

implementation of the following mitigation measures (*see* the IPHCP for additional details about these measures):

- To the maximum extent feasible, the City and County will require that any revegetation or landscaping activities associated with Covered Activities are conducted using locally derived source material (*i.e.*, seeds or cuttings) of plant species native to the Sandhills, with particular emphasis on the plant species identified in Appendix F of the IPHCP.

- Prior to beginning any ground-disturbing activities, the impacts of Covered Activities must be mitigated in one of the following ways: (1) The landowner must secure conservation credits for the Mount Hermon June beetle at a ratio of 1:1 in terms of acres of disturbance to numbers of credits (*e.g.*, a project with a 0.1-acre disturbance envelope will mitigate by securing 0.1 acre of conservation credits for the Mount Hermon June beetle) at the Zayante Sandhills Conservation Bank; or (2) The landowner must secure conservation credits for the Mount Hermon June beetle at a ratio of 1:1 in terms of acres of disturbance to numbers of credits (*e.g.*, a project with a 0.1-acre disturbance envelope will mitigate by securing 0.1 acre of conservation credits for the Mount Hermon June beetle) at another Service-approved conservation bank; this bank must also have an Operating Agreement with the County if the parcel is within the County's jurisdiction.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

The Draft EA considers the effects on the human environment of: (1) Our proposed action of issuing ITPs to the City and County based on the IPHCP, (2) a Reduced-Take Alternative to the proposed action, and (3) No Action Alternative. Under the Reduced-Take Alternative, we would propose to issue ITPs to the City and County where the total amount of development that would be covered under the IPHCP and related ITPs would be 100 acres, instead of 139 acres as is currently proposed. The maximum disturbance footprint would remain at 15,000 square feet (0.34 acre) per parcel. The boundaries of the 10 project units would remain unchanged as would the minimization and mitigation measures of the IPHCP's operating conservation plan. Under the No Action Alternative, the Service would not issue ITPs for the Mount Hermon June beetle to the City and County; thus, private landowners within the IPHCP area would have to apply to the Service individually to obtain an ITP.

Request for Comments

We are requesting comments on our preliminary determination that the proposed project will not have significant effects on the environment, and suggestions for issues we should consider in our analysis. The Service will use the EA to determine whether its decision can result in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared.

Based on our review of public comments that we receive in response to this notice, we may revise this preliminary determination.

Public Availability of Comments

Please direct any comments to the Service contact listed above in the **ADDRESSES** section, and any questions to the Service contact listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section. All comments and materials we receive, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail 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.

Next Steps

We will evaluate the IPHCP and comments we receive to determine whether the permit applications meet the requirements of section 10(a) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and complete our compliance with NEPA. If we determine that the applications meet these requirements, we will issue the permits for incidental take of the Mount Hermon June beetle. We will also evaluate whether issuance of section 10(a)(1)(B) permits would comply with section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service section 7 consultation. We will use the results of this consultation, in combination with the above findings, in our final analysis to determine whether or not to issue a permit. If the requirements are met, we will issue the permits to the applicants.

Authority

We provide this notice under section 10 of the Act (U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

Dated: March 24, 2011.

Paul B McKim,

Acting Deputy Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region, Sacramento, CA.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R8-ES-2011-N010; 1112-0000-80221-F2]

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Permits; Joint Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement, Riverside County, CA

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in coordination with the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC), are gathering information necessary for the preparation of a joint Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Supplemental EIR/EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This is a Supplemental EIR/EIS to the approved and certified September 2007 Final Recirculated EIR/EIS for the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (Plan, or CVMSHCP). The Supplemental EIR/EIS will consider the environmental effects associated with the issuance of an amended permit for the CVMSHCP, adding the City of Desert Hot Springs (City) and Mission Springs Water District (MSWD) as permittees under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended. We are furnishing this notice to announce the initiation of a public scoping period, during which we invite other agencies, Tribes, and interested persons to provide comments to identify and discuss the scope of issues and alternatives that should be addressed in the Supplemental EIR/EIS.

DATES: Written comments must be received by 5 p.m. on April 29, 2011.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Mr. Jim A. Bartel, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Suite 101, Carlsbad, CA 92011. Alternatively, you may submit comments by facsimile to (760) 918-0638.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carol Roberts, Division Chief, Coachella and Imperial Valleys (*see* **ADDRESSES**), telephone (760) 431-9440.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

In accordance with section 10(a)(2)(A) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC) is preparing a proposed habitat conservation plan (HCP) in support of an application for an amended permit from the Service to incidentally take listed species. Section 9 of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1538) and its implementing regulations prohibit the take of animal species listed as endangered or threatened. The term "take" is defined under the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1532) as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in such conduct. "Harm" is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) by Service regulations at 50 CFR 17.3 to include significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavior patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering. In certain circumstances, under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA, we may issue permits to authorize "incidental take" of listed species. "Incidental take" is defined by the ESA as take that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity. Regulations governing permits for threatened and endangered species are found at 50 CFR 17.32 and 50 CFR 17.22, respectively. Take of listed plant species on non-Federal lands is not prohibited under the ESA, and authorization under an ESA section 10 permit is not required. However, plant species may be included on a permit in recognition of the conservation benefits provided for them under the HCP. If the permit is issued, the CVCC would receive assurances for all species included on the incidental take permit under the Service's "No Surprises" regulations (50 CFR 17.22 (b)(5) and 17.32 (b)(5)).

