United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
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Sacramento, California 95825-1846

In Reply Refer to:
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2014-I-0470

JUL 8 2014

Gregory S. Capra, P.E., LEED AP
6451 B Street
Beale AFB, California 95903-1708

Subject: Informal Consultation on the Four Bridges Replacement Project, Beale Air Force Base (AFB), Yuba County, California

Dear Mr. Capra:

This letter is in response to your June 11, 2014, letter requesting concurrence with a determination Four Bridges Replacement Project at Beale AFB is not likely to adversely affect federally-listed species. Your request was received by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on June 13, 2014. At issue are the effects of the proposed project on the federally-listed as threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), the federally-listed as endangered vernal pool tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardi*) (henceforth, both referred to as vernal pool crustaceans) and the federally-listed as endangered giant garter snake (GGS) (*Thamnophis gigas*). The proposed project is not located within critical habitat for the vernal pool crustaceans, therefore critical habitat will not be affected. Critical habitat for the GGS has not been established; therefore, none will be affected. This response is provided under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) (Act).

The Service used the following to review your request: 1) your June 11, 2014, letter; 2) the Special Area Management Plan and associated Beale AFB programmatic biological opinion (81420-2009-F-1118-1); and 3) other information on file at the Service's Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office.

Beale Air Force Base (AFB) proposes to replace four bridges over Dry Creek and Best Slough along Gavin Mandery Drive. These actions are covered under the Special Area Management Plan Programmatic Biological Opinion (Bridges: Maintenance and Upgrades) and will involve the following activities:

- Replacement of four bridges over Dry Creek and Best Slough along Gavin Mandery Drive (about 450 feet of existing bridge infrastructure along a 1,125-foot stretch of road). The bridge replacement action would raise the bridges (less than 3-foot height increase compared to existing height) and reduce the number and size of piers within the channels. During demolition and construction within the Best Slough and Dry Creek channels, the channel would be temporarily dewatered using a bladder dam. Flows would be routed through a culvert and re-enter the channel downstream of the construction area.

- Reinstall sewer and communication lines attached to the bridges, moving them above the 100-year high water elevation.

- Widen Gavin Mandery Drive from one to two traffic lanes through the project area, increasing the width of paved roadway from 18-22 feet (18 to 22-foot travel lanes with variable width gravel shoulders) to 32 feet (24-foot travel lanes with 4-foot paved shoulders).

- Install a new sewage pump station consisting of a series of two or three belowground vaults that would house pumps and controls about 200 feet east of Dry Creek and south of Gavin Mandery Drive. The pump station would include a perimeter fence and an aboveground emergency generator with secondary containment of the fuel tank. The pump station footprint would cover about 100 square feet.

- Install about 50 feet of additional sanitary sewer force main from the new pump station to a manhole located west of the bridge structures. Sanitary sewer would be attached to the bridges over the Dry Creek and Best Slough channels, and would be installed at a depth of between 3 and 14 feet below ground surface within previously disturbed annual grassland east and west of the bridges.

- Install about 300 feet of new belowground communication line and 60 feet of electrical line north of Gavin Mandery Drive to service the new pump station. Electrical and communications lines would be installed within a 3- to 4-foot wide and 2- to 2.5-foot deep trench, within the graveled road shoulder of Gavin Mandery Drive.

- Installation of up to 3 manholes along the additional sanitary sewer force main, which will require excavation to a depth of 5 to 16 feet and disturbance of about 10 feet diameter at each location.

- Construction access would be from Gavin Mandery Drive and staging areas would be located along the road and/or within 50 feet of the edge of the road.

- Gavin Mandery Drive, through the proposed project area, would be closed to vehicle traffic during the 3 to 5 month construction period. Residents within the Military Housing Area would be directed to use Camp Beale Highway and 14th Street as an alternate travel route.

- To eliminate the threat of overtopping the existing bridges and damage to sewer pipelines, the project should be completed prior to the start of the 2015 rainy season (generally beginning November 1). The bridge replacements are expected to take 3 to 5 months.

Beale AFB has identified that the following avoidance, minimization and compensation measures will be implemented for the proposed action:

1) A biologist approved by the Service will conduct preconstruction surveys of all ground disturbance areas within sensitive habitats to determine if any federally-listed species may be present prior to the start of construction. These surveys will be conducted 2 weeks prior to the start of construction activities in any sensitive habitat. If any federally-listed species are

found during the preconstruction surveys, the Service-approved biologist will contact the Service to determine how to proceed. At least 15 days prior to the onset of activities, Beale AFB will submit the name(s) and credentials of biologists who will conduct these preconstruction surveys. No project activities will begin until proponents have received written approval from the Service that the biologist(s) is qualified to conduct the work.

