

## Public Availability of Comments

Written comments we receive become part of the administrative 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.

## Next Steps

If we decide to issue permits to any of the applicants listed in this notice, we will publish a notice in the **Federal Register**.

## Authority

We publish this notice under section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

**Peter Erickson,**

*Acting Chief of Ecological Services, Pacific Southwest Region, Sacramento, California.*

[FR Doc. 2020-03818 Filed 2-25-20; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4333-15-P**

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R3-ES-2018-N131;  
FXES1113030000-189-FF03E00000]

### Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Draft Recovery Plan for the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability and request for public comment.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the availability of the draft recovery plan for the threatened eastern massasauga rattlesnake. We request review and comment on this draft recovery plan from local, State, and Federal agencies, and the public.

**DATES:** In order to be considered, comments must be received on or before March 27, 2020.

**ADDRESSES:** *Document availability:* You may obtain a copy of the draft recovery plan by one of the following methods:

- *U.S. Mail:* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Chicago Ecological Services Field Office, Attention: Louise Clemency; 230 South Dearborn, Suite 2398, Chicago, IL 60604.
- *Telephone:* Louise Clemency, 312-216-4720.
- *Internet:* Download the document at the Service's Midwest Region website at <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/reptiles/eama/index.html>.

*Comment Submission:* You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- *Mail or Hand-Delivery:* Submit written comments to the above U.S. mail address.
- *Fax:* 312-837-1788, Attention: Louise Clemency. Please include "Eastern Massasauga DRP" in the subject line.
- *Email:* [louise\\_clemency@fws.gov](mailto:louise_clemency@fws.gov). Please include "Eastern Massasauga DRP" in the subject line.

For additional information about submitting comments, see Availability of Public Comments in **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Louise Clemency, by one of the methods in **ADDRESSES**.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of the draft recovery plan for the threatened eastern massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*, "EMR") for public review and comment. The draft recovery plan includes objective, measurable criteria and management actions as may be necessary for removal of the species from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. We request review and comment on this draft recovery plan from local, State, and Federal agencies, and the public.

### Recovery Planning

Section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act), requires the development of recovery plans for listed species, unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species. Also pursuant to section 4(f) of the Act, a recovery plan must, to the maximum extent practicable, include (1) a description of site-specific management actions as may be necessary to achieve the plan's goals for the conservation and survival of the species; (2) objective, measurable criteria that, when met, would support a determination under section 4(a)(1) that the species should be removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened

Species; and (3) estimates of the time and costs required to carry out those measures needed to achieve the plan's goal and to achieve intermediate steps toward that goal.

The Service has revised its approach to recovery planning. The revised process is intended to reduce the time needed to develop and implement recovery plans, increase recovery plan relevancy over a longer timeframe, and add flexibility to recovery plans so they can be adjusted to new information or circumstances. A recovery plan will include statutorily required elements (objective, measurable criteria, site-specific management actions, and estimates of time and costs), along with a concise introduction and our strategy for how we plan to achieve species recovery. The recovery plan is supported by a separate Species Status Assessment. The essential component to flexible implementation under this recovery process is producing a separate working document called the Recovery Implementation Strategy (implementation strategy). The implementation strategy steps down from the more general description of actions in the recovery plan to detail the specific, near-term activities needed to implement the recovery plan. The implementation strategy will be adaptable by being able to incorporate new information without having to concurrently revise the recovery plan, unless changes to statutory elements are required. The implementation strategy will be developed following publication of the final recovery plan and will be made available on the Service's website at that time.

### Species Background

The EMR is a small pit viper that occurred historically in 10 States (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) and in Ontario, Canada. It is believed that populations have been extirpated in at least two States (Minnesota and Missouri). The species is impacted by a number of threats. The loss of habitat was historically, and continues to be, the threat with greatest impact to the species, either through loss of habitat to development or through changes in habitat structure due to vegetative succession. Poaching, either by persecution or illegal collection for the pet trade, is also a continuing threat. Disease, new or increasingly prevalent, is another emerging threat to the EMR. Additionally, this species is vulnerable to the effects of climate change through increasing intensity of winter droughts and increasing risk of summer floods,

particularly in the southwestern part of its range. (Refer to the Species Status Assessment Report (Szymanski et al. 2016) for a full discussion of the species' biology and threats.) Under the Act, the Service added the eastern massasauga rattlesnake as a threatened species to the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife on September 30, 2016 (81 FR 67193).

