

Federal action significantly effecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. This preliminary information may be revised due to public comment received in response to this notice and is based on information contained in the EA and HCP. An appropriate excerpt from the FONSI reflecting the Service's finding on the application is provided below:

Based on the analysis conducted by the Service, it has been determined that:

- Issuance of the ITP will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the effected species in the wild.
- The HCP contains provisions which sufficiently minimize and/or mitigate the impacts of issuing the ITP.
- Issuance of the ITP would not have significant effects on the human environment in the project area.
- The proposed take is incidental to an otherwise lawful activity.
- Adequate funding will be provided to implement the measures proposed in the submitted HCP and authorizing ITP.

The Service will also evaluate whether the issuance of a Section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with Section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service Section 7 consultation. The results of the biological opinion, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP.

Dated: November 4, 1997.

**H. Dale Hall,**

*Deputy Regional Director.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

#### Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for the Wildwash Sand and Gravel Mine, San Bernardino County, CA

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** E. L. Yeager Construction Company, Incorporated, of Riverside, California, has applied to the Fish and Wildlife Service for a 20-year incidental take permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). The Service proposes to issue an incidental take permit for the federally-listed threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus*

*agassizii*) at the proposed mine site, located in San Bernardino County, California. The permit also would include the state-listed threatened Mojave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*) and the unlisted loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), should these species be listed during the life of the permit. This notice announces the availability of the permit application and the environmental assessment. The permit application includes the habitat conservation plan for the Wildwash Sand and Gravel Mine and an implementing agreement. The Service requests comments on these documents, including the appropriateness of the "No Surprises" assurances contained in section 12.3.a of the implementing agreement. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be made available to the public.

**DATES:** Written comments should be received on or before December 18, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be addressed to Ms. Diane Noda, Field Supervisor, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Service, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, California 93003. Written comments may also be sent by facsimile to (805) 644-3958.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Mr. Ray Bransfield, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at the above address or call (805) 644-1766.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Availability of Documents

Individuals wishing copies of the documents should immediately contact the Service's Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office at the above referenced address or telephone. Documents also will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

##### Background

The permit applicant proposes phased mining of up to 100 acres of desert habitat adjacent to Interstate 15. Portions of the site are occupied by the desert tortoise. One loggerhead shrike was observed on site during biological surveys. The site is considered potentially suitable habitat for the Mojave ground squirrel, although surveys were not conducted for this species. During the initial mining phase, lasting 5 years, the applicant would mine sand and gravel on up to 35 acres of land. During the subsequent phase(s), lasting 15 years, the applicant would mine up to an additional 65 acres.

The applicant needs an incidental take permit from the Service because endangered and threatened wildlife species are protected against "take" pursuant to section 9 of the ESA. The term "take" means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect listed animal species, or attempt to engage in such conduct (16 U.S.C. 1538). The Service, however, may issue permits to take listed animal species if such taking is incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Regulations governing permits for threatened and endangered species are at 50 CFR 17.22 and 17.32.

As part of the permit application, the applicant prepared a habitat conservation plan that addresses the desert tortoise, Mojave ground squirrel, and loggerhead shrike. Pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Federal ESA, the Service proposes to issue a permit to the applicant for incidental take of the threatened desert tortoise, and for the Mojave ground squirrel and loggerhead shrike should Federal take authorization for these latter two species be necessary during the life of the permit. The ground squirrel and shrike would be named on the permit; however, incidental take authorization for these species would become effective only if they become listed under the Federal ESA.

The proposed sand and gravel mine would result in the loss of habitat for the desert tortoise, Mojave ground squirrel, and loggerhead shrike as the ground is disturbed and the vegetation communities are removed during mining activities. This mining could directly and indirectly affect these species.

The proposed action would authorize the incidental take of all desert tortoises on the 100 acre site in the form of harassment from being moved out of harm's way. Additionally, two desert tortoises may be taken in the form of direct mortality associated with mining activities and vehicle travel on the mine access road. If Mojave ground squirrels are present on site, they would likely be killed during the initial grading of the mining areas. Loggerhead shrikes are unlikely to be killed or injured by the proposed action.

The applicant's habitat conservation plan contains measures to minimize and/or mitigate the effects of the mining on the three species. Before mining begins, an amount of desert tortoise habitat equal to that being destroyed would be purchased and placed under management for recovery of the desert tortoise. A fence to prevent desert tortoises from entering the mine would be constructed under the supervision of

a biologist and the area enclosed by the fence would be systematically searched. All desert tortoises found would be relocated to adjacent habitat in a manner consistent with current handling procedures and guidelines. Workers at the mine site would be educated about the status of the desert tortoise and what to do if desert tortoises are found on access roads or during work activities. The applicant would ensure that trash is handled in a way that does not lure predators of the desert tortoise into the area.