2) Prior to initiation of construction activities, sensitive areas, such as vernal pools, wetlands, riparian areas, and potential habitat for federally listed species (i.e., vernal pool crustaceans, GGS) will be staked and flagged as exclusion zones where construction activities cannot take place. Orange construction barrier fencing will be used to designate exclusion zones. The flagging and fencing will be clearly marked as an environmentally sensitive area. The contractor will remove all fencing, stakes, and flagging within 60 days of construction completion.

3) A Service approved biologist will monitor construction activities in or adjacent to sensitive habitats. The biological monitor will ensure compliance with the avoidance and minimization measures required to protect federally-listed species and their habitats. If federally-listed species are found that are likely to be affected by work activities, the Service approved biologist will have the authority to stop any aspect of the project that could result in unauthorized take of a federally-listed species. If the biological monitor exercises this authority, he/she must notify the Service by telephone and letter within one working day.

4) Environmental awareness training will be provided for all construction personnel working on the proposed project. Training will be provided at the start of work and within 15 days of any new worker arrival. The program will consist of a briefing on environmental issues relative to the proposed project. Training will be conducted by a Service approved biologist.

5) A biological monitor will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible (see Beale AFB INRMP, [Beale AFB 2011]).

6) All wetlands/drainages/vernal pools will have erosion control measures (straw waddles, hay bales, silt fencing) installed when work is within 250 feet of a wetland or where hydrological continuity exists between the construction activities and the wetland. Construction boundaries within the buffer will be designated with fencing to ensure no equipment and/or construction workers access those protected areas.

7) Best Slough south of the bridge structures is considered potentially suitable aquatic habitat for GGS, in addition, the upland area within 200 feet of the channel also provides potentially suitable upland habitat for GGS. Although GGS has never been detected on Beale AFB, construction activities will be timed to avoid sensitive life history periods for GGS (i.e., construction activities within upland habitat during the snake's hibernation period [October 1 through May 1]; Best Slough channel dewatered for a minimum of 15 days prior to the start of construction activities during the snake's active period [April 1 through October 1]).

8) Construction activities will be conducted between May 1st and October 1st, when the potential for direct mortality will be lessened because GGS are likely to actively avoid danger.

9) A 200-foot buffer will be implemented surrounding suitable aquatic habitat for GGS. No construction activities will occur within the 200-foot buffer from October 1st through May 1st.

10) Disturbance to all hibernacula areas (i.e., rocks, burrows, logs, brush piles, etc.) will be avoided from October 1st to May 1st and during cold or cool-weather periods when GGS are inactive or moving into upland habitat in search of hibernacula.

11) All construction-related holes, ditches, or trenches will be covered to prevent entrapment of individual GGS. Provisions for egress for trapped snakes will be provided. If a trapped GGS is discovered the Service will be immediately contacted to recommend appropriate action.

12) No work will be conducted in the vicinity of vernal pools and streams between November 1st and May 1st, unless specifically approved by the Beale AFB Environmental Office who will field verify soil saturation, visual ponding, and expected surface disturbance. The Service will be notified of any work approved between November 1st and May 1st.

13) Off-road travel outside of the demarcated construction boundaries will be prohibited.

14) Motor vehicles and equipment will only be fueled and serviced in designated service areas. All fueling and maintenance of vehicles and other equipment and staging areas will occur at least 250 feet from any wetland/drainage habitat or water body. Prior to the onset of work, Beale AFB will prepare a plan to allow a prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. All workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

After reviewing the information provided, including on-site habitat, the potential for vernal pool crustaceans and GGS to be found at the project sites, and the proposed conservation measures described in the request, we concur with your determination that the proposed project, as described, is not likely to adversely affect the vernal pool crustaceans or GGS.

This concurrence is provided specific to this action area, and for the proposed project action only as originally described within the request.

This concludes our review of your proposed project and no further coordination with the Service under the Act is necessary at this time. Please note, however, that this letter does not authorize take of listed species. Section 9 of the Act prohibits the "take" (e.g., harm, harass, pursue, injure, kill) of federally-listed wildlife species. Therefore, unless new information reveals effects of the proposed project that may affect listed species in a manner or to an extent not considered, or a new species or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by the proposed project, no further action pursuant to the Act is necessary.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Mark Littlefield, Chief, Watershed Planning Branch at the letterhead address or (916