



PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: EA for grazing permit renewal on the following allotments, NM61006 Fritz Place, NM61007 Chaveroo, & NM61008 Gallinas

Project Type: GRAZING, RENEWAL OR CONTINUED GRAZING-UPLAND AREAS ONLY

Latitude/Longitude (DMS): 33.707638 / -103.559837

County(s): CHAVES; ROOSEVELT

Project Description: Grazing permit renewal.

REQUESTOR INFORMATION

Project Organization:

Contact Name: Erin Salano

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Organization: New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

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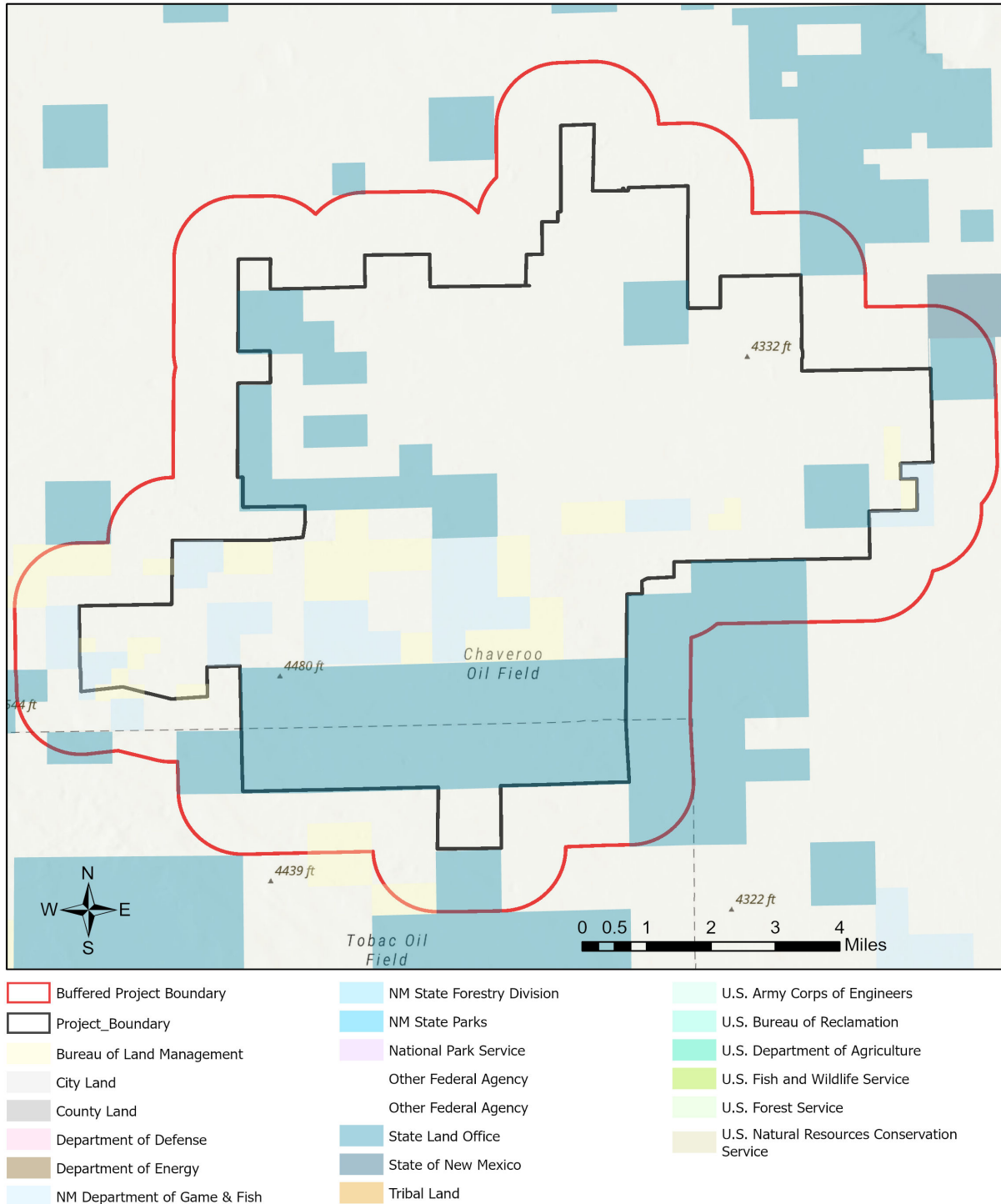
OVERALL STATUS

This report contains an initial list of recommendations regarding potential impacts to wildlife or wildlife habitats from the proposed project; see the Project Recommendations section below for further details. Your project proposal is being forwarded to a New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) biologist for review to determine whether there are any additional recommendations regarding the proposed actions. A Department biologist will be in touch within 30 days if there are further recommendations regarding this project proposal.

