responsible way. BOEM's functions include: leasing, plan administration, environmental studies, NEPA analysis, resource evaluation, economic analysis, and renewable energy. BSEE is responsible for enforcing safety and environmental regulations. BSEE functions include: All field operations including permitting and inspections, research, offshore regulatory programs, oil spill response, and training and environmental compliance.

BOEMRE developed the Final EIS for WPA Lease Sale 218 in order to consider new circumstances and information available since publication of the prior EIS's or arising from, among other things, the *Deepwater Horizon* event and spill. In this Final EIS, BOEMRE evaluated three alternatives:

Alternative A—The Proposed Action: This is the Agency's preferred alternative. This alternative would offer for lease all unleased blocks within the WPA for oil and gas operations, except whole and partial blocks within the boundary of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary and whole and partial blocks in the Western Gap buffer area. The WPA sale area encompasses about 28.7 million acres. Approximately 18.3 million ac (64 percent) of the WPA sale area is currently unleased. The estimated amount of resources projected to be developed as a result of the proposed WPA lease sale is 0.222–0.423 billion barrels of oil (BBO) and 1.495–2.647 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of gas.

Alternative B—The Proposed Action Excluding the Unleased Blocks Near Biologically Sensitive Topographic Features: This alternative would offer for lease all unleased blocks in the WPA, as described for the proposed action (Alternative A), with the exception of any unleased blocks subject to the Topographic Features Stipulation.

Alternative C—No Action: This is the cancellation of the proposed WPA lease sale. The opportunity for development of the estimated 0.222–0.423 BBO and 1.495–2.647 Tcf of gas that could have resulted from the proposed WPA lease sale would be precluded or postponed. Any potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed lease sale would not occur or would be postponed.

After careful consideration, BOEM has selected the proposed action, identified as the Agency's preferred alternative (Alternative A) in the Final SEIS. BOEM's selection of the preferred alternative reflects an orderly resource development with protection of the human, marine, and coastal environments while simultaneously ensuring that the public receives an equitable return for these resources and that free-market competition is maintained.

Record of Decision Availability: To obtain a single printed or CD–ROM copy of the ROD for WPA Lease Sale 218, you may contact the BOEM, GOM OCS Region, Public Information Office (MS 5034), 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, Room 250, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123–2394 (1–800–200–GULF). An electronic copy of the ROD is available at the BOEM's Internet Web site at *http://www.gomr.boemre.gov/homepg/regulate/environ/nepa/nepaprocess.html.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information on the ROD, you may contact Mr. Gary D. Goeke, BOEM, GOM OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard (MS 5410), New Orleans, Louisiana 70123–2394. You may also contact Mr. Goeke by telephone at (504) 736–3233.

Authority: This NOA is published pursuant to the regulations (40 CFR part 1506) implementing the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.* (1988)).

Dated: November 8, 2011.

Tommy P. Beaudreau,

Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

[FR Doc. 2011–29343 Filed 11–10–11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–MR–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R2–ES–2010–N174; 20124–1112–0000–F2]

Draft Environmental Assessment and Safe Harbor Agreement for the Houston Toad Within Nine Texas Counties

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Defense Fund (Applicant) has applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for an enhancement of survival permit pursuant to a section of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The requested permit, which is for a period of 30 years, would authorize incidental take of the endangered Houston toad (*Bufo houstonensis*) as a result of conservation actions, land management, and other land-use activities. We invite the public to review and comment on the permit application and the associated draft Safe Harbor Agreement (Agreement).

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before January 13, 2012.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments or requests for copies or more information by any of the following methods. You may request hard copies or a CD–ROM of the documents.

- *Email: Edith_Erfling@fws.gov.* Include ''Clear Lake Ecological Services Field Office draft Houston Toad Programatic SHA/draft EA'' in the subject line of the message.
- *Fax:* [Attn: Field Supervisor], (281) 488–5882.
- *U.S. Mail:* 17629 El Camino Real, Suite 211, Houston, Texas 77058.
- *In-Person Drop-off, Viewing, or Pickup:* Call (281) 286–8282 to make an appointment (necessary for view/pickup only) during regular business hours at 17629 El Camino Real, Suite 211, Houston, Texas 77058. For more information on locations for viewing or obtaining documents, see ''Public Availability of Documents'' under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Marty Tuegel, at the Service's Southwest Regional Office, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103 (505) 248–6651).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under a Safe Harbor Agreement, participating property owners voluntarily undertake management activities to enhance, restore, or maintain habitat benefiting species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Safe Harbor Agreements encourage private and other non-Federal property owners to implement conservation efforts for listed species by assuring property owners they will not be subjected to increased property use restrictions as a result of increased target species abundance due to their efforts to improve conditions for listed species on their property. Application requirements and issuance criteria for enhancement of survival permits through Safe Harbor Agreements are found in 50 CFR 17.22 and 17.32.

