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## PROJECT INFORMATION

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**Project Title:** Whiptail Substation  
**Project Type:** ENERGY DEVELOPMENT, ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION, ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION, MAINTENANCE/MINOR RETROFIT  
**Latitude/Longitude (DMS):** 32.336721 / -103.627076  
**County(s):** LEA  
**Project Description:** New substation and microgrid

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## REQUESTOR INFORMATION

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**Project Organization:**  
**Contact Name:** Danielle Seifried  
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**Organization:** SWCA Environmental Consultants  
**Address:** 1130 Madeira Dr SE, Apt 105, Albuquerque NM 87116  
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## OVERALL STATUS

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The information contained within this report comprises the recommendations of the New Mexico Department of Wildlife (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.

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**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 \(SGCN\)](#) (page 18, table 5), 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. Any surveys including handling or capturing wildlife may require a scientific collection permit; contact the Department's Wildlife Permits Manager at [dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov](mailto:dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov) for more information.
- 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.

# Whiptail Substation



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 1 Miles of Project Area

| Common Name                              | Scientific Name                               | USFWS (ESA) | NMDOW (WCA) | NMDOW SGCN/SERI | USFS              | USFS SCC    | BLM           |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <a href="#">Barking Frog</a>             | <a href="#">Craugastor augusti</a>            |             |             | SGCN            |                   |             |               |
| <a href="#">Aplomado Falcon</a>          | <a href="#">Falco femoralis</a>               |             | E           | SGCN            |                   |             |               |
| <a href="#">Western Burrowing Owl</a>    | <a href="#">Athene cunicularia hypugaea</a>   |             |             | SGCN            | Sensitive Species | USFS R3 SCC | BLM SENSITIVE |
| <a href="#">Common Nighthawk</a>         | <a href="#">Chordeiles minor</a>              |             |             | SGCN            |                   |             |               |
| <a href="#">Sprague's Pipit</a>          | <a href="#">Anthus spragueii</a>              |             |             | SGCN            |                   |             | BLM SENSITIVE |
| <a href="#">Loggerhead Shrike</a>        | <a href="#">Lanius ludovicianus</a>           |             |             | SGCN            |                   | USFS R3 SCC | BLM WATCH     |
| <a href="#">Bell's Vireo</a>             | <a href="#">Vireo bellii</a>                  |             | T           | SGCN            |                   |             | BLM SENSITIVE |
| <a href="#">Varied Bunting</a>           | <a href="#">Passerina versicolor</a>          |             | T           | SGCN            | Sensitive Species |             |               |
| <a href="#">Vesper Sparrow</a>           | <a href="#">Poocetes gramineus</a>            |             |             | SGCN            |                   |             |               |
| <a href="#">Thick-billed Longspur</a>    | <a href="#">Rhynchophanes mccownii</a>        |             |             | SGCN            |                   |             | BLM SENSITIVE |
| <a href="#">Black-Tailed Prairie Dog</a> | <a href="#">Cynomys ludovicianus</a>          |             |             | SGCN            | Sensitive Species |             | BLM SENSITIVE |
| <a href="#">Mule Deer</a>                | <a href="#">Odocoileus hemionus</a>           |             |             | SERI            |                   |             |               |
| <a href="#">Pronghorn</a>                | <a href="#">Antilocapra americana</a>         |             |             | SERI            |                   |             |               |
| <a href="#">Dunes Sagebrush Lizard</a>   | <a href="#">Sceloporus arenicolus</a>         | LE          | E           | SGCN            |                   |             |               |
| <a href="#">Desert Massasauga</a>        | <a href="#">Sistrurus catenatus edwardsii</a> |             |             | SGCN            |                   |             |               |

Common Name hyperlink takes you to species account in [bison-m.org](http://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.

### Special Status Plant Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

| Common Name                       | Scientific Name                 | USFWS (ESA) | NMAC | NMRPCS | USFS | USFS SCC | BLM           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|--------|------|----------|---------------|
| <a href="#">Tharp's Blue Star</a> | <a href="#">Amsonia tharpii</a> |             | E    |        |      |          | BLM SENSITIVE |

Special Status Plant Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

| Common Name                                | Scientific Name                                       | USFWS (ESA) | NMAC | NMRPCS | USFS | USFS SCC | BLM              |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------|--------|------|----------|------------------|
| <a href="#">Scheer's Pincushion Cactus</a> | <a href="#">Coryphantha robustispina ssp. scheeri</a> |             | E    |        |      |          | BLM<br>SENSITIVE |
| <a href="#">Gyp Ground Plum</a>            | <a href="#">Astragalus gypsodes</a>                   |             |      |        |      |          | BLM<br>SENSITIVE |

