection:* Indian tribes that would like to apply for an EMDP grant must submit an application that includes certain information. A complete application must contain a current, signed tribal resolution that provides sufficient information to authorize the project and comply with the terms of the grant; a proposal describing the planned activities and deliverable products; and a detailed budget estimate. The IEED requires this information to ensure that it provides funding only to those projects that meet the goals of the EMDP and purposes for which Congress provides the appropriation. Upon acceptance of an application, a tribe must then submit one—to two—page quarterly progress reports summarizing events, accomplishments, problems and/or results in executing the project. Response is required to obtain a benefit.

*Type of Review:* Extension without change of currently approved collection.