The phasing of mining would reduce the numbers of Mojave ground squirrels killed at any given time. The acquisition and management of off-site habitat would be the primary means of compensating for the loss of this habitat and individual Mojave ground squirrels. Nest tree buffers and grading season restrictions would protect any loggerhead shrikes nesting on site. During reclamation of the site, trees would be planted that provide nesting habitat for the loggerhead shrike.

#### Environmental Assessment

The environmental assessment considers the environmental consequences of the proposed action and no action alternatives. A no take alternative was not feasible due to the size of the proposed mine and the unpredictable distribution of desert tortoises in the project area. Under the no action alternative, the Service would not issue an incidental take permit to the applicant and a habitat conservation plan would not be implemented. The applicant would not be able to proceed legally with mining as planned due to the presence of listed animal species in the area.

#### Authority

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA and Service regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (40 CFR 1506.6). The Service will evaluate the application, its associated documents, and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the application meets the requirements of the ESA. If the Service determines that the requirements are met, a permit will be issued for the incidental take of the listed species. A final decision on permit issuance will be made no sooner than 30 days from the date of this notice.

Dated: November 12, 1997.

**Thomas Dwyer,**

*Acting Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Geological Survey

#### Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC); Public Review of Utilities Data Content Standard

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

**SUMMARY:** The FGDC is conducting a public review of the Utilities Data Content Standard. The purpose of this public review is to provide data users and producers with an opportunity to comment on this standard in order to ensure that it meets their needs. Specifically, the FGDC request responses in three areas: (1) Identify any "ad hoc" or "defacto" standards being used that address data content for utilities systems; (2) identify additional feature classes, feature types, attributes, and domains not contained in this standard that are necessary to meet a user's requirements; (3) identify any issues that a user may have in implementing the information contained in the utilities standard into a system's feature schema.

Participants in the public review are encouraged to provide comments that address specific issues/changes/additions that may result in revisions to the draft utilities standard. All participants who make comments during the public review period will receive an acknowledgment of the receipt of their comment. After comments have been considered, participants will receive notification of how their comments were addressed. After the formal adoption of the standard by the FGDC, the revised standard and a summary analysis of the changes will be made available.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before March 6, 1998.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The standard can be downloaded from the following Internet address: <http://www.fgdc.gov/Standards/Documents/Standards/Utility>.

Requests for written copies of the standard should be addressed to "Utilities Data Content Standard", FGDC Secretariat (attn: Jennifer Fox), U.S. Geological Survey, 590 National Center, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, Virginia, 20192; or telephone

703-648-5514; facsimile 703-648-5755; or Internet "gdc@usgs.gov."

Reviewer's comments may be sent to the FGDC via Internet mail to: [gdc.util@www.fgdc.gov](mailto:gdc.util@www.fgdc.gov). Reviewer comments may also be sent to the FGDC Secretariat at the above address. Please send one hardcopy version of the comments and a soft copy version, preferably on a 3.5x3.5 diskette in WordPerfect 5.0 or 6.0/6.1 format.

For answers to questions related to the content of the standard please contact the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Facilities Working Group, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, General Engineering Branch 20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20314-1000; voice telephone numbers: Kevin Backe (703) 428-6505, Nancy Blyler facsimile telephone number: (703) 428-6991.

Dated: October 10, 1997.

**John Fischer,**

*Acting Chief, National Mapping Division, U.S. Geological Survey.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Park Service

#### Homestead National Monument of America, NE

**AGENCY:** National Park Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Park Service, Department of the Interior will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess the impact of alternative management concepts in a revised General Management Plan (GMP) for Homestead National Monument of America. The purpose of revising the GMP is to set forth the basic management philosophy for the next 10 to 15 years, and provide the strategies for addressing issues and achieving identified management objectives. Some of the issues needing addressing are: flooding threats to the park's developed infrastructure and operations much of which resides or occurs in a floodplain; the restored tallgrass prairie's relationship to the park's purpose; cultural landscape alterations misrepresenting the historic scene and integrity; adequacy of domestic water and sewerage infrastructure; Highway 4 and traffic safety; Freeman School's interpretive relationship and safe public access thereto; unfulfilled legislative mandates to serve as a repository for