

projects move forward, given this criteria? How should FEMA determine the extent to which proposed projects benefit the individual census tract(s) and promote comprehensive community-wide resilience?

2. How can the identified community disaster resilience zones and FEMA's assistance amplify other Federal and non-Federal programs to direct resources to communities with high risk to natural hazards, high social vulnerability and low community resilience? What other programs would be complementary?

3. How can FEMA monitor progress of improving resilience in community disaster resilience zones over time? What are key data and other metrics that can be used to monitor and evaluate progress?

4. In what ways could FEMA use the community disaster resilience zone designation as a catalyst for Federal and non-Federal funding, e.g., encouraging communities with the designation to partner with non-governmental entities, such as private non-profit organizations, philanthropy, and private equity, to drive investments to benefit designated communities?

5. For mitigation projects that benefit large areas covering many census tracts, how can FEMA help applicants determine if the project is "within" or "primarily benefits" a community disaster resilience zone? What tools or resources would help potential applicants design projects that prioritize these identified communities? How should these projects be evaluated for their efficacy in reducing natural hazard risk?

#### *H. Community Disaster Resilience Zone Projects Causing Displacement*

1. How can FEMA best ensure any residents displaced by resilience or mitigation projects receive equitable treatment?

2. How can FEMA ensure comprehensive community engagement is a central component of any community resilience planning and project implementation for Community Disaster Resilience Zones?

3. How can FEMA work with local jurisdictions designated as Community Disaster Resilience Zones to support community driven relocation, where appropriate?

**Deanne Criswell,**

*Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency.*

[FR Doc. 2023-11268 Filed 5-25-23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 9110-12-P**

## **DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

### **Fish and Wildlife Service**

**[Docket No. FWS-R8-ES-2023-0043; FXES1114080000-234-FF08ECAR00]**

#### **Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Proposed Low-Effect Habitat Conservation Plan for the Sweetwater Authority Habitat Management Program and Habitat Recovery Project, County of San Diego, CA**

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

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

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announce receipt of an application for an incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act and a draft habitat conservation plan from the Sweetwater Authority. We request public comment on the application, which includes the applicant's proposed habitat conservation plan (HCP), and on the Service's preliminary determination that the proposed permitting action may be eligible for a categorical exclusion pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, the Department of the Interior's (DOI) NEPA regulations, and the DOI Departmental Manual. To make this preliminary determination, we prepared a draft environmental action statement and low-effect screening form, which is also available for public review. We invite comment from the public and local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, please send your written comments by June 26, 2023.

**ADDRESSES:** *Obtaining Documents:* You may obtain copies of the documents this notice announces, along with public comments received, online in Docket No. FWS-R8-ES-2023-0043 at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

*Submitting Comments:* You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- *Online:* <https://www.regulations.gov>. Search for and submit comments on Docket No. FWS-R8-ES-2023-0043.
- *Email:* [fw8cfwocomments@fws.gov](mailto:fw8cfwocomments@fws.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Jonathan Snyder, Assistant Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 760-431-9440 (telephone). Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY,

TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), have received an application from the Sweetwater Authority (applicant) for a 5-year incidental take permit for five covered species pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The applicant is seeking a permit to incidentally take four animal species and seeking assurance for one plant species (all are federally listed species) during the term of the proposed 5-year permit. The permit is needed to authorize take of listed animal species (including harm, death, and injury) in the course of activities associated with the implementation of the Sweetwater Reservoir Habitat Management Program (HMP), removal of the requirement to hold reservoir water elevation at or below 230 feet (ft), and implementation of the Sweetwater Reservoir Wetlands Habitat Recovery Project (HRP) within the HMP area in San Diego County, California. A conservation program to avoid, minimize, and mitigate anticipated impacts from project activities would be implemented as described in the habitat conservation plan (HCP) prepared by the applicant.

We are requesting comments on the permit application, which includes the applicant's habitat conservation plan (HCP), and on the Service's preliminary determination that this proposed incidental take permit qualifies as "low effect" and may qualify for a categorical exclusion pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (40 CFR 1501.4), the Department of the Interior's (DOI) NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46), and the DOI's Departmental Manual (516 DM 8.5(C)(2)). To make this preliminary determination, we prepared a draft environmental action statement and low-effect screening form, which is also available for public review.

#### **Background**

Section 9 of the Act and its implementing Federal regulations prohibit the take of animal species listed as endangered or threatened. "Take" is defined under the Act as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect listed animal species, or to attempt to engage in such conduct (16 U.S.C. 1538). However,

under section 10(a) of the Act, the Service may issue permits to authorize incidental take of listed animal species. "Incidental take" is defined by the Act's implementing regulations as take that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity. Regulations governing incidental take permits for endangered and threatened species, respectively, are found in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 17.22 and 50 CFR 17.32. The definition of take under the Act does not apply to plant species; however, plant species identified in an HCP are included on the permit as covered species in recognition of the conservation measures provided for them under the HCP, and these plants receive "no surprises" regulatory assurances under the permit.

