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21 November 2024

RE: Bureau of Land Management, Public Comment for May 2025 Oil and Gas Lease Sale in New Mexico. NMDGF No. NMERT-3979.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) has reviewed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) proposed May 2025 oil and gas lease sale in New Mexico. The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed BLM lease sale and provides the following comments to benefit and protect wildlife and their habitats.

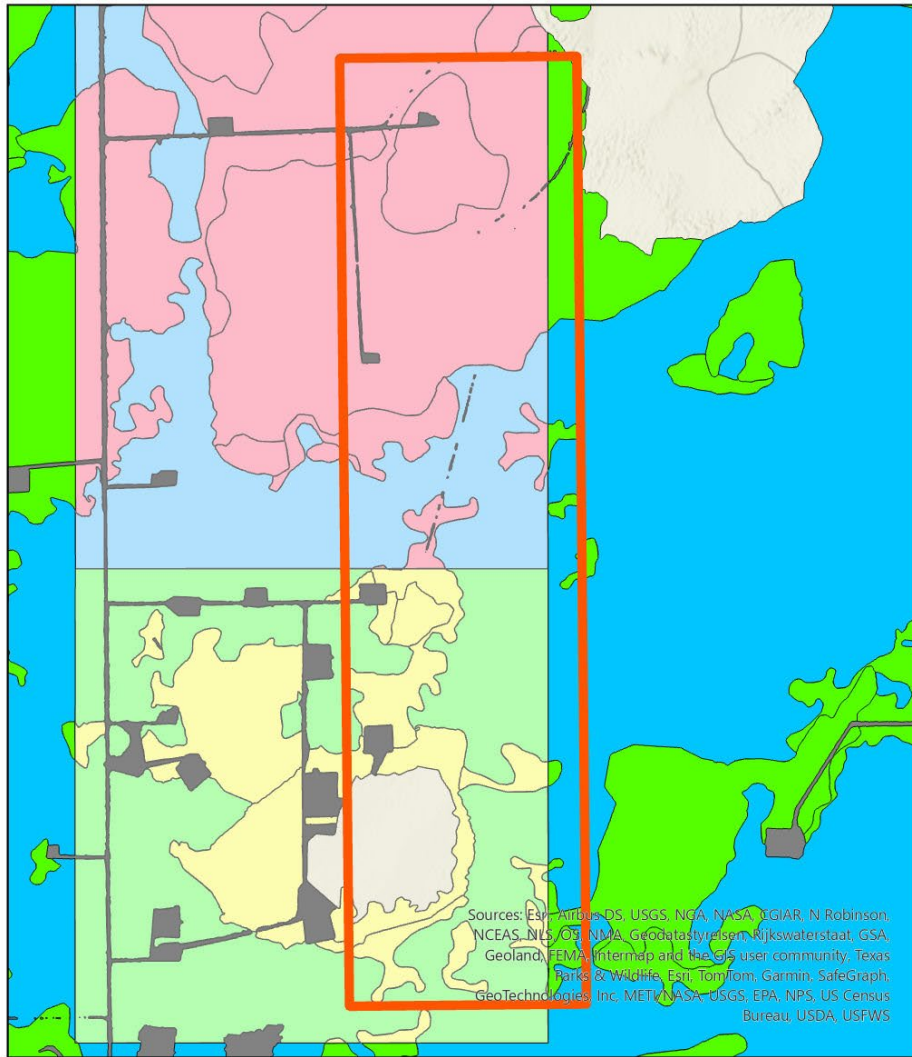
The eastern boundary of parcel NM-2025-05-6850 extends into minimally-disturbed shinnery oak (*Quercus havardi*) duneland and shinnery oak supportive habitat (Figure 1) as identified in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS's) Species Status Assessment for the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard (DSL; *Sceloporus arenicolus*) (USFWS 2023). The DSL was listed as endangered by the USFWS in May 2024. Protecting the highest quality, least-disturbed shinnery oak duneland habitat is critical for the DSL. These habitats provide appropriate substrate for DSL nests, cover for juvenile lizards, and food resources as juvenile lizards mature into adults. The Department strongly recommends that, per Figure 1, the BLM move the eastern boundary of parcel NM-2025-05-6850 to the west in order to fully exclude any minimally-disturbed shinnery oak duneland and associated supportive habitat for the DSL from the proposed lease sale.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed BLM oil and gas lease sale in New Mexico. If you have any questions, please contact Ron Kellermueller, Mining and Energy Habitat Specialist, at (505) 270-6612 or ronald.kellermueller@dgf.nm.gov.

Sincerely,

Virginia Seamster, Ph.D.
Assistant Chief, Ecological and Environmental Planning Section

cc: USFWS NMES Field Office



Legend

 sale_Q2_2025_draft_N	 Shinnery oak duneland degraded	 Shinnery oak supportive habitat disturbed
NM_DSL_HabitatM	 Shinnery oak duneland minimally disturbed	 Shinnery oak supportive habitat minimally disturbed
RevisedClassName	 Shinnery oak supportive habitat degraded	 <all other values>
 Shinnery oak duneland disturbed		

Figure 1. Overlay of May 2025 oil and gas lease boundaries (parcel NM-2025-05-6850) with Dunes Sagebrush Lizard (*Sceloporus arenicolus*) habitat based on the Species Status Assessment completed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 2023).

References:

[USFWS] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2023. Species status assessment for the dunes sagebrush lizard. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Office, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. <<https://ecos.fws.gov/ServCat/DownloadFile/231962>>.