3. *Single-County Alternative.* The Single-County Alternative would essentially be limited to the extent of the permittees' jurisdictions. This would include both incidental take coverage and mitigation. It is assumed that the plan area for the Single-County Alternative would include Bexar County and the area within 10 miles outside of Bexar County (which would be generally sufficient to accommodate the City of San Antonio's current extra-territorial jurisdiction and possible future expansions). As habitat for the covered species within Bexar County only occurs in the northwest half of the county, the plan area for this alternative is still roughly equivalent to the geographic area of a single central Texas county.

Since all mitigation would occur in the vicinity of San Antonio, the price of land is substantially higher compared to more rural parts of the plan area. This alternative assumes that approximately 75 percent of the GCWA and BCVI preserve lands would be acquired in relatively ''suburban'' areas, and approximately 25 percent of the land would be acquired in relatively rural areas. This distribution of preserve lands would have a significant impact on the method of acquisition (fee simple vs. easement), the anticipated cost for acquisition, and the costs to manage suburban preserves compared to rural preserves. This alternative could cost nearly twice as much overall to implement over 30 years compared to the proposed alternative.

4. *Increased Mitigation Alternative.* The Increased Mitigation Alternative would implement recommendations passed by the SEP HCP's Biological Advisory Team (BAT) pertaining to mitigation for the GCWA and the karst invertebrates (BCVI mitigation would be the same as the Proposed Alternative). These recommendations were also strongly favored by many members of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

The BAT passed a recommendation calling for impacts to GCWA habitat within Bexar County to be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio (*i.e.*, 3 acres of habitat protected for each acre of direct habitat loss) and that at least 60 percent of that mitigation be placed within Bexar County or within 5 miles outside of Bexar County. The BAT also passed a recommendation that the karst preserve system be sized to achieve roughly twice the level of conservation specified by the Service's downlisting criteria for the karst invertebrates. For the purpose of modeling this alternative, it is assumed that all of the incidental take of the GCWA requested by the Permittees would be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio and that 60 percent of the GCWA preserve system would be acquired in relatively suburban parts of the Plan Area, with the remaining preserve lands acquired in rural areas. This recommendation is modeled as a requirement to acquire approximately 2,000 acres of recovery-quality karst preserves over 30 years, with at least two high-quality (100 acres each) and four medium-quality preserves (50 acres each) created in each of the five regions where the karst invertebrates occur.

Similar to the Single-County Alternative, this Increased Mitigation Alternative requires the acquisition of a large portion of the preserve system in relatively high-cost suburban or (for the karst preserves) urban areas, which would disproportionately increase the expected preserve acquisition and management costs. This alternative would achieve a higher level of conservation for the GCWA and karst invertebrates, but at a financial cost that would be approximately 275 percent higher than the proposed SEP HCP.

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 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 request in your comment that we withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public disclosure in their entirety.

Authority

We provide this notice under section 10(c) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.22 and 17.32) and NEPA and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

Joy E. Nicholopoulos,

Acting Regional Director, Southwest Region, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

[FR Doc. 2014–29525 Filed 12–18–14; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R5–ES–2014–0051; FXES111205000000–156–FF05E00000]

Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for Piping Plover, From the Town of Orleans, MA, and Availability of Proposed Habitat Conservation Plan

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service or ''we''), announce the availability of an application for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) and a proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) from the Town of Orleans (Town) for public review and comment. We received the permit application from the Town for incidental take of the threatened piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) resulting from the Town's authorization and management of over-sand vehicle (OSV) activities over the next 3 years. Our preliminary determination is that the proposed HCP qualifies as low-effect under our final Handbook for Habitat Conservation Planning and Incidental Take Permitting Process. To make this determination, we used our Low-Effect HCP Screening Form/Environmental Action Statement (EAS), the preliminary version of which is also available for review.

We provide this notice to (1) seek public comments on the proposed HCP and application; (2) seek public comments on our preliminary determination that the HCP qualifies as low-effect and is therefore eligible for a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and (3) advise other Federal and State agencies, affected Tribes, and the public of our intent to issue an ITP.

DATES: To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by January 20, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be submitted electronically by any one of the following methods:

Electronically: www.regulations.gov. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS–R5–ES–2014–0051.

