

INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION**Sunshine Act Meetings**

TIME AND DATE: August 30, 2021, 2:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

PLACE: Via tele-conference.

STATUS: Meeting of the IAF Board of Director, closed to the public as provided for by 22 CFR 1004.4(b)

MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED:

- Executive Session

CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Aswathi Zachariah, General Counsel, (202) 683–7118.

For Dial-in Information Contact:

Karen Vargas, Board Liaison, (202) 524–8869.

The Inter-American Foundation is holding this meeting under the Government in the Sunshine Act, 5 U.S.C. 552(b).

Aswathi Zachariah,

General Counsel.

[FR Doc. 2021–18569 Filed 8–25–21; 11:15 am]

BILLING CODE 7025–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Fish and Wildlife Service**

[Docket No. FWS–R8–ES–2021–0094; FF08ESMF00–FXES11140800000–212]

DifWind VII & IX Reclamation Project, Alameda County, California; Draft Categorical Exclusion and Draft Habitat Conservation Plan

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of permit application; request for comment.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the receipt of an application from DifWind Farms Limited VII and DifWind Farms Limited IX (collectively, the applicants) for a 6-year incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), along with the applicants' draft habitat conservation plan. We also announce the availability of the associated draft National Environmental Policy Act categorical exclusion screening form. The applicants have applied for an incidental take permit under the ESA for the DifWind VII & IX Reclamation Project in Alameda County, California. The permit would authorize the take of two species incidental to the reclamation of a decommissioned commercial wind energy project. We invite the public and local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies to comment on the application and related documents. Before issuing the requested permit, we

will take into consideration any information that we receive during the public comment period.

DATES: We must receive your written comments on or before September 27, 2021.

ADDRESSES:

Obtaining Documents: The draft categorical exclusion screening form (CatEx), draft habitat conservation plan (HCP), and any comments and other materials that we receive are available for public inspection at <http://www.regulations.gov> in Docket No. FWS–R8–ES–2021–0094.

Submitting Comments: To submit comments, please use one of the following methods, and note that your information requests or comments are in reference to the draft CatEx, draft HCP, or both.

- **Internet:** Submit comments at <http://www.regulations.gov> under Docket No. FWS–R8–ES–2021–0094.
- **U.S. Mail:** Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS–R8–ES–2021–0094; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: PRB/3W; 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, VA 22041–3803.

For more information, see Public Comments and Public Availability of Comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Vincent Griego, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, or Ryan Olah, Chief, Coast Bay Division, Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, by phone at 916–414–6600 or via the Federal Relay Service at 800–877–8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the receipt of an application from DifWind Farms Limited VII, and DifWind Farms Limited IX (collectively, the applicants), for a 6-year incidental take permit (ITP) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), along with the applicants' draft habitat conservation plan. We also announce the availability of the associated draft National Environmental Policy Act categorical exclusion screening form (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*). The applicants have applied for an incidental take permit under the ESA for the DifWind VII & IX Reclamation Project in Alameda County, California. The permit would authorize the take of two species incidental to the reclamation of a decommissioned commercial wind energy project. We invite the public and local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies to comment on the application and related documents. Before issuing the requested permit, we will take into

consideration any information that we receive during the public comment period.

An ITP application requires the preparation of an HCP with measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the impacts of incidental take to the maximum extent practicable. The applicants prepared and submitted for Service review their Draft DifWind VII & IX Reclamation Project Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA. The Service then prepared a draft categorical exclusion screening form consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), and its implementing regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 40 CFR 1501.4, and now is making it available in accordance with provisions within 40 CFR 1506.6. The purpose of the screening form is to confirm that the agency action is within a category of actions previously determined, pursuant to agency NEPA procedures, not to normally have significant effects on the natural and human environment, and thus does not require further NEPA evaluation, and that there are no extraordinary circumstances that indicate that an otherwise-excluded action may warrant further NEPA evaluation.

Background

Section 9 of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531–1544 *et seq.*) and Federal regulations (50 CFR 17) prohibit the taking of fish and wildlife species listed as endangered or threatened under section 4 of the ESA. Regulations governing allowable exceptions to prohibited take of endangered and threatened species via permits are at 50 CFR 17.22 and 17.32. For more about the Federal habitat conservation plan program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/hcp.pdf>.

National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

The proposed permit issuance triggers the need for compliance with NEPA. The draft CatEx was prepared to analyze the impacts of issuing an ITP based on the draft HCP and to inform the public of the proposed action, any alternatives, and associated impacts, and to disclose any irreversible commitments of resources. The draft CatEx further confirms if an action is within a category of categorically excluded activities indicating further NEPA evaluation is not necessary.