Non-Federal landowners within Austin, Bastrop, Burleson, Colorado, Lavaca, Lee, Leon, Milam, and Robertson Counties, Texas, may be enrolled under the proposed Agreement if it is approved by entering into a Cooperative Agreement with the Applicant. The Cooperative Agreement will include: (1) A map of the property and its legal location; (2) the portion of the property to be enrolled and its acreage; (3) a description of the habitat types that occur on the portion of the property to be enrolled, including

accurate descriptions of vegetation, water features, and soil types; (4) current land use practices and existing development; and (5) a detailed account of conservation activities to be undertaken on the portion of the property to be enrolled. After signing a Cooperative Agreement, landowners will receive a certificate of inclusion to document landowners' participation in the Safe Harbor Agreement and convey incidental take authorization from the Applicant to certificate recipients. The Applicant will be responsible for annual monitoring and reporting related to implementation of the Safe Harbor Agreement and Cooperative Agreements and fulfillment of their provisions.

We have worked with the Applicant to design conservation activities expected to have a net conservation benefit to the Houston toad within the nine Texas counties to be covered under this proposed Agreement. These conservation activities include: (1) Brush management to create desired understory conditions and facilitate restoration of native ground cover; (2) forest enhancement/restoration to create favorable canopy conditions; (3) prescribed burning to restore, create, and maintain desired understory and ground cover conditions; (4) enhancement of existing breeding ponds to provide habitat for breeding adults and emerging toadlets; (5) control of red imported fire ants to maximize successful toadlet survival; (6) creation of new breeding ponds; and (7) headstarting and/or reintroduction of captively bred Houston toads (see section 5 ''Conservation Activities'' in the draft Agreement).

These conservation activities are expected to: (1) Enhance Houston toad foraging and hibernating habitat; (2) create and enhance Houston toad breeding and toadlet emergence habitat; (3) facilitate Houston toad dispersal through the creation and enhancement of habitat linkages throughout the species' range; (4) increase Houston toad population numbers through headstarting and reintroduction; and (5) facilitate viable, self-sustaining Houston toad subpopulations.

The incidental take of toads may occur from: (1) Habitat management actions conducted in accordance with the conservation activities in the Agreement, (2) ongoing land use activities that may have an increased chance of taking a toad if toad numbers increase, as expected, and (3) cessation of the conservation activities, return to baseline activities; if enrolled landowners exercise their authorization to do so under the permit.

The impacts of permit issuance and implementation on the human environment are analyzed within the draft Environmental Assessment, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) prohibits ''taking'' of threatened or endangered species. However, the Service, under limited circumstances, may issue permits to take threatened and endangered wildlife species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities.

Public Availability of Comments

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 made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authorities

We provide this notice pursuant to section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.22), and the National Environmental Policy Act (42 CFR 4371 *et seq.*).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: October 13, 2011.

Joy E. Nicholopoulos,

Acting Regional Director, Southwest Region, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 2011–29044 Filed 11–10–11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R8–R–2011–N199; 1261–0000–81680–W5]

Otay River Estuary Restoration Project, South San Diego Bay Unit of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge, California; Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent; request for public comment.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), intend to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed Otay River Estuary Restoration Project. The proposed project involves the restoration of 66.4 acres of estuarine (subtidal and intertidal) wetland habitat within the western terminus of the Otay River, part of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This notice advises the public that we intend to gather information necessary to prepare an EIS, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We encourage the public and other agencies to participate in the NEPA scoping process by sending written suggestions and information on the issues and concerns that should be addressed in the draft EIS, including the range of alternatives, appropriate mitigation measures, and the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts.

DATES: To ensure that we have adequate time to evaluate and incorporate suggestions and other input, we must receive your comments on or before January 6, 2012.

ADDRESSES: Send your comments or requests for more information by any one of the following methods.

Email: Otay_NOI@fws.gov. Please include ''Otay Estuary NOI'' in the subject line of the message.

Fax: Attn: Brian Collins, (619) 476–9149.

U.S. Mail: Brian Collins, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex, P.O. Box 2358, Chula Vista, CA 91912.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brian Collins, Refuge Manager (619) 575–2704, extension 302), or Andy Yuen, Project Leader (619) 476–9150, extension 100).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In 2006, we completed a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and EIS/Record of Decision (ROD) to guide the management of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge over a 15-year period (71 FR 64552, November 2, 2006). The wildlife and habitat management goal of the selected management alternative in the CCP for the South San Diego Bay Unit is to ''protect, manage, enhance, and restore * * * coastal wetlands * * * to benefit the native fish, wildlife, and plant species supported within the South San Diego Bay Unit.'' One of the strategies identified to meet this goal is to restore native habitats in the Otay River floodplain. The proposed restoration project represents step-down restoration planning for the western portion of the Otay River floodplain. The site-specific EIS for this project will tier from the programmatic EIS and ROD prepared for the CCP.