DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R8–ES–2020–N132; FXES11140800000–201–FF08EVEN00]

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Draft Habitat Conservation Plan and Draft Categorical Exclusion for the Santa Barbara County Distinct Population Segment of the California Tiger Salamander; Santa Maria Public Airport District Santa Maria Airport Commercial Center Project, Santa Barbara County, California

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the availability of a draft habitat conservation plan (HCP) and draft categorical exclusion (CatEx) for activities associated with an application for an incidental take permit (ITP) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The ITP would authorize take of the Santa Barbara County distinct population segment of the California tiger salamander incidental to activities associated with construction near the Santa Maria Airport in Santa Barbara County, California. The applicant developed the draft HCP as part of their application for an ITP. The Service prepared a draft low-effect screening form and environmental action statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to evaluate the potential effects to the natural and human environment resulting from issuing an ITP to the applicant. We invite public comment on these documents.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].
**ADDRESSES: Obtaining Documents:** You may download a copy of the draft HCP and draft CatEx at http://www.fws.gov/ventura/, or you may request copies of the documents by U.S. mail (below) or by phone (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

**Submitting Written Comments:** Please send us your written comments using one of the following methods:

- **U.S. mail:** Stephen P. Henry, Field Supervisor, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, CA 93003.
- **Email:** joseph_brandt@fws.gov.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Joseph Brandt, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, by email (see ADDRESSES), via phone at (805)677-3324, via the Federal Relay Service at 1–800–877–8339 for TTY assistance, or by mail (see ADDRESSES).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft habitat conservation plan (HCP) and draft low-effect screening form and environmental action statement for activities associated with an application for an incidental take permit (ITP) under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). The ITP would authorize take of the Santa Barbara County distinct population segment of the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) incidental to activities associated with the construction of commercial urban developed uses over an 28-acre project site near the Santa Maria Airport in Santa Barbara County, California. The site would be fully developed with urban uses and a water detention basin. The applicant developed the draft HCP as part of their application for an ITP. The Service prepared a draft low-effect screening form and environmental action statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) to evaluate the
potential effects to the natural and human environment resulting from issuing an ITP to
the applicant. We invite public comment on all of these documents.

**Background**

The Service listed the Santa Barbara County DPS of the California tiger
salamander as endangered on September 21, 2000 (65 FR 57242). Section 9 of the ESA
prohibits take of fish and wildlife species listed as endangered (16 U.S.C. 1538). Under
the ESA, “take” is defined to include the following activities: “to harass, harm, pursue,
hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such
1539(a)(1)(B)), we may issue permits to authorize take of listed fish and wildlife species
that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity.
Regulations governing incidental take permits for endangered species are in the Code of
Federal Regulations (CFR) at 50 CFR 17.22. Issuance of an ITP also must not jeopardize
the existence of federally listed fish, wildlife, or plant species, pursuant to section 7 of the
ESA and 50 CFR 402.02. The permittee would receive assurances under our “No
Surprises” regulations (50 CFR 17.22(b)(5)).

**Proposed Activities**

The applicant has applied for a permit for incidental take of the Santa Barbara
County DPS of the California tiger salamander. The take would occur in association with
the construction of commercial urban developed uses over an 28-acre project site
near the Santa Maria Airport in Santa Barbara County, California.

The HCP includes avoidance and minimization measures for the Santa Barbara
County DPS of the California tiger salamander and mitigation for unavoidable loss of
habitat. As mitigation, the applicant proposes to purchase credits from a Service-
approved conservation bank.
Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public view, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority

We provide this notice under section 10(c) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.22) and NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1506.6).

Stephen Henry,

Field Supervisor,

Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office,

Ventura, California.

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