Proposed Action Alternative

Under the proposed action alternative, the Service would issue an ITP to the applicants for a period of 6 years for certain covered activities (described below). The applicants have requested an ITP for two covered species (described below), which are listed as threatened under the ESA.

Covered Activities

The proposed ESA section 10 ITP would allow take of two covered species from covered activities in the proposed HCP area. The applicants are requesting incidental take authorization to complete the decommissioning and removal of a wind energy project originally installed in the 1980s and 1990s. The applicants have completed non-ground-disturbing work, including the removal of wind turbine blades, nacelles, turbine towers, transformers, meteorological masts, and other minor aboveground facilities. Under the HCP, the applicants would complete the decommissioning and removal of approximately 14 miscellaneous concrete pads, 17 junction boxes, 308 turbine foundations, 41 concrete pad-mount transformer pads, and would restore approximately 14.7 miles of access roads. The applicants seek a 6-year permit to match the projected time necessary to complete the activities associated with this proposed decommissioning and reclamation project, including ground-disturbing activities, and remedial actions, if necessary, to ensure restoration of the project site.

The applicants propose actions to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the effects to the Covered Species associated with the Covered Activities through the implementation of the HCP. The proposed mitigation measures in the HCP closely follow the avoidance and minimization measures outlined in the East Alameda Conservation Strategy (EACCS). The measures generally require preconstruction surveys; avoidance and monitoring during construction; and best management practices for restoration of Covered Species habitat.

Covered Species

The California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) (central California distinct population segment), and the California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), both federally listed as threatened, are proposed to be included as covered species in the proposed HCP.

Alternatives

In addition to the proposed action alternative in the applicant's HCP, as

required by the ESA, the HCP considers several alternatives to such action's potential taking: (1) The No-Take Alternative; (2) the Reduced Take Alternative, and (3) an Other Alternative.

No-Action Alternative

Under the no-action alternative, the Service would not issue an ITP to the applicants, and the reclamation would not be completed. The no-action alternative is not feasible, based on the purpose and need of the project. The existing wind energy project has been partially decommissioned, but the applicants are responsible for comprehensive decommissioning and reclamation activities. Ground disturbance during the final phases of decommissioning/reclamation activities is unavoidable, along with plausible incidental take of covered species. For these reasons, the no-action alternative has been rejected.

Reduced Take Alternative

Under the reduced take alternative, the applicants considered only removing turbine foundations that were located further away from aquatic habitat for the covered species. The Service would issue a permit, and the applicants would implement the proposed mitigation measures. While this reduced take alternative would reduce the amount of California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog habitat affected, it was determined to be infeasible because the applicants have previous agreements with the landowner to remove all project components during decommissioning. The applicants would not be able to meet their obligations with landowners under this alternative, so the reduced take alternative was rejected.

Other Alternative

The applicants also considered restoring fewer miles of roads as an alternative. The Service would issue a permit, and the applicants would implement the proposed mitigation measures. While this other alternative would reduce by a very small amount the amount of California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog habitat initially affected, the long-term value of rehabilitating areas for future habitat would be lost. Additionally, it was determined to be generally infeasible because the applicants have previous agreements with the landowner to remove all project components during decommissioning. So for these reasons, the reduced take alternative was rejected.

Public Comments

We request data, comments, new information, or suggestions from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, Tribes, industry, or any other interested party on this notice, the draft CatEx, and the draft HCP. We particularly seek comments on the following:

(1) Biological information concerning the species;

(2) Relevant data concerning the species;

(3) Additional information concerning the range, distribution, population size, and population trends of the species;

(4) Current or planned activities in the subject area and their possible impacts on the species; and

(5) The presence of archeological sites, buildings and structures, historic events, sacred and traditional areas, and other historic preservation concerns, which are required to be considered in project planning by the National Historic Preservation Act; and

(6) Any other environmental issues that should be considered with regard to the proposed development and permit action.

Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—might 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

Issuance of an ITP is a Federal proposed action subject to compliance with NEPA and section 7 of the ESA. We will evaluate the application, associated documents, and any public comments we receive to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the ESA. If we determine that those requirements are met, we will conduct an intra-Service consultation under section 7 of the ESA for the Federal action for the potential issuance of an ITP. If the intra-Service consultation confirms that issuance of the ITP will not jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species, or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat, we will issue a permit to the applicant for the incidental take of the California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog from the

implementation of the covered activities described in the draft HCP. We will make the final permit decision no sooner than 30 days after publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**.