U.S. mail: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R5–ES–2014–0051; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; MS: BPHC; 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, Virginia 22041–3803.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Susi vonOettingen, by U.S. mail at U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service, New England Field Office, 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300, Concord, NH 03301; or via phone at 603–223–2541.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: We received an application from the Town of Orleans for an ITP for take of the federally listed threatened piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) resulting from the Town's authorization and management of OSV activities over the next 3 years. To minimize and mitigate for the incidental take, the Town will implement a conservation program as described in its proposed HCP.

We prepared a preliminary EAS to comply with NEPA. The Service will evaluate whether the proposed action, issuance of an ITP to the Town of Orleans, is adequate to support a categorical exclusion.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*).

We are requesting comments on the proposed HCP and our preliminary determination that the plan qualifies as low effect under NEPA.

Availability of Documents

The proposed HCP and preliminary EAS are available on the New England Field Office's Web site at *http://www.fws.gov/newengland/,* or at *http://www.regulations.gov* under Docket Number FWS–R5–ES–2014–0051. Copies of the proposed HCP, subsequently filed addendum to the HCP, and preliminary EAS will also be available for public review during regular business hours at the New England Field Office (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**). Those who do not have access to the Web site or cannot visit our office may request copies by telephone at 603–223–2541, or by letter to the New England Field Office.

Background

Section 9 of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations prohibit the ''take'' of animal species listed as endangered or threatened. Take is defined under the ESA as to ''harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct'' (16 U.S.C. 1538). However, under section 10(a) 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 ITPs for threatened and endangered species, respectively, are found in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 17.22 and 50 CFR 17.32.

The Town of Orleans is seeking a permit for the incidental take of piping plover for a term of 3 years. Incidental take of this species may occur as a result of the Town's authorization and management of OSV activities along Nauset Beach South.

Proposed covered activities include authorization and implementation of the Town of Orleans OSV use program. The Town's proposed management of OSV activities would in one limited respect deviate from established State and Federal guidelines for managing recreational beaches to avoid the take of piping plovers. The Town proposes to add a late-breeding season OSV escort program across limited areas where OSVs would otherwise not be allowed due to nesting plovers' presence. The HCP and addendum explain how the escort program has been designed to minimize the potential to take unfledged plover chicks. It also contains a variety of on-site and off-site predator management measures developed to mitigate for the impact of the anticipated taking, and improve piping plover productivity.

The proposed action consists of the issuance of an ITP and implementation of the proposed HCP. One alternative to the proposed action was considered in the HCP: No action (*i.e.,* operation of the project without an ITP and without avoidance, minimization, or mitigation of piping plover impacts). This alternative was deemed not practicable by the Town because the project would not have the important protections of the ITP and would not have the conservation benefits proposed by the Town.

National Environmental Policy Act

We have made a preliminary determination that the Town of Orleans proposed HCP, including the proposed minimization and mitigation measures, will have a minor or negligible effect on the species covered in the plan, and that the plan qualifies as a ''low-effect'' HCP as described in the Service's HCP Handbook (61 FR 63854, December 2, 1996).

As further explained in the preliminary EAS, included for public review, our preliminary determination that the plan qualifies as a low-effect HCP is based on the following three criteria:

(1) Implementation of the plan would result in minor or negligible effects on federally listed, proposed, and candidate species and their habitats;

(2) Implementation of the plan would result in minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources prior to implementation of the mitigation measures; and

(3) Impacts of the plan, considered together with the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable similarly situated projects, would not result, over time, in cumulative effects to environmental values or resources that would be considered significant.

Therefore, we initially conclude that the proposed ITP would qualify for a categorical exclusion under the NEPA, as provided by the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM 2 Appendix 1 and 516 DM 8). Based on our review of public comments that we receive in response to this notice, we may revise this preliminary determination.

Next Steps

We will evaluate the proposed HCP and comments we receive to determine whether the permit application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). We will also evaluate whether issuance of a section 10(a)(1)(B) permit would comply with section 7 of the ESA 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 to issue a permit. If the requirements are met, we will issue the permit to the applicant.

Public Comments

The Service invites the public to comment on the proposed HCP and preliminary EAS during a 30-day public comment period (see **DATES**). You may submit written comments by one of the methods in the **ADDRESSES** section.

We will post all public comments and information received electronically or via hard copy on *http://www.regulations.gov.* All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and will be available to the public. 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—will be publicly available.

