



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office  
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Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113  
Phone: (505) 346-2525 Fax: (505) 346-2542

March 26, 2004

Cons. # 2-22-04-I-349

Lawrence E. Kokajko, Chief  
Environmental and Performance Assessment Branch  
Division of Waste Management  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Kokajko:

Thank you for your March 2, 2004, letter requesting information on threatened or endangered species or important wildlife habitats that could be affected by a proposed project to construct, operate, and decommission a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment facility near Eunice, Lea County, New Mexico. The proposed facility and construction would disturb 543 acres of land located within the Louisiana Energy Services National Enrichment Facility site.

We have enclosed a current list of federally endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate species, and species of concern that may be found in Lea County, New Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Under the Endangered Species Act, as amended (Act), it is the responsibility of the Federal action agency or its designated representative to determine if a proposed action "may affect" endangered, threatened, or proposed species, or designated critical habitat, and if so, to consult with us further. If your action area has suitable habitat for any of these species, we recommend that species-specific surveys be conducted during the flowering season for plants and at the appropriate time for wildlife to evaluate any possible project-related impacts. Please keep in mind that the scope of federally listed species compliance also includes any interrelated or interdependent project activities (e.g., equipment staging areas, offsite borrow material areas, or utility relocations) and any indirect or cumulative effects.

Candidates and species of concern have no legal protection under the Act and are included in this document for planning purposes only. We monitor the status of these species. If significant declines are detected, these species could potentially be listed as endangered or threatened. Therefore, actions that may contribute to their decline should be avoided. We recommend that candidates and species of concern be included in your surveys.

<sup>1</sup> Additional information about these species is available on the Internet at <http://nmrareplants.unm.edu>, <http://nrmnhp.unm.edu/bisonm/bisonquery.php>, and <http://ifw2es.fws.gov/endangeredspecies>.

NMSSO1

Under Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, Federal agencies are required to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and floodplains, and preserve and enhance their natural and beneficial values. We recommend you contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for permitting requirements under section 404 of the Clean Water Act if your proposed action could impact floodplains or wetlands. These habitats should be conserved through avoidance, or mitigated to ensure no net loss of wetlands function and value.

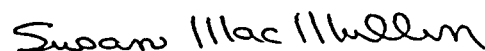
The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits the taking of migratory birds, nests, and eggs, except as permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). To minimize the likelihood of adverse impacts to all birds protected under the MBTA, we recommend construction activities occur outside the general migratory bird nesting season of March through August, or that areas proposed for construction during the nesting season be surveyed, and when occupied, avoided until nesting is complete.

The primary concern of the Service is the protection of the Nation's fish and wildlife resources including threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and their habitats. Under its responsibilities in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Service would be concerned if an open, hazardous waste impoundment attracted migratory birds or other wildlife to their detriment. During flight, migratory birds (as well as bats) would not necessarily distinguish between an impoundment and a natural waterbody and could be attracted to drink, rest, and perhaps feed on the insects that are invariably associated with impounded wastewater. The facility lighting could attract them as well. Therefore, the Service supports that any open hazardous waste lagoon, pond, or container be constructed with appropriate exclusion technology (*e.g.*, netting, fences, enclosed tanks, *etc.*) to prevent migratory bird access, and that any exclusion technologies are regularly maintained. To minimize the likelihood of adverse impacts to nesting migratory birds during facility construction, we recommend that construction activities occur outside the general migratory bird-nesting season of March through August, or that areas proposed for construction during the nesting season be surveyed, and when occupied, avoided until nesting is complete.

We suggest you contact the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division for information regarding fish, wildlife, and plants of State concern.

Thank you for your concern for endangered and threatened species and New Mexico's wildlife habitats. In future correspondence regarding this project, please refer to consultation # 2-22-04-I-349. If you have any questions about the information in this letter, please contact Dennis Coleman at the letterhead address or at (505) 346-2525, ext. 4716.

Sincerely,



Susan MacMullin  
Field Supervisor

Lawrence E. Kokajko, Chief

3

Enclosure

cc: (w/o enc)

Director, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Director, New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Forestry  
Division, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Revised: September 2003

FEDERAL ENDANGERED, THREATENED,  
PROPOSED, AND CANDIDATE SPECIES  
AND SPECIES OF CONCERN IN NEW MEXICO  
Consultation Number 2-22-04-I-349  
March 25, 2004

Lea County

ENDANGERED

Black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*)\*\*  
Northern aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis septentrionalis*)

THREATENED

Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

CANDIDATE

Black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*)  
Lesser prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*)  
Sand dune lizard (*Sceloporus arenicolus*)

SPECIES OF CONCERN

Swift fox (*Vulpes velox*)  
American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*)  
Arctic peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus tundrius*)  
Baird's sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*)  
Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii*)  
Western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugea*)  
Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*)

## Index

- Endangered = Any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- Threatened = Any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- Candidate = Candidate Species (taxa for which the Service has sufficient information to propose that they be added to list of endangered and threatened species, but the listing action has been precluded by other higher priority listing activities).
- Proposed = Any species of fish, wildlife or plant that is proposed in the Federal Register to be listed under section 4 of the Act.
- Species of Concern = Taxa for which further biological research and field study are needed to resolve their conservation status OR are considered sensitive, rare, or declining on lists maintained by Natural Heritage Programs, State wildlife agencies, other Federal agencies, or professional/academic scientific societies. Species of Concern are included for planning purposes only.
- \*\* = Survey should be conducted if project involves impacts to prairie dog towns or complexes of 200-acres or more for the Gunnison's prairie dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) and/or 80-acres or more for any subspecies of Black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*). A complex consists of two or more neighboring prairie dog towns within 4.3 miles (7 kilometers) of each other.