



PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Xcel Lynchsubstation expansion project
Project Type: (NO PROJECT REVIEW) SPECIES LIST ONLY
Latitude/Longitude (DMS): 32.558430 / -103.576786
County(s): LEA
Project Description: Exploratory substation expansion

REQUESTOR INFORMATION

Project Organization:
Contact Name: Shelby Hoglund
Email Address: shelby.hoglund@swca.com
Organization: SWCA Environmental Consultants
Address: 7770 Jefferson St NE, Suite 410, Albuquerque NM 87109
Phone: (612) 877-2787

OVERALL STATUS

The information contained within this report comprises the recommendations of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) for management and mitigation of proposed project impacts to wildlife and habitat resources; see the Project Recommendations section below for further details. No further consultation with the Department is required based on the project's location and, with implementation of mitigation measures described in the Project Recommendations section below, no adverse effects to wildlife or important habitats are anticipated. However, a Department biologist may be in touch within 30 days if they determine that further review is required.

About this report:

- This environmental review is based on the project description and location that was entered. The report must be updated if the project type, area, or operational components are modified.
- This is a preliminary environmental screening assessment and report. It is not a substitute for the potential wildlife knowledge gained by having a biologist conduct a field survey of the project area. Federal status and plant data are provided as a courtesy to users. The review is also not intended to replace consultation required under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), including impact analyses for federal resources from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) using their [Information for Planning and Consultation tool](#).
- This report contains information on wildlife species protected under the ESA and the [Wildlife Conservation Act \(WCA\)](#), [Species of Greatest Conservation Need \(SGCN\)](#), and Species of Economic and Recreational Importance (SERI). Species listed under the ESA are protected from take at the federal level and under the WCA are protected from take at the state level. SGCN are identified in the [State Wildlife Action Plan \(SWAP\) for New Mexico](#); all of these species are considered to be of conservation concern but not all of them are protected from take at the state or federal level. The harvest of all SERI is regulated at the state level. The Department has no authority to designate critical habitat for species listed under the WCA; only the USFWS can designate critical habitat for species listed under the ESA.
- The New Mexico Environmental Review Tool (ERT) utilizes species observation locations and species habitat suitability models, both of which are subject to ongoing change and refinement. Inclusion or omission of a species within a report cannot guarantee species presence or absence within your project area. To determine occurrence of any species listed in this report, or other wildlife that may be present within your project area, onsite surveys conducted by a qualified biologist during appropriate, species-specific survey timelines may be necessary.
- The Department encourages use of the ERT to modify proposed projects for avoidance, minimization, or mitigation of wildlife impacts. However, the ERT is not intended to be used in a repeatedly iterative fashion to adjust project attributes until a previously determined recommendation is generated. The ERT serves to assess impacts once project details are developed. The [New Mexico Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool](#), the data layers from which are included in the ERT, is the appropriate system for advising early-stage project planning and design to avoid areas of anticipated wildlife concerns and associated regulatory requirements.

Xcel Lynchsubstation expansion project



 Buffered Project Boundary	 NM State Forestry Division	 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 Project_Boundary	 NM State Parks	 U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
 Bureau of Land Management	 National Park Service	 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 City Land	 Other Federal Agency	 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 County Land	 Other Federal Agency	 U.S. Forest Service
 Department of Defense	 State Land Office	 U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Department of Energy	 State of New Mexico	
 NM Department of Game & Fish	 Tribal Land	

NHNM, USGS, USFS, US Census Bureau, NMDGF
 Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA
 Texas Parks & Wildlife, CONANP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA, USFWS

Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 2000 Meters of Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMDGF (WCA)	NMDGF SGCN/SERI	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
Barking Frog	Craugastor augusti			SGCN			
Plains Leopard Frog	Lithobates blairi			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Aplomado Falcon	Falco femoralis		E	SGCN			
Lesser Prairie-Chicken	Tympnanuchus pallidicinctus	LE		SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
Western Burrowing Owl	Athene cunicularia hypugaea			SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Common Nighthawk	Chordeiles minor			SGCN			
Sprague's Pipit	Anthus spragueii			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Loggerhead Shrike	Lanius ludovicianus			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH
Bell's Vireo	Vireo bellii		T	SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Varied Bunting	Passerina versicolor		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Vesper Sparrow	Poocetes gramineus			SGCN			
Black-Tailed Prairie Dog	Cynomys ludovicianus			SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
Mule Deer	Odocoileus hemionus			SGCN			
Pronghorn	Antilocapra americana			SGCN			
Dunes Sagebrush Lizard	Sceloporus arenicolus		E	SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Desert Massasauga	Sistrurus catenatus edwardsii			SGCN			

Common Name hyperlink takes you to species account in [bison-m.org](https://www.bison-m.org/); Scientific Name hyperlink takes you to information in [NatureServe Explorer](#); ESA = Endangered Species Act, C = Candidate, LE = Listed Endangered, LT = Listed Threatened, XN = Non-essential Experimental Population, for other ESA codes see this [website](#); WCA = Wildlife Conservation Act, E = Endangered, T = Threatened; SERI = Species of Economic and Recreational Importance; SGCN = Species of Greatest Conservation Need; USFS = U.S. Forest Service, Sensitive Species = A species likely to occur on USFS lands that is of concern for a potential reduction in population viability; SCC = Species of Conservation Concern; BLM = Bureau of Land Management, BLM SENSITIVE = A species that occurs on BLM lands and whose viability is at risk, BLM WATCH = Species that may be added to the sensitive species list in future pending new information regarding species status.

Project Recommendations

This report includes a preliminary species list that may be used during early stages of project or conservation planning. Even if this report indicates that your proposed project location would require a custom review from a biologist, **no review will be returned** until additional project details are provided. **To obtain a project review**, please submit additional details regarding the **type** of project, project **objectives**, anticipated project **duration**, **timing** of project construction, the composition and dimensions/quantities of **materials** that will be utilized for project implementation, any **equipment** that will be used, anticipated **ground disturbance** that will occur, wildlife surveys or observations that have occurred on or near the project site, and **any other relevant details** regarding potential effects of project activities on wildlife or wildlife habitat. **Photographs** of the project site are especially useful.

Although this project report may include management recommendations based on the project location, additional conservation measures may be needed. The Department can not fully assess potential effects and associated management recommendations until a **project type and description** have been submitted and an appropriate **impact buffer** for that project type has been applied. Also, the species list within this report represents an estimation of special status species that could be present at the site of a small-scale project. Species lists for projects that occur across **broader geographic scales** (e.g., one or more counties, multiple habitat types) are more appropriately obtained from the **Department's Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M) database**. Species lists generated by the ERT may contain modeled species distributions in order to predict species occurrences within areas that lack previous wildlife inventories or surveys. This list can be refined using occurrence-based information within BISON-M regarding wildlife-habitat relationships and biological needs for species that might be present within the project footprint.

Our preliminary assessment indicates your project occurs in Lesser Prairie-chicken Crucial Habitat Category 3 (Modeled Habitat Zone).

The Lesser Prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) (LPC) was designated as a SGCN in New Mexico and the southern Distinct Population Segment, including populations in New Mexico and Texas, is federally listed as Endangered. The LPC Interstate Working Group has developed the Southern Great Plains Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool ([SGP-CHAT](#)) to designate and prioritize areas for LPC conservation activities and development. Our preliminary assessment indicates your project occurs in LPC habitat. For more information on the SGP-CHAT, contact Chanda Pettie, Industry LPC Program Contact with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, at (719) 207-5053 or chanda.pettie@wafwa.org.

If your project has potential to lead to take (including harassment, harm, pursuit, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, collecting, or attempting to engage in these activities) of a LPC and you entered into the Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) or CCA with Assurances (CCAA) for the LPC with [CEHMM](#), the Department recommends you contact CEHMM (575-885-3700). If your project may lead to take of a LPC and you did not enter the CCA/A with CEHMM, the Department recommends you contact Lauren Rangel, at 505-761-4745 or lauren_rangel@fws.gov, who is the species lead for the LPC in the Ecological Services Office with USFWS. She is also the contact for the rangewide renewable energy Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) if relevant for your project. The Department recommends a qualified, permitted biologist conduct surveys for the LPC according to these [Lesser Prairie-chicken Survey Protocols](#) (or others recommended by USFWS) and following any training as required by USFWS.

Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) may occur within your project area. Burrowing owls are protected from take by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and under New Mexico state statute. Before any ground disturbing activities occur, the Department recommends that a preliminary burrowing owl survey be conducted by a qualified biologist using the Department's [Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol](#). Should burrowing owls be documented in the project area, please contact the Department or USFWS for further recommendations regarding relocation or avoidance of impacts.

Your proposed project intersects dunes sagebrush lizard (*Sceloporus arenicolus*) (DSL) habitat. The DSL is listed as Endangered under the ESA by the USFWS and as Endangered by the State of New Mexico under the New Mexico WCA. The Center of Excellence for Hazardous Materials Management ([CEHMM](#)) entered into an agreement with USFWS to work in cooperation with private landowners and industry to support conservation for the DSL while continuing to work on the land. If your project has potential to lead to take (including harassment, harm, pursuit, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, collecting, or attempting to engage in these activities) of a DSL and you entered into the Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) or CCA with Assurances (CCAA) for the DSL with CEHMM, the Department recommends you contact CEHMM (575-885-3700). If your project may lead to take of a DSL and you did not enter the CCA/A with CEHMM, the Department recommends you contact Marilyn Wright, at 505-761-4715 or marilyn_wright@fws.gov, who is the species lead for the DSL in the Ecological Services Office with USFWS. The Department recommends a qualified, permitted biologist conduct surveys for the DSL according to any survey protocol recommended by, and following any training required by, USFWS.

Prairie dog colonies may occur within the vicinity of your project area. Both black-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) and Gunnison's prairie dogs (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) are designated as New Mexico SGCN, and their colonies provide important habitat for other grassland wildlife. Wherever possible, occupied prairie dog colonies should be left undisturbed, and all project activities should be directed off the colony. Any burrows that are located on the project site should be surveyed by a qualified biologist to determine whether burrows are active or inactive and whether burrowing owls may be utilizing the site. Colonies within the range of the black-tailed prairie dog can be surveyed by a qualified biologist diurnally, year-round using binoculars. Colonies within the range of the Gunnison's prairie dog can be surveyed by a qualified biologist diurnally, using binoculars during the warmer months from April through October and by searching for fairly fresh scat and lack of cobwebs or debris at the mouths of burrows during the cold months (November through March). If ground-disturbing activities cannot be relocated off the prairie dog colony, or if project activities involve control of prairie dogs, the Department recommends live-trapping and relocation of prairie dogs. The Department can provide recommendations regarding suitability of potential translocation areas and procedures.

Disclaimers regarding recommendations:

- The Department provides technical guidance to support the persistence of all protected species of native fish and wildlife, including game and nongame wildlife species. Species listed within this report include those that have been documented to occur within the project area, and others that may not have been documented but are projected to occur within the project vicinity.
- Recommendations are provided by the Department under the authority of § 17-1-5.1 New Mexico Statutes Annotated 1978, to provide "communication and consultation with federal and other state agencies, local governments and communities, private organizations and affected interests responsible for habitat, wilderness, recreation, water quality and environmental protection to ensure comprehensive conservation services for hunters, anglers and nonconsumptive wildlife users".
- The Department has no authority for management of plants or Important Plant Areas. The [New Mexico Endangered Plant Program](#), under the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department's Forestry Division, identifies and develops conservation measures necessary to ensure the survival of plant species within New Mexico. Plant status information is provided within this report as a courtesy to users. Recommendations provided within the ERT may not be sufficient to preclude impacts to rare or sensitive plants, unless conservation measures are identified in coordination with the Endangered Plant Program.
- Additional coordination and/or consultation may also be necessary under the federal ESA or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Further site-specific mitigation recommendations may be proposed during ESA consultation and/or NEPA analyses or through coordination with affected federal agencies.