

Commission Act of 2007 (9/11 Act).<sup>1</sup> These statutory programs led to the development of the Intermodal Security Training Exercise Program (I-STEP) for the Transportation Systems Sector (TSS). Within the I-STEP program, EXIS is an interactive resource for the TSS.

*Number of Respondents:* 9,551.

*Estimated Annual Burden Hours:* An estimated 4,804 hours annually.<sup>2</sup>

Dated: November 22, 2017.

**Christina A. Walsh,**

*TSA Paperwork Reduction Act Officer, Office of Information Technology.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R2-ES-2017-N108;  
FXES1114020000-178-FF02ENEH00]

#### Notice of Availability; Draft Environmental Assessment for a Draft Amendment To Add the Northern Mexican Gartersnake to the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of documents; request for public comment.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as the lead Federal agency, along with the Bureau of Reclamation as a cooperating agency and the implementing agency for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP), announce the availability of a draft environmental assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act. The draft EA evaluates the impacts of, and alternatives to, amendment of the existing Endangered Species Act permit for the LCR MSCP, in order to add the northern Mexican gartersnake as a covered species, and the impacts of implementation of the amended LCR MSCP.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, written comments must be received or postmarked on or before December 28, 2017. Any comments we receive after the closing date or not postmarked by the closing date may not be considered in the final decision on this action.

<sup>1</sup> See 9/11 Act secs. 1407 (public transportation, codified at 6 U.S.C. 1136(a)), 1516 (railroads, codified at 6 U.S.C. 1166), and 1533 (over-the-road buses, codified at 6 U.S.C. 1183).

<sup>2</sup> TSA made an error in its calculations and reported the burden in the 60-day notice as 4,820 hours annually. The correct calculation is 4,804.

#### **ADDRESSES:** *Obtaining Documents:*

- *Internet:* You may obtain copies of the draft EA, which includes the draft amendment to the LCR MSCP, on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Web site at <https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/>.

- *U.S. Mail:* A limited number of CD-ROM and printed copies of the draft EA and associated draft amendment to the LCR MSCP are available, by request, from the Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Field Office, 9828 N. 31st Avenue #C3, Phoenix, AZ 85051; by phone at 602-242-0210; or by fax at 602-242-2513. Please note that your request is in reference to the draft amended LCR MSCP for northern Mexican gartersnake.

- *In-Person:* Copies of the draft EA and associated draft amendment to the LCR MSCP are also available for public inspection and review at the following locations, by appointment and written request only, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 500 Gold Avenue SW., Room 6034, Albuquerque, NM 87102.

- Arizona Ecological Services Office (Phoenix; see information under *U.S. Mail*, above).

*Submitting Comments:* You may submit comments by one of the following methods.

- *U.S. Mail:* Arizona Ecological Services Office (Phoenix; see information under *U.S. Mail, Obtaining Documents*, above).

- *Electronically:* [incomingazcorr@fws.gov](mailto:incomingazcorr@fws.gov) or [fw2\\_hcp\\_permits@fws.gov](mailto:fw2_hcp_permits@fws.gov).

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Steve Spangle, Field Supervisor (see contact information for Arizona Ecological Services Field Office (Phoenix) in **ADDRESSES**).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), as the lead Federal agency, along with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) as a cooperating agency and the implementing agency for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP), announce the availability of a draft environmental assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*; NEPA). The draft EA evaluates the impacts of, and alternatives to, amendment of an existing permit for the LCR MSCP under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), in order to add the northern Mexican gartersnake (*Thamnophis eques*) as a covered species, as well as the impacts of implementation of the amended LCR MSCP.

Under the proposed amendment, there are no proposed changes to covered actions; no changes to the covered area; and no extension of the time period of permit coverage. Permittees with existing LCR MSCP certificates of inclusion are bound by the terms and conditions of their existing requirements. The amendment is not expected to trigger any new environmental consequences that were not identified in the LCR MSCP final programmatic environmental impact statement/environmental impact report (LCR MSCP EIS/EIR), which was prepared for the original LCR MSCP, or any new impacts to local economies or cultural resources. Nor are there any expected changes to direct, indirect, and cumulative effects, beyond those identified for biological resources.

Coverage for incidental take of the northern Mexican gartersnake will include the entire program area, as defined in the record of decision (ROD) for the LCR MSCP EIS/EIR, dated April 2005. This includes areas up to and including the full-pool elevation of Lakes Mead, Mohave, and Havasu and the historical floodplain of the Colorado River to the Southerly International Boundary with Mexico. The ROD also included off-site conservation areas for implementing the LCR MSCP. The LCR MSCP, with Reclamation as the implementing agency, will manage 512 acres of LCR MSCP-created marsh for the northern Mexican gartersnake. Of the 5,940 acres of LCR MSCP-created cottonwood-willow, 984 acres will be managed near marshes for the northern Mexican gartersnake.

