



News Release

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ELECTRIC UTILITY INDUSTRY, SERVICE TEAM TO PROTECT BIRDS

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New voluntary guidelines for protecting birds from electrocution and collisions with power lines now being developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) promise improved safeguards for migratory birds.

Electrocutions and line strikes are a particular threat to birds with large wingspans, such as eagles, hawks, and owls – all species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Avian interactions with power lines also cause power outages, which represent added cost and inconvenience for electric utilities and their customers.

The new guidelines will give electric utilities a framework to use in developing voluntary Avian Protection Plans (APP) tailored to their specific operations. The APP guidance document, which will be published on the Service and APLIC websites, will reference the latest industry standards for preventing avian power line interactions, including recommendations from the most current edition of APLIC's "Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines."

"This cooperative effort will enhance existing voluntary conservation efforts by the electric utility industry," said Service Director Steve Williams. "We

value our partnership with APLIC and the industry, and encourage electric power companies to take advantage of the new guidelines."

"A voluntary approach protects birds through industry cooperation, rather than through mandatory 'one-size-fits-all' agreements," said Jim Burruss, APLIC chair and a representative of PacifiCorp. "Customers expect utilities to provide a reliable source of energy, and the public expects the Service to protect the Nation's wildlife resources. Our collaborative work on voluntary guidelines for Avian Protection Plans should help safeguard birds, enhance energy delivery, and cut costs for electric utilities."

The new guidelines, like those already published by the Service for the communication tower industry, outline practical tested ways to reduce threats to birds. Similar recommendations have just been released by the Service for the wind turbine industry.

"We will continue working with individual electric power companies to develop company-specific approaches for protecting birds," Williams said. "Voluntary industry cooperation has long been essential to our conservation efforts. The new guidelines build on that tradition."

The Service and APLIC have a long history of working together on avian power line issues. Created in 1989 to evaluate whooping crane collisions with power lines in the Rocky Mountains, APLIC was originally a partnership involving the Service, the National Audubon Society, and 10 electric utilities.

Today APLIC members include representatives from the Edison Electric Institute, 18 investor-owned utilities, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (which represents nearly 1,000 consumer-owned electric utilities), the Electric Power Research Institute, two Federal utility agencies and the Service. APLIC continues to sponsor short courses, fund research, and update guidance materials designed to protect birds and enhance energy delivery.

More information can be found at <www.aplic.org>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.