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.

val on the following allotments, NM61006 Fritz Place, NM61007 Chav



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

Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles 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 | | | |
| Peregrine Falcon | Falco peregrinus | | T | SGCN | | | BLM WATCH |
| Lesser Prairie-Chicken | Typanuchus pallidicinctus | LE | | SGCN | Sensitive Species | | BLM SENSITIVE |
| Mountain Plover | Charadrius montanus | | | SGCN | Sensitive Species | | BLM WATCH |
| Long-Billed Curlew | Numenius americanus | | | SGCN | | | BLM WATCH |
| Elf Owl | Micrathene whitneyi | | | SGCN | | | BLM WATCH |
| Western Burrowing Owl | Athene cunicularia hypugaea | | | SGCN | Sensitive Species | USFS R3 SCC | BLM SENSITIVE |
| Common Nighthawk | Chordeiles minor | | | SGCN | | | |
| Lewis's Woodpecker | Melanerpes lewis | | | SGCN | | USFS R3 SCC | BLM WATCH |
| Red-Headed Woodpecker | Melanerpes erythrocephalus | | | SGCN | | | |
| Pinyon Jay | Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus | | | SGCN | | USFS R3 SCC | BLM SENSITIVE |
| Pygmy Nuthatch | Sitta pygmaea | | | SGCN | | | |
| Mountain Bluebird | Sialia currucoides | | | SGCN | | | |
| Sprague's Pipit | Anthus spragueii | | | SGCN | | | BLM SENSITIVE |
| Loggerhead Shrike | Lanius ludovicianus | | | SGCN | | USFS R3 SCC | BLM WATCH |
| Vesper Sparrow | Poocetes gramineus | | | SGCN | | | |
| Thick-billed Longspur | Rhynchophanes mccownii | | | SGCN | | | BLM SENSITIVE |
| Chestnut-Collared Longspur | Calcarius ornatus | | | SGCN | | | BLM SENSITIVE |
| Cassin's Finch | Haemorhous cassinii | | | SGCN | | | BLM WATCH |
| Evening Grosbeak | Coccothraustes vespertinus | | | SGCN | | | |
| Least Shrew | Cryptotis parva | | T | SGCN | | | BLM WATCH |

Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

| Common Name | Scientific Name | USFWS (ESA) | NMDGF (WCA) | NMDGF SGCN/SERI | USFS | USFS SCC | BLM |
|--|---|-------------|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------|------------------|
| Black-Tailed Prairie Dog | Cynomys ludovicianus | | | SGCN | Sensitive Species | | BLM SENSITIVE |
| Mule Deer | Odocoileus hemionus | | | SERI | | | |
| Pronghorn | Antilocapra americana | | | SERI | | | |
| 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; 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

The Department generally makes recommendations for livestock grazing on public land allotments based on site-specific information and effects on wildlife and their habitats. The significance of the effects from recent grazing on these habitats is usually based on ecosystem function and/or biological diversity. The typical attributes analyzed within the Allotment Evaluation (AE) include: 1) soil/site stability assessed by bare ground, compaction, or erosion; 2) hydrologic function indicated by water flow patterns and sediment; and 3) biotic integrity assessed by annual production and composition of cool/warm season plants.

The above attributes are used to determine a "proper functioning condition" for the particular range evaluation and to further assign ratings for the AE. With the large volume of AEs to be assessed across the state, the Department cannot always look at each AE individually. Therefore, any AE below functioning condition should also be assumed to provide diminished wildlife habitat, and the allotment lease should not be reissued until corrective action is taken.

On AEs where indicators rate as properly functioning, and depending on vegetation type, conservative base stocking should be emphasized. Utilization of no more than 35% of key forage species is recommended on an annual basis. This level of intensity provides for allowances of wildlife use, residual cover, and watershed protection.

The Department also recommends the following to maintain or improve rangelands for most classes of wildlife.

