



DIRECTOR AND SECRETARY
TO THE COMMISSION
Michael B. Sloane

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF GAME & FISH

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13 December 2024

Barbara Hosler
Regional Listing Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Midwest Region Headquarters
5600 American Blvd, Bloomington, MN 55437

RE: Threatened Species Status with Section 4(d) Rule for Monarch Butterfly and Designation of Critical Habitat; NMERT Project No. NMERT-4049

Dear Ms. Hosler,

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) has reviewed the Proposed Rule put forth by the USFWS to list the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) as a threatened species and designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and to open a public comment period for the Proposed Rule. Page 6, subsection 1c of the "Information Requested" section in the Proposed Rule states that the USFWS is seeking comments concerning "Historical and current range, including distribution patterns, alternative migratory pathways, and the locations of any additional populations of this species." Below is information regarding a confirmed location of milkweed plant (*Asclepias* spp.) resources being utilized by monarch butterflies (adults and larva) in New Mexico.

The Department received a report produced by Navarro Research and Engineering, Inc. (see attached) in 2019 detailing the results of a special-status plant and wildlife inventory at the Bluewater disposal site (Site) managed by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Legacy Management (OLM). The Site is a Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act site located near Bluewater, New Mexico, which was identified by OLM ecologists as being a "high-value" location and containing native wildlife and plants. The report states that horsetail milkweed (*Asclepias subverticillata*) was found throughout a large area of the Site, a plant important for oviposition and larval consumption by, and adult breeding of, the monarch. Additionally, adult and larval monarch butterflies were confirmed to be using the Site and the milkweed plants. No data were collected on the number of adult or larval monarchs, or the number of milkweed plants, that were present. However, the location and approximate spatial extent of milkweed patches at the Site is shown in Figure 3 of the 2019 report.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Proposed Rule. Please contact Jack Marchetti, Aquatic/Riparian Habitat Specialist, at jack.marchetti@dqf.nm.gov or (505) 479-1269 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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

Attachments: Navarro Research and Engineering, Inc. 2019. Results of Special-Status Plant and Wildlife Inventory at the Bluewater, New Mexico, Disposal Site. Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management. Navarro Research and Engineering, Inc., Oak Ridge, Tennessee, USA.