The HMP area is in southern San Diego County, south of the community of Spring Valley, along the Sweetwater River. The Sweetwater Reservoir is a managed surface water storage facility in the Sweetwater River Watershed that receives direct local runoff from the watershed's middle basin, water transfers from Loveland Reservoir (which captures water runoff from the watershed's upper basin), and imported water, when available, through the San Diego County Water Authority aqueduct. The HMP area supports coastal sage scrub, mulefat scrub, southern willow forest, and nonnative grassland vegetation communities, which include potential habitat for the covered species: the federally listed endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), and the federally listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), and Otay tarplant (*Deinandra conjugens*). More details on the specific parcels and their locations are available in the permit application (see **ADDRESSES**).

The applicant is seeking an incidental take permit for implementation of the HMP, removal of the 230-ft-elevation imported water restrictions, and implementation of the 66.9-acre (ac) HRP within the 250-ac HMP area. The HMP area was originally set aside for conservation in 1994 to preserve and manage least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher and their habitat, while providing the applicant the ability to manage the Sweetwater Reservoir for drinking water purposes. In 2005, an irrevocable dedication of land for wildlife preservation was created on 52.5 ac of riparian habitat within the HMP area potentially suitable for least Bell's vireo,

and associated mitigation credits were established for applicant project impacts to least Bell's vireo and riparian habitat. The HRP is a grant-funded project and will establish 66.9 ac of additional riparian and wetland habitat within the managed portion of Sweetwater Reservoir, using a combination of passive and active techniques. The applicant also proposes to remove the 230-ft restriction and allow the water elevation to reach the high point of the dam (239 ft) on an infrequent basis, to increase water storage during high-rainfall years. Raising the water elevation threshold may result in infrequent flooding and temporary impacts to riparian habitat, with reproductive impacts to least Bell's vireo, and also potentially to southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo should they be observed on site in the future. The HCP requires an update to the HMP to address changes in reservoir operations and adaptive management of reservoir levels; the HMP update must be completed and approved by the Service prior to allowing imported water above the 230-ft elevation. The updated HMP will allow for the establishment of additional mitigation credits based on newly established and restored riparian habitat placed under in-perpetuity conservation.

The HMP area provides regionally important habitat for least Bell's vireo as well as potential habitat for southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo. We anticipate minor periodic impacts to least Bell's vireo, and potentially to southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoos, during implementation of the HRP and HMP, and infrequent, temporary flooding impacts associated with the increase in the reservoir elevation in periods of high rainfall. Proposed maintenance activities within the HMP also have the potential to result in minor periodic impacts to the coastal California gnatcatcher in upland coastal sage scrub habitat. Critical habitat for least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, coastal California gnatcatcher, and Otay tarplant occur within the 250-ac HMP area proposed to be conserved in perpetuity.

#### Proposed Action and Alternatives

The proposed action consists of the issuance of an incidental take permit and implementation of the proposed HCP, which includes measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to covered species. The applicant proposes to preserve the entire 250-ac HMP in perpetuity through an irrevocable

dedication or similar instrument. As project-specific mitigation, the applicant will debit 37.5 ac from established riparian habitat mitigation credits within the HMP. Funding for habitat management within the HMP will come from the applicant's general funds, an endowment for in-perpetuity funding, or other mechanism(s) agreed upon by the Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Three alternatives to the taking of the listed species under the proposed action are considered in the proposed HCP. Under the no-action alternative, no authorized incidental take of covered species would occur, and no additional habitat restoration or management would be conducted in the HMP to expand habitat for least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, or yellow-billed cuckoo. Under the HRP with channel modifications alternative, extensive grading and channel modifications within the floodplain would improve natural hydrology with substantial impacts to existing riparian habitat but ultimately more sustainable hydrological function. This alternative would result in an increase in the temporal loss of riparian habitat and breeding territories relative to the proposed action and require additional regulatory permitting. Under the alternative for retaining the 230-ft imported water restriction, the water storage capacity of the reservoir would not be increased to meet regional drinking water demands. While this alternative would reduce potential infrequent temporary impacts to least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, and yellow-billed cuckoo and their habitat, habitat flooding with the potential to impact covered riparian birds and their habitat may still occur within the HMP in high-rainfall years, and the applicant would not be eligible for the grant that is proposed to fund the HRP. The proposed project achieves the applicant's objectives and maximizes riparian vegetation and least Bell's vireo habitat, while minimizing potential impacts to covered species.