## Recovery Plan

### Recovery Strategy

The recovery strategy for the EMR includes addressing the threats of habitat loss due to development, conversion of habitat to agriculture, changes to land cover due to succession by invasive woody species, persecution or poaching, effects of climate change (flooding or drought), and emerging diseases. Maintaining healthy populations will require protecting sufficient quantity of high-quality habitat and the reduction or management of threats where these populations occur. To maximize use of limited resources, we need to identify, then focus management and protection on, specific populations that will ensure that the species' breadth of adaptive diversity is maintained. The strategy also includes increasing public tolerance and support for EMR conservation by working with landowners, partners, and the public. Lastly, successful recovery will necessitate an adaptive management approach. Using an adaptive management framework and monitoring during recovery implementation will allow us to evaluate how to best manage for suitable habitat conditions, protect against disease epidemics, and lessen the effects of climate change to ensure that the recovery actions are effective in recovering the EMR.

### Recovery Criteria

The ultimate recovery goal is to remove the eastern massasauga rattlesnake from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (delist) by ensuring the long-term viability of the species in the wild. In the recovery plan, we define the following delisting criteria based on the best available information on the species:

1. The probability of continued persistence over 50 years is 95 percent within each of 3 conservation units.
2. An adequate quantity and configuration of land is being managed and is expected to continue to be managed in a way that will support EMR populations such that a probability of persistence of 95 percent over 50

years in each of the 3 conservation units is maintained.

3. Threats from climate change and disease are addressed such that a probability of persistence of 95 percent over 50 years in each of the 3 conservation units is maintained.

The map showing the three species conservation units is available on the internet at <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/reptiles/eama/index.html>.

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### Authority

The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

**Lori H. Nordstrom,**

*Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Midwest Region.*

[FIR Doc. 2020-03778 Filed 2-25-20; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4333-15-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

**[AA-8104-02;  
20X.LLA944000.L14100000.HY0000.P]**

### Alaska Native Claims Selection

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

**ACTION:** Notice of decision approving lands for conveyance.

**SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) hereby provides constructive notice that it will issue an appealable decision approving conveyance of the surface and subsurface estates in certain lands to Ahtna, Incorporated, an Alaska Native regional corporation, pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA).

**DATES:** Any party claiming a property interest in the lands affected by the decision may appeal the decision in accordance with the requirements of 43 CFR part 4 within the time limits set out in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section.

**ADDRESSES:** You may obtain a copy of the decision from the Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, 222 West Seventh Avenue, #13, Anchorage, AK 99513-7504.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Matthew R. Lux, BLM Alaska State Office, 907-271-3176, or [mlux@blm.gov](mailto:mlux@blm.gov). The BLM Alaska State Office may also be contacted via Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) through the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. The relay service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the BLM. The BLM will reply during normal business hours.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** As required by 43 CFR 2650.7(d), notice is hereby given that the BLM will issue an appealable decision to Ahtna, Incorporated. The decision approves conveyance of the surface and subsurface estates in certain lands pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601, *et seq.*). The lands are located in the vicinity of Chitina, Alaska, and are described as: Mineral Survey No. 2325, Alaska. Containing 61.653 acres.

The decision addresses public access easements, if any, to be reserved to the United States pursuant to Sec. 17(b) of ANCSA (43 U.S.C. 1616(b)), in the lands described above.

The BLM will also publish notice of the decision once a week for four consecutive weeks in the "Anchorage Daily News" newspaper.

Any party claiming a property interest in the lands affected by the decision may appeal the decision in accordance with the requirements of 43 CFR part 4 within the following time limits:

1. Unknown parties, parties unable to be located after reasonable efforts have been expended to locate, parties who fail or refuse to sign their return receipt, and parties who receive a copy of the decision by regular mail which is not certified, return receipt requested, shall have until March 27, 2020 to file an appeal.

2. Parties receiving service of the decision by certified mail shall have 30 days from the date of receipt to file an appeal.

Parties who do not file an appeal in accordance with the requirements of 43 CFR part 4 shall be deemed to have waived their rights. Notices of appeal transmitted by facsimile will not be accepted as timely filed.

**Matthew R. Lux,**

*Land Law Examiner, Adjudication Section.*

[FIR Doc. 2020-03850 Filed 2-25-20; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4310-JA-P**