If you submit a hard copy comment that includes personal identifying information, you may request at the top of your document that we withhold this information from public review. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

Martin Miller,

Acting Assistant Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 2014–29751 Filed 12–18–14; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[LLORV000.51010000.ER0000. LVRWH09H0480; OROR065375; IDI036029 HAG 14–0196]

Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Land-use Plan Amendments for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project

AGENCIES: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vale District Office announces the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Land-Use Plan Amendments (LUPAs) for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (Project) and by this notice is announcing the opening of the public comment period.

DATES: The Draft EIS is now available for public review. To be considered in the Final EIS, written comments on the Draft EIS must be received within 90 days after the Environmental Protection Agency's publication in the **Federal Register** of a Notice of Availability (NOA) of this Draft EIS.

All public meetings or other opportunities for public involvement related to the Project will be announced to the public by the BLM at least 15 days in advance through the public Web site at: *http://www.boardmanto hemingway.com,* project mailings, and local media news releases.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Draft EIS have been sent to affected Federal agencies, state and local governments and public libraries in the Project area. The Draft EIS and supporting documents will be available electronically on the project Web site at: *http://www.boardmantohemingway.com.* Compact Disc copies of the document are available through request on this project Web site address. A list of locations where copies of the Draft EIS are available for public inspection can be found in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.

Written comments may be submitted by the following methods:

- email: *comment@boardmantohemingway.com*
- mail: Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project, P.O. Box 655, Vale, OR 97918
- courier or hand delivery: Bureau of Land Management, Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918
- no faxed or anonymous comments will be accepted

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tamara Gertsch, BLM National Project Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918, or by telephone at 307–775–6115. Any persons wishing to be added to the project mailing list of interested parties may write or call Ms. Gertsch at the address and phone number above.

Persons who use telecommunication devices for the deaf may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 307–775–6115 to contact Ms. Gertsch during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or questions with the above individual regarding the project. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Idaho Power Company submitted applications to the BLM for a right-of-way (ROW) grant, the United States Forest Service (USFS) for a special use authorization, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) for an authorization/permit, to use federal lands for portions of a proposed 300 mile 500-kilovolt (kV) single-circuit, alternating-current transmission line and ancillary facilities between a new or existing substation near Boardman, Oregon, and the Hemingway Substation, near Melba, Idaho. Idaho Power Company filed its applications in December 2007 and then filed revised applications in November 2011 and May 2012 to reflect changes to the proposed action. Idaho Power Company's objective for the Project is to provide additional capacity to connect transmission between the Pacific Northwest and Intermountain Regions in order to alleviate existing transmission constraints and to ensure sufficient capacity that will enable Idaho Power Company to meet present and forecasted load requirements. The Project description includes a rebuild of two separate 138 and 69-kV lines into double circuit monopole structures for short distances. Electrical equipment to connect the 500 kV transmission line would be installed at the endpoint substations. The proposed ROW width is 250 feet for the 500 kV portion of the line and 100 feet for two 138/69 kV rebuild sections of the line. The BLM's purpose and need for action is to respond to Idaho Power Company's ROW application.

The BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an EIS on September 12, 2008 (73 FR 52944), and held public scoping meetings in October 2008. On July 27, 2010 (75 FR 44008), the BLM published a revised NOI to Prepare an EIS in response to substantive changes in Idaho Power Company's proposal as submitted in the revised application, and sought public input on the issues associated with the project. The issues brought forward from the scoping comments for analysis in the Draft EIS include:

- Use of Federal versus private property;
- Potential impacts to private agricultural operations and irrigated lands and other existing land use;
- Potential impacts to Greater Sage-grouse;
- Proximity to other protected wildlife and habitats (*e.g.,* fish and water resources, plants, Washington ground squirrel);
- Potential impacts to Department of Defense operations;
- Potential impacts to lands with wilderness characteristics;
- Potential impacts to visual resources, including visual impacts to cultural resources;
- Potential impacts to historic properties (*e.g.,* Oregon Trail) and paleontological resources;
- Native American concerns;
- Potential impacts to air quality;
- Potential impacts of noxious weeds and invasive species;
- Potential Socio-economic impacts;
- Potential health effects from electro-magnetic fields; and
- Noise and potential line interference with electronic devices.

The scoping comments and preliminary alternatives, some of which were eliminated from further consideration are documented and discussed in the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Project Siting Study Report available online at: *http://www.boardmantohemingway.com/documents/B2H_Siting_Study_8–17–10.pdf.* The Draft EIS analyzes the environmental consequences of granting a ROW to Idaho Power Company to construct, operate, and maintain, the transmission project. The Draft EIS also analyzes: (1) The consequences of the