NMAC = New Mexico Administrative Code, E = Endangered; NMRPCS = [New Mexico Rare Plant Conservation Strategy](#), SS = NM Rare Plant Conservation Strategy Species; 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

Your proposed project activities may require a custom review for assessment of potential effects to wildlife. See the "OVERALL STATUS" section above to determine the likelihood that your project will be reviewed further based on its location. A Department biologist will confirm whether any additional conservation measures are needed. You should expect to receive any additional project recommendations within 30 days of your project submission. If the "OVERALL STATUS" section indicates that no further consultation with the Department is required based on its location, then you will only receive additional project feedback from the Department if a biologist deems it necessary.

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](#). Surveys including audio calls may require a scientific collection permit; contact the Department's Wildlife Permits Manager at [dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov](mailto:dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov) for more information. Should burrowing owls be documented in the project area, please contact the Department or USFWS for further recommendations and information on any permitting requirements regarding relocation or avoidance of impacts. The Wild Take Unit at the USFWS, which issues take and relocation permits for migratory birds, can be reached at [MBPermits\\_take@fws.gov](mailto:MBPermits_take@fws.gov).

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

The Lesser Prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) (LPC) was designated as a SGCN in New Mexico and previously the southern Distinct Population Segment, including populations in New Mexico and Texas, was 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](mailto: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 a qualified, permitted biologist conduct surveys for the LPC according to these [Lesser Prairie-chicken Survey Protocols](#) and mitigating the effects of project activities by buffering (>1.25 miles of known leks) and avoiding construction or off-road activities during the breeding season (March 1-July 15). Low-altitude aerial surveys or surveys based on flush counts may require a scientific collection permit; contact the Department's Wildlife Permits Manager at [dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov](mailto:dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov) for more information.

Since your project occurs within Lesser Prairie-chicken habitat, the Department recommends the following:

- As much as possible, avoid development within focal areas, connectivity zones, or within 1.25 miles of known Lesser Prairie-chicken (LPC) leks that have been active at least once within the previous five years, as well as project sites dominated by tracts of native grass and shrublands (see Southern Great plains Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool [[SGP-CHAT](#)] and Department staff for more information).
- As much as possible, focus development on lands already altered or cultivated (e.g., in areas with row-crop agriculture or developed oilfields) and away from areas of undeveloped native grass or shrublands. Select fragmented or degraded habitats over relatively intact areas, and select sites with lower LPC habitat potential over sites with greater habitat potential based on appropriate indicators, including Natural Resources Conservation Service Ecological Site Descriptions, specifically loamy, loamy sand, sandhills, sandy, sandy plains, shallow sandy, and very shallow.
- Where avoidance of LPC habitat is not possible, use common rights of way for multiple types of infrastructure in locating new power lines and other associated infrastructure. Utilize mono-pole construction for new electrical transmission lines within SGP-CHAT categories 1-3.
- Within 1.25 miles of leks active within the previous five years, the Department recommends burying new distribution lines. If these new lines cannot be buried, they must be sited to minimize potential collision risk, and if appropriate, should be marked. Raptor deterrents should be installed on new electrical distribution and transmission poles as indicated by the [Avian Power Line Interaction Committee's \(APLIC's\) Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2006](#).

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. A scientific collection permit may be required; contact the Department's Wildlife Permits Manager at [dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov](mailto:dgf.permits@dgf.nm.gov) for more information. The Department can provide recommendations regarding suitability of potential translocation areas and procedures. If a project will only impact 10 or fewer burrows and there is a large, active colony adjacent to the site the continued existence of which will not cause future conflicts, the Department suggests use of reverse dispersal translocation methods as outlined in [Creating Prairie Dog Management Plans Part three: Appendices and Attachments](#) (see Attachment 1). Methods include setting up a wire door over active burrows followed by monitoring and closure of the few burrows in the project disturbance area after prairie dog evacuation and barrier installation to prevent recolonization of closed areas. Removal activities should be performed after the spring breeding and birthing seasons and prior to winter hibernation (e.g., mid-June to mid-November). Prairie dogs in southern New Mexico may remain active in the winter, extending the potential removal period beyond mid-November. Removal activities should also begin roughly one month before construction or other disturbance occurs as it can take between one week and one month for the animals to disperse.

**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.
- Unless a project is marked as confidential in the title or description by the project proponent and if a ERT-generated report is the only response that the project proponent receives from the Department, then the report will be made publicly accessible via the [Public Comment Letters](#) page on the ERT website.