

News Release



Pacific Southwest Region

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Service Seeks Public Comment on Scope of Environmental Review of Eagle Permit Application for Pacific Gas & Electric Company *Public Scoping Meeting Set for May 21 in Sacramento*

Sacramento - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking public input as it conducts an environmental review of issuing a programmatic eagle take permit to Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) for activities within its utility service area in California. PG&E is requesting a permit to address potential impacts to bald and golden eagles as a result of collisions with or electrocution by above-ground power lines and disturbance by company operations and facilities over a 30 year period.

Bald and golden eagles are protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (Eagle Act). Before being issued an eagle permit, an applicant must demonstrate that it is implementing measures to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce or eliminate, and mitigate threats to eagles during the life of the project.

Since 2007, PG&E has implemented a comprehensive Avian Protection Plan to minimize and mitigate the potential adverse effects to avian species from PG&E's existing facilities. PG&E recently expanded on its existing Avian Protection Plan by developing an Eagle Conservation Plan (ECP). The ECP serves as the foundation for an application for a thirty-year eagle take permit under the Eagle Act that was submitted to the Service. If approved, PG&E will continue its current conservation actions to reduce impacts to eagles, including measures that make power poles safe for birds and eagles over the 30 year permit term.

An environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared by the Service to evaluate the effects of issuing an eagle permit as well as the effects of several other permitting alternatives, and an alternative of not issuing a permit. The Service will use information in the EIS to determine if issuance of a programmatic eagle permit

to PG&E is compatible and consistent with the eagle preservation standard under the Eagle Act, which is a stable or increasing breeding population.

The Service is seeking comments and information from agencies and the public on the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. A public scoping meeting will be held on May 21, 2015 at Red Lion Hotel Woodlake Conference Center, 500 Leisure Lane, Sacramento, CA 95815. The Service will accept comments during a 60-day comment period which will close on June 30, 2015. .

Under the Eagle Act, the Service can issue eagle permits to entities whose activities may result in “take” of eagles that is unintentional and incidental to otherwise lawful activities. Electric utility companies are not required to have an eagle permit. However, companies operating without an eagle permit risk federal penalties, including criminal prosecution under the Eagle Act, for any unauthorized take of eagles.

Prior to authorizing any new eagle permits, the Service must determine that any unavoidable take is compatible with the preservation of eagles. The limited data available for golden eagle populations indicate that any increase in authorized take should be offset (for example by preventing eagle deaths elsewhere or by creating eagle breeding habitat) in order to be compatible with maintaining stable breeding populations.

You may request further information or submit comment by one of the following methods:

Email: [FW8_eagle_nepa@fws.gov]. Include “PG&E Eagle Conservation Plan EIS” in the subject line of the message.

U.S. Mail or hand delivery: Heather Beeler, Migratory Bird Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Southwest Region, 2800 Cottage Way, W-2605, Sacramento, California 95825.

Fax: Heather Beeler, Migratory Bird Program, 916-414-6486, Attn: PG&E Eagle Conservation Plan EIS Comments.

You can find the [full Federal Register Notice here](#).

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