

News Release

Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250
Carlsbad, California 92008
Phone: 760-431-9440

<https://www.fws.gov/office/carlsbad-fish-and-wildlife>



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: jessica_dambrosio@fws.gov

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opens public scoping period on draft environmental impact statement for desert tortoise general conservation plan

Agency to hold three public meetings during comment period

Palm Springs, Calif. — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the opening of a public scoping period on a draft environmental impact statement for a general conservation plan for the federally threatened Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in California.

The general conservation plan will support local agencies and individuals proposing a range of covered activities on non-federal lands in meeting the statutory and regulatory requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, while promoting conservation of the desert tortoise.

The Service is proposing to streamline ESA compliance for the species on non-federal lands during commercial, agricultural, residential, industrial and infrastructure development. The Bureau of Land Management, which is a cooperating agency for the environmental impact statement, is also considering identifying areas that could be used for relocation of desert tortoises that may be displaced by covered activities and more effectively promote tortoise conservation and recovery.

The environmental impact statement will evaluate impacts of the general conservation plan, and the public can assist in its development by identifying important issues and alternatives that should be considered.

The draft general conservation plan and instructions on how to submit comments are available at www.regulations.gov, by searching Docket No. FWS-R8-ES-2023-0084. Comments will be accepted until August 31, 2023.

Additionally, the Service will hold virtual and in-person public meetings to provide overview and answer questions about the proposed plan. The virtual meetings are scheduled for July 25, 2023, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and July 27, 2023, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Pacific Time. The in-person meeting is scheduled for August 10, 2023, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Pacific Time in Victorville, California, at the Hilton Garden Inn (12603 Mariposa Road, Victorville, CA 92395). [Find out more information about the meetings.](#)

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