

News Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management to hold public information gathering forum on Desert Tortoise General Conservation Plan

Palm Springs, Calif. — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (Bureau), will hold two virtual and one in-person information gathering forums to involve the public in the early stages of a proposed environmental impact statement for a general conservation plan for the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in California. The Service is in the initial stages of identifying issues for the environmental impact statement and invites the public to submit comments. The information gathering public comment period begins June 1 and ends July 1, 2022.

The Service is proposing to develop a general conservation plan to provide a streamlined mechanism for local agencies and proponents engaged in covered activities that lack a federal nexus to meet the statutory and regulatory requirements of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, while promoting conservation of the federally threatened desert tortoise. Initial ideas for covered activities include commercial, agricultural, residential, industrial, and infrastructure development, and recreational activities. The Service is proposing to standardize the issuance of incidental take permits that cover take of the desert tortoise. The Bureau is considering identifying areas that could be used for relocation of desert tortoises that may be displaced by covered activities.

The proposed environmental impact statement will be developed in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 United States Code 4321 et seq.); Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA; and section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act, as amended (15 United States Code 1532). The environmental impact statement will evaluate the impacts of and alternatives to the proposed approval and implementation of the general conservation plan.

The virtual information forums will be held on June 14, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific Time and June 15, 2022, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Pacific Time, with an in-person meeting in Victorville, California, at the Hilton Garden Inn (12603 Mariposa Road, Victorville, CA 92395) on June 16, 2022, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Registration for the forums, forum updates, and more information on the proposed action is available at www.virtualpublicmeeting.com/usfws-desert-tortoise-gcp-eis. Those unable to attend the meetings or who wish to ask questions may do so by contacting Ray Bransfield (ray_bransfield@fws.gov) or Amy Fesnock (afesnock@blm.gov). Comments may be submitted at the website above or via email to Ray Bransfield (ray_bransfield@fws.gov) through July 1, 2022.

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 publicly available at any time. While you may request that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, the Service cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so. Anonymity is not allowed for submissions from organizations or businesses or from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information about our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov/cno or connect with us via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).

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