#### **Background**

The original LCR MSCP permit was approved on April 4, 2005 (69 FR 75556), and extends through April 30, 2055. The LCR MSCP is a combined ESA section 10(a)(1)(B) and ESA section 7 approach to ESA compliance for implementation of covered activities for non-Federal (section 10) and Federal (section 7) participants.

The LCR MSCP is a habitat-based program that is responsible for the creation and management of land-cover types that benefit multiple covered species, including 5,940 acres of cottonwood-willow; 1,320 acres of honey mesquite; 512 acres of marsh; and 360 acres of backwater.

The LCR MSCP currently includes measures necessary to minimize and mitigate impacts to the 26 listed and unlisted species and their habitats covered by the plan. Take of covered species is incidental to covered activities associated with river operations and, water and power

delivery to Arizona, California, and Nevada. The LCR MSCP provides incidental take coverage to the following listed species;

Razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*)

Endangered

Bonytail chub (*Gila elegans*)

Endangered

Humpback chub (*Gila cypha*)

Endangered

Yuma Ridgway's (clapper) rail (*Rallus obsoletus* [= *longirostris*] *yumanensis*)

Endangered

Southwestern willow flycatcher

(*Empidonax traillii extimus*)

Endangered

Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) Threatened

During the initial development of the LCR MSCP in 2005, the northern Mexican gartersnake was not considered for coverage, because the species was believed to be extirpated within the planning area. However, subsequently, the species was found to be present. On July 8, 2014, the Service listed the northern Mexican gartersnake as threatened under the ESA, and critical habitat was proposed, including portions of the Bill Williams River. In 2012, northern Mexican gartersnakes were detected in portions of the Bill Williams River, between Alamo Dam and the Colorado River. In 2015, the northern Mexican gartersnake was confirmed at the LCR MSCP's Beal Lake Conservation Area on Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, on the east side of the Colorado River, where it had been considered extirpated.

#### 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. We will not consider anonymous comments. 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 ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (50

CFR 17.22) and NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

**Amy Lueders,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Geological Survey

**[GR17ND00GCT2800; OMB Control Number 1028—New]**

#### Agency Information Collection Activities; Phragmites Adaptive Management Framework

**AGENCY:** U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the USGS is proposing a new information collection (IC).

**DATES:** Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before January 29, 2018.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Geological Survey, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive MS 159, Reston, VA 20192 (mail); or *gs-info\_collections@usgs.gov* (email). Please reference 'Information Collection 1028—NEW, Phragmites Adaptive Management Framework' in all correspondence.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Clint Moore, USGS Research Wildlife Biologist, at (706) 542-1166 or *cmoore@usgs.gov*.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** We, the USGS, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, provide the general public and other Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed, revised, and continuing collections of information. This helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. It also helps the public understand our information collection requirements and provide the requested data in the desired format.

We are soliciting comments on the proposed IC that is described below. We are especially interested in public comment addressing the following issues: (1) Is the collection necessary to the proper functions of the USGS; (2) will this information be processed and used in a timely manner; (3) is the estimate of burden accurate; (4) how

might the USGS enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (5) how might the USGS minimize the burden of this collection on the respondents, including through the use of information technology.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include or summarize each comment in our request to OMB to approve this IC. 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 may 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.

**Abstract:** The *Phragmites* Adaptive Management Framework (PAMF) is a collaborative effort to confront and reduce the spread of invasive *Phragmites* grass in the Great Lakes watershed. *Phragmites* is associated with reduced water quality, loss of biodiversity, reduced recreational opportunities, and increased fire hazards. Reducing or eliminating *Phragmites* throughout the region will reverse these deleterious effects and help achieve the comprehensive restoration goals for the Great Lakes basin (see the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at <https://www.glri.us/>). The PAMF initiative uses the principles of adaptive management, a learning-based form of management in which data gathered following a treatment action are used to improve the predictive models that inform the decision-making process itself. Identified as a priority by the multi-national Great Lakes *Phragmites* Collaborative (<http://www.greatlakesphragmites.net/>), PAMF is a network of public and private cooperators who share a common desire to reduce or eradicate invasive *Phragmites* on lands that they manage. Membership in PAMF is voluntary and occurs after the cooperator has decided to treat *Phragmites*. A process is being developed to deliver site-specific guidance to participants that will both help them understand what treatment approach is most likely to achieve their management objectives and support regional adaptive learning through improvements and feedbacks to underlying scientific models. Cooperators will monitor and report vegetation characteristics on lands enrolled in the program, and they will report attributes about treatments