Section 10 of the ESA specifies the requirements for the issuance of incidental take permits to non-Federal entities. Any proposed take must be incidental to otherwise lawful activities and must not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild. The impacts of such take must also be minimized and mitigated to the maximum extent practicable. To obtain an incidental take permit, an applicant must prepare a HCP describing the impact that would likely result from the proposed taking, the measures for minimizing and mitigating the take, the funding available to implement such measures,

alternatives to the taking, and the reason why such alternatives are not being implemented.

In February 2006, the Final CVMSHCP and associated Final EIR/EIS were released for review and approval by the participating jurisdictions and agencies as part of the application process to support the issuance of take authorizations by the Service (April 1, 2006, 71 FR 20719). However, in June 2006, the City voted not to approve the Plan. Subsequently, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) Executive Committee rescinded its approval of the Plan and directed that Desert Hot Springs be removed as a Permittee. The CVAG prepared and recirculated a revised Plan and associated EIR/EIS, which removed the City and made other modifications consistent with direction from the CVAG Executive Committee (March 30, 2007, 72 FR 15148).

The revised and recirculated CVMSHCP was approved and the associated Final Recirculated EIR/EIS was certified by CVAG and the CVCC in September 2007 and subsequently by all local Permittees by the end of October 2007. The State Permittees (Caltrans, CVMC, and California State Parks) approved the Plan and signed the Implementing Agreement as of March 2008. The Final Recirculated CVMSHCP, which did not include the City, received final State and Federal permits on September 9 and October 1, 2008, respectively.

However, in a reversal of their June 2006 decision to opt out of the Plan, the City Council reconsidered their decision and unanimously approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in October 2007, stating the parties' mutual intent to enter into negotiations for the City to join the CVMSHCP as a Permittee. The MOU was subsequently approved by the CVCC, CVAG, and the County of Riverside as of February 2008. Subsequent to the City's decision, the MSWD has also made the decision to join the CVMSHCP as a Permittee, and the addition of both entities as Permittees will be evaluated in the Supplemental EIR/EIS.

The Amendment to reinstate the City proposes that the Plan provisions and boundaries will be based on the February 2006 CVMSHCP, with modifications as described in the September 2007 Final Recirculated CVMSHCP to provide for the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District's future flood control facility. The current Plan boundaries would be amended to include all of the private lands within the City limits and restore the original

boundaries of the Upper Mission Creek/Big Morongo Canyon and Whitewater Canyon Conservation Areas within City limits. Adding the City as a Permittee requires a Major Amendment to the CVMSHCP in accordance with the requirements outlined in Section 6.12.4 of the Plan. The procedures outlined in Section 6.12.4 state that Major Amendments require the same process to be followed as for the original CVMSHCP approval, including California Environmental Quality Act and NEPA compliance. In addition, MSWD, not previously a participating agency, has also opted to join the CVMSHCP as a Permittee. MSWD and the City have proposed that a number of infrastructure projects be included as Covered Activities under the Plan. Covered Activities include certain activities carried out or conducted by Permittees, which receive take authorization under an USFWS section 10(a)(1)(B) permit and a State Natural Community Conservation Planning Permit, provided these activities are otherwise lawful. Details of the proposed Covered Activities for an amended permit will be provided in the amended CVMSHCP and Supplemental EIR/EIS.

Environmental Impact Statement

Prior to issuing an amendment to the permit, we will prepare a draft Supplemental EIR/EIS to analyze the environmental impacts associated with the issuance of the requested permit amendment and the implementation of the amended CVMSHCP by the City and the MSWD. The Fish and Wildlife Service is the NEPA lead for the Supplemental EIR/EIS, and we are responsible for the scope and content of the document. The Supplemental EIR/EIS will consider the proposed action, the issuance of a section 10(a)(1)(B) permit amendment under the ESA, No Action (no permit amendment), and a reasonable range of alternatives. A detailed description of the impacts of the proposed action and each alternative will be included in the Supplemental EIR/EIS.