- Provide for a desired future condition (wildlife, vegetation, watershed) based on measurable goals within the allotment plan.
- Calculate carrying capacity for the area available for grazing and ensure that domestic livestock stocking rates are at or below carrying capacity. Use calculation methods that consider the natural features of the local landscape and the varying impacts of different types of foraging animals, including larger wild herbivores where possible (e.g., consider the methods described by [Spackman and Ward 2023](#); further information may be obtained from the [Extension Animal Science and Natural Resources program at New Mexico State University](#)).
- An adaptive management plan should be developed to address lack of forage during drought periods.
- Reseeding efforts should utilize native species of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. When possible, use seeds that are sourced from the same region and habitat type as the restoration site or from a region that represents potential future climatic conditions at this site. Habitat improvements should consider wildlife species and promote diversity of forage.
- Water sources should be equally available to all classes of wildlife throughout the year. Escape ramps should be used on all troughs, and ground-level drinkers should be provided on all new water developments.
- Springs/seeps and other sensitive riparian areas may require fencing to protect from overuse by grazing animals. Reference the Department's [Guidelines for Grazing Management in New Mexico's Riparian Areas: Towards Protection of Wildlife and Fisheries Resources](#) for further recommendations regarding grazing in riparian areas.

Our preliminary assessment indicates your project occurs in Lesser Prairie-chicken Crucial Habitat Category 1 (Focal Area).

Our preliminary assessment indicates your project occurs in Lesser Prairie-chicken Crucial Habitat Category 2 (Connectivity Zone).

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.

Your project could affect important components of habitat for large mammals, including important and sensitive seasonal areas, stopover sites, or movement corridors for elk, mule deer, or pronghorn. Mitigation measures should be implemented as appropriate in these high use sites and movement areas that were identified based on data gathered and analyzed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) and partners. Management recommendations within these areas may include the following (as relevant to the proposed project).

- Restrictions on noise-generating activities during wintering and calving/fawning seasons. These seasons are November 15-April 30 for wintering and May 15-June 30 for calving fawning in northern New Mexico; specific timing differs for southern New Mexico. These activities include oil and gas well pad development and operations that expose wildlife to loud noises from drilling, compressors, and pumping stations within 400 feet of the source.
- Avoid new fence construction where possible and modify unavoidable fences along high use areas to make them wildlife friendly and facilitate large animal movement. Where possible, divide larger fenced sites into smaller fenced areas with movement corridors in between.
- Avoid siting facilities within important habitats such as critical seasonal ranges or parturition sites.
- To minimize surface disturbance, implement directional drilling and co-locate drill holes on a single pad in the least suitable areas for wildlife.
- Avoid construction or development activities during important times, like parturition (May 15 – June 30 in northern New Mexico).
- Where feasible, coordinate with the Department on collection of pre- and post-construction observational or GPS collar data to quantify responses of big game herds to project implementation.

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 project area intersects a Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) as identified in the [SWAP](#) for New Mexico. These areas contain high numbers of SGCN as identified in the SWAP and therefore represent areas where implementing conservation actions, including restoration projects intended to benefit wildlife, has higher potential to benefit a diversity of species. Within COAs, the Department encourages project proponents to consider (during project planning and design) and mitigate (during project implementation) potential adverse effects to non-federally listed SGCN and their habitats. State-listed and federally-listed species are protected from take by the New Mexico WCA and ESA, respectively, and migratory birds are protected from take by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

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.

It appears that your buffered project footprint intersects one or more properties owned by the State Game Commission and managed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. You can use the NM Ownership (2021) layer in the ERT's Create Project/Map tab to determine whether your project footprint directly intersects any Department-managed properties. To better coordinate any access or other administrative requirements and address any concerns from our Department lands program, please contact Donald Auer at donaldp.auer@dgf.nm.gov.

The proposed project occurs near a playa. Playas are shallow, ephemeral wetlands that fill in response to precipitation. Some playas remain wet for just a few weeks or months, while others remain wet for years. Playas are often highly productive habitats that attract abundant wildlife, and are vital to continentally important populations of waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, and many other migratory and resident birds.

- To ensure continued function of these important wildlife habitats, the project footprint should completely avoid the playa feature during both wet *and* dry periods. Some playas may remain dry for multiple years. Construction techniques should not disturb the natural playa soils or hydrology, such as by farming, trenching, pitting, or draining.
- Projects occurring in upland areas near a playa should maintain a minimum 40-meter wide buffer around the entire playa. A buffer of 40 meters protects the playa from excess sedimentation, which is a major source of playa degradation. The buffer should consist of native grass species, preferably native shortgrass prairie species such as buffalo grass (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) or blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*).
- Because playas are bird concentration areas, tall structures should be located as far away from the playa as possible to prevent avian collisions. If location near a playa is deemed necessary, the Department requests the opportunity for additional consultation.
- Design considerations should also include clustering project activity and development within the project footprint wherever possible, and avoiding disturbances that lead to increases in noise, lighting, perturbed soil and non-native vegetation, or other activity.

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.