Authority

We publish this notice in compliance with section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531–1544 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations at 40 CFR 17.22 and 17.32; and in furtherance of objectives under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347 *et seq.*), and its implementing regulations at 40 CFR 1500–1508.

Kim S. Turner,

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

[FR Doc. 2021–18449 Filed 8–26–21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R2–ES–2020–N156;
FXES11140200000–212–FF02ENEH00]

Application for an Incidental Take Permit; Habitat Conservation Plan and Draft Environmental Assessment for Wildhorse Mountain Wind Project, Pushmataha County, Oklahoma

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft environmental assessment (dEA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and application for an incidental take permit (ITP) supported by a habitat conservation plan (HCP) for the operation of an existing wind facility, the Wildhorse Mountain Wind project (project), in Pushmataha County, Oklahoma. Wildhorse Wind Energy, LLC (Applicant) has applied for an ITP under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The requested ITP, which would be in effect for a period of 30 years, if granted, would cover incidental take of the federally endangered Indiana bat and threatened northern long-eared bat. The potential incidental take would be associated with activities associated with the operation of the existing wind project. We invite public comments on the permit application, proposed HCP, and dEA.

DATES: *Submission of Comments:* We will accept comments received or

postmarked on or before September 27, 2021.

ADDRESSES:

Obtaining documents: The documents this notice announces are available for public inspection by any of the following means.

Internet: You may obtain electronic copies of the dEA and HCP on the Oklahoma Field Office website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/oklahoma/>.

U.S. Mail: You may obtain the documents at the following addresses. In your request for documents, please note that your request is in reference to the Wildhorse Mountain Wind Project HCP and dEA.

- *EA and HCP:* A limited number of CD-ROM and printed copies of the EA and HCP are available, by request, from Ken Collins, Acting Field Supervisor, Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office, Tulsa OK, telephone 918–581–7458.

- The ITP application is available by mail from the Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1306, Room 6034, Albuquerque, NM 87103.

Submitting Comments

You may submit written comments by one of the following methods:

- *Email:* okes_nepa@fws.gov; or
- *Facsimile:* 918–581–7467, Attn: OKES Wildhorse Mountain Wind Project HCP EA.

- *U.S. mail:* Field Supervisor, Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office, 9014 East 21st Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74129–1428.

Please specify that your information request or comments concern the Wildhorse Mountain Wind Project EA/HCP.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ken Collins, by U.S. mail at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office (at the Tulsa street address above), or by phone at 918–581–7458. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), please call the Federal Information Relay Service at 800–877–8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Applicant has applied to the Service for an ITP under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The requested ITP, which would be in effect for a period of 30 years, if granted, would authorize incidental take of the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) during the operation of an existing wind facility in Pushmataha County, Oklahoma.

In total, the plan area is 13,731.6 acres, including the 13,641.6-acre wind facility and an off-site mitigation area (90 acres of contiguous forested habitat in Pushmataha County). The facility, constructed in 2019, consists of 29 wind turbines, with a total generating capacity of 100 megawatts.

Activities potentially causing take include the operation of the existing 29 wind turbines. The Applicant has proposed a HCP that would be implemented to address project impacts to the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat.

We are notifying the public of the Applicant's proposal of an HCP and request to the Service for an ITP to cover incidental take of the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat associated with the operation of the Wildhorse Mountain Wind facility. In addition, we are notifying the public of the Service's preparation of a dEA regarding impacts of the requested action or feasible alternatives, of an opportunity for public comment on our action, and of our intention to finalize the environmental assessment after consideration of public comment.

Background

Section 9 of the ESA prohibits “take” of fish and wildlife species listed as endangered or threatened (16 U.S.C. 1531–1544). Under section 3 of the ESA, the term “take” means 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. 1532(19)). The term “harm” is further defined by regulation as an act which actually kills or injures wildlife. Such acts may include significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering (50 CFR 17.3).

Under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA, the Secretary of the Interior may authorize the taking of federally listed species if such taking occurs incidental to otherwise legal activities and where a conservation plan has been developed under ESA section 10(a)(2)(A) that describes (1) the impact that will likely result from such taking; (2) the steps an Applicant will take to minimize and mitigate that take to the maximum extent practicable, and the funding that will be available to implement such steps; (3) the alternative actions to such taking that an Applicant considered and the reasons why such alternatives are not being utilized; and (4) other measures that the Service may require as being necessary or appropriate for the purposes of the plan. Issuance criteria