



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[Docket No. FWS-R4-ES-2024-0190; FXES11140400000-256-FF04EF4000]

Receipt of Incidental Take Permit Application and Proposed Habitat Conservation Plan for the Sand Skink and Blue-tailed Mole-skink; Polk County, FL; Categorical Exclusion

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comment.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce receipt of an application from ADH Rollins Court, LLC (applicant) for an incidental take permit (ITP) under the Endangered Species Act. The applicant requests the ITP to take the federally listed sand skink (*Plestiodon reynoldsi*) and blue-tailed mole skink (*Eumeces egregius lividus*) incidental to the construction of a residential development in Polk County, Florida. We request public comment on the application, which includes the applicant's proposed habitat conservation plan (HCP), and on the Service's preliminary determination that the proposed permitting action may be eligible for a categorical exclusion pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, the Department of the Interior's (DOI) NEPA regulations, and the DOI Departmental Manual. To make this preliminary determination, we prepared a draft environmental action statement and low-effect screening form, both of which are also available for public review. We invite comment from the public and local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies.

DATES: We must receive your written comments on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

ADDRESSES: *Obtaining Documents:* The documents this notice announces, as well as

any comments and other materials that we receive, will be available for public inspection online in Docket No. FWS–R4–ES–2024–0190 at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

Submitting Comments: If you wish to submit comments on any of the documents, you may do so in writing by one of the following methods:

- *Online:* <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS–R4–ES–2024–0190.
- *U.S. mail:* Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS–R4–ES–2024–0190; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: PRB/3W, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041–3803.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Al Begazo, by U.S. mail (see **ADDRESSES**), by telephone at 772–226–8134, or via email at alfredo_begazo@fws.gov. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce receipt of an application from ADH Rollins Court, LLC (applicant) for an incidental take permit (ITP) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The applicant requests the ITP to take the sand skink (*Plestiodon reynoldsi*) and blue-tailed mole skink (*Eumeces egregius lividus*) (skinks), federally listed as threatened under the ESA, incidental to the construction of a residential development in Polk County, Florida. We request public comment on the application, which includes the applicant’s habitat conservation plan (HCP), and on the Service’s preliminary determination that this proposed ITP qualifies as low effect, and may qualify for a categorical exclusion pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality’s National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (40 CFR 1501.4), the Department of the Interior's (DOI) NEPA regulations (43 CFR part 46), and the DOI's Departmental Manual (516 DM 8.5(C)(2)). To make this preliminary determination, we prepared a draft environmental action statement and low-effect screening form, both of which are also available for public review.

Proposed Project

The applicant requests a 5-year ITP to take skinks via the conversion of approximately 5.46 acres (ac) of occupied nesting, foraging, and sheltering skink habitat incidental to the construction of a residential development on 46 ac on Polk County Parcels 27-27-11-735500-000140 and 27-27-11-734500-030300 within Section 11, Township 27 South, Range 27 East, Polk County, Florida. The applicant proposes to mitigate for take of skinks through the purchase 10.92 ac of conservation credits (in accordance with the Service's 2:1 mitigation ratio guidelines) from a Service-authorized conservation bank prior to engaging in any phase of the project.

Our Preliminary Determination

The Service has made a preliminary determination that the applicant's proposed project, including the construction of a residential development and associated infrastructure (e.g., electric, water, and sewer lines), would individually and cumulatively have a minor or negligible effect on the skinks and the human environment. Therefore, we have preliminarily determined that the proposed ESA section 10(a)(1)(B) permit would be a low-effect ITP that individually or cumulatively would have a minor effect on the skinks and may qualify for application of a categorical exclusion pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, DOI's NEPA regulations, and the DOI Departmental Manual. A low-effect ITP is one that would result in (1) minor or nonsignificant effects on species covered in the HCP; (2) nonsignificant effects on the human environment; and (3) impacts that, when added together with the impacts of other

past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions, would not result in significant cumulative effects to the human environment.

Next Steps

The Service will evaluate the application and the comments to determine whether to issue the requested ITP. We will also conduct an intra-Service consultation pursuant to section 7 of the ESA to evaluate the effects of the proposed take. After considering the preceding and other matters, we will determine whether the permit issuance criteria of section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA have been met. If met, the Service will issue ITP number PER11450292 to ADH Rollins Court, LLC.

Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made available to the public. If you submit a comment at <https://www.regulations.gov>, your entire comment, including any personal identifying information, will be posted on the website. If you submit a hardcopy comment that includes personal identifying information, such as your address, phone number, or email address, you may request at the top of your document that we withhold this information from public review. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Moreover, all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public disclosure in their entirety.

Authority

The Service provides this notice under section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.32) and the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500 through 1508 and 43 CFR part 46).

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Manager, *Division of Environmental Review,*

Florida Ecological Services Field Office.

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