#### Our Preliminary Determination

The Service has made a preliminary determination that the applicant's proposed project would individually and cumulatively have a minor, nonsignificant effect on the covered species and the human environment. Therefore, we have preliminarily determined that the proposed Endangered Species Act section 10(a)(1)(B) permit would be a "low-effect" incidental take permit that individually or cumulatively would have a minor effect on the species and

may qualify for application of a categorical exclusion pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, DOI's NEPA regulations, and the DOI Departmental Manual. A "low-effect" incidental take permit is one that would result in (1) minor or negligible effects on species covered in the HCP; (2) nonsignificant effects on the human environment; and (3) impacts that, when added together with the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions, would not result in significant cumulative effects to the human environment.

### Public Comments

If you wish to comment on the permit application, proposed HCP, and associated documents, you may submit comments by any of the methods noted in the **ADDRESSES** section.

### Public Availability of Comments

Written comments we receive become part of the public record associated with this action. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comments, 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.

### 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 17.32) and the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500–1508 and 43 CFR 46).

### Jonathan Snyder,

Acting Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, Carlsbad, California.

[FR Doc. 2023–11226 Filed 5–25–23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4333–15–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[BLM\_NV\_FRN\_MO #4500170412]

### Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Greenlink North Project in White Pine, Eureka, Lander, Churchill, and Lyon Counties, Nevada

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Nevada State Office, Reno, Nevada, intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to consider the effects of a right-of-way (ROW) application for proposed transmission facilities from NV Energy for the Greenlink North Project. Publication of this notice initiates the scoping period to solicit public comments and identify issues to be analyzed in the Draft EIS.

**DATES:** This notice initiates the public scoping process for the EIS. The BLM requests the public submit comments concerning the scope of the analysis, potential alternatives, and identification of relevant information and studies by July 10, 2023. To afford the BLM the opportunity to consider issues raised by commenters in the Draft EIS, please ensure your comments are received prior to the close of the 45-day scoping period or 15 days after the last public scoping workshop, whichever is later.

The BLM will conduct a combination of virtual and in-person scoping workshops during the 45-day scoping period. The BLM will provide the public at least 15 days' notice prior to the workshops.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on issues related to the Greenlink North Project by any of the following methods:

- **Website:** <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2017033/510>.
- **Email:** [blm\\_nv\\_greenlinknorth@blm.gov](mailto:blm_nv_greenlinknorth@blm.gov).
- **Mail:** BLM, Nevada State Office, Attn: Greenlink North Project, 1340 Financial Boulevard, Reno, NV 89502.

Documents pertinent to this Project may also be examined at the Reno Nevada State Office.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Brian Buttazoni, Planning & Environmental Specialist, telephone (775) 861–6491; address 1340 Financial Boulevard, Reno, NV 89502; email [\[nv\\\_greenlinknorth@blm.gov\]\(mailto:nv\_greenlinknorth@blm.gov\). Contact us at this email address to have your name added to our mailing list. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 \(TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille\) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.](mailto:blm_</a></p>
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**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This document provides notice that the BLM Nevada State Office intends to prepare an EIS to consider the effects of a ROW application for the Greenlink North Project, announces the beginning of the scoping process, and seeks public input on issues to be analyzed in the Draft EIS. The proposed Project is in White Pine, Eureka, Lander, Churchill, and Lyon counties, Nevada. The proposed Project encompasses approximately 1,394 acres of public lands administered by the BLM.

### Purpose and Need

In compliance with NEPA and FLPMA, the BLM Nevada State Office intends to prepare an EIS to analyze the environmental impacts associated with NV Energy's application seeking to obtain a ROW grant for the Greenlink North Project.

Under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's) Open Access Transmission Tariff adopted in 18 CFR parts 35 and 385, Order No. 888 (75 FERC 61,080 (April 24, 1996)), NV Energy is required to plan and construct adequate transmission facilities to deliver the projected electric demand in Nevada. The State of Nevada is facing unprecedented changes in both system growth and resource requirements. By 2031, 1,000 megawatts (MW) of base load generation are planned for retirement, *i.e.*, will no longer be generating electricity. In addition, NV Energy has received more than 1,450 MW of new electric service requests in northern Nevada that will require additional transmission facilities. Currently, the maximum amount of power that can be provided in northern Nevada on the existing transmission network is 1,275 MW, and all 1,275 MW are being used by current network customers. The power demand in northern Nevada is forecast to increase by more than 700 MW within 10 years. New transmission infrastructure is required to deliver the anticipated electric power demand.

The Greenlink North Project would alleviate some of the capacity issues on existing transmission lines and enhance