The proposed action and alternatives will be evaluated against the No Action alternative, which assumes that no permit amendment will be issued. A range of alternatives will be considered and analyzed, representing varying levels of conservation and impacts. The alternatives to be considered for analysis in the Supplemental EIR/EIS may include: Variations in the scope of covered activities; variations in the location, amount, and type of conservation; variations in permit duration; or a combination of these

elements. The Supplemental EIR/EIS will also identify potentially significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on biological resources, land use, air quality, water quality, water resources, and socioeconomics, along with other environmental issues that could occur with the implementation of the proposed actions and alternatives. For all potentially significant impacts, the Supplemental EIR/EIS will identify avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to reduce these impacts, where feasible, to a level below significance.

Public Comments

Please direct any comments to the Service contact listed above in the **ADDRESSES** section, and any questions to the Service contact listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section. All comments and materials received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail 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.

Authority: This notice is provided under section 10(a) of the ESA and Service regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1506.6).

Dated: March 24, 2011.

Paul McKim,

Acting Deputy Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region, Sacramento, California.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[L51010000-FX0000-LVRWA09A2590-LLAZC02000; AZA34666]

Notice of Intent To Prepare a Possible Land Use Plan Amendment in Conjunction With the Proposed Quartzsite Solar Energy Project, La Paz County, AZ

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, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Yuma Field Office, Yuma, Arizona, proposes to amend the Yuma Resource Management Plan (RMP), in conjunction with the Quartzsite Solar Energy Project (QSEP), and by this notice is announcing the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues associated with the proposed RMP amendment.

DATES: This notice initiates the public scoping process for the proposed amendment. To be fully considered in the planning process, comments must be submitted in writing by April 29, 2011. The date(s) and location(s) of all scoping meetings will be announced at least 15 days in advance of the meeting(s) through local media and the following BLM Web site at: <http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en.html>. The BLM will provide additional opportunities for public participation upon publication of the draft planning document.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the plan amendment proposal by any of the following methods:

- *Web site:* <http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en.html>.
- *E-mail:* Quartzsite_Solar@blm.gov.
- *Fax:* 928-317-3250.
- *Mail:* Quartzsite Solar Energy Project, BLM, Yuma Field Office, Attention: Eddie Arreola, Supervisory Project Manager, 2555 East Gila Ridge Road, Yuma, Arizona 85365.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Eddie Arreola, Supervisory Project Manager, telephone 602-417-9505; e-mail eddie_arreola@blm.gov; address One North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, Arizona 85004.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Quartzsite Solar Energy LLC (QSE), a wholly owned subsidiary of Solar Reserve LLC, has requested a right-of-way authorization from the BLM to construct, operate, and maintain a 100-megawatt solar energy generation facility on 1,450 acres using concentrated solar power tower technology and has also applied for the approval of the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) to interconnect the facility's electric grid system into WAPA's existing 230 kilovolt transmission line paralleling State Route 95. QSE's proposed project is approximately 10 miles north of the Town of Quartzsite and approximately 1 mile to the east of State Route 95. WAPA, as the lead agency under NEPA for the project, published a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed

project in the **Federal Register** on January 14, 2010 (75 FR 2133). Public scoping meetings on the QSE project EIS were held on January 26, 2010, in Yuma, Arizona; January 27, 2010, in Parker, Arizona; and January 28, 2010, in Quartzsite, Arizona. The BLM is a cooperating agency for this EIS.

Preliminary environmental analysis by the BLM has determined that QSE's proposed project tower is in non-conformance with the Yuma RMP's Visual Resources Management (VRM) Class III management objectives. Authorization of the solar facility may therefore require an amendment to the Yuma RMP.

By this notice, the BLM is complying with requirements in 43 CFR 1610.2(c) to notify the public of potential amendments to land use plans, predicated on the findings of the NEPA analysis. The BLM will coordinate the RMP commenting process to satisfy the public involvement process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470(f)), as provided for in 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). Native American tribal consultations will be conducted in accordance with policy, and tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets, will be given due consideration.

The purpose of this public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis as it relates to the potential RMP amendment, including alternatives, and guide the process for developing the relevant NEPA analyses. At present, the BLM has identified the following preliminary issues, among others: Air quality, geologic resources, soils, water resources, threatened and endangered species, wildlife habitats, cultural and historical resources, paleontological resources, visual resources, land use, recreational resources, and public health and safety. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with other stakeholders that may be interested or affected by the BLM's decision on this project, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate as a cooperating agency for the development of the RMP amendment.

The NEPA document analyzing the RMP amendment will consider the impacts of the proposed action, alternatives, and the no action alternative. The BLM, as a cooperating agency for the project EIS, will work to coordinate the analysis associated with the RMP amendment with the project EIS. The public is invited to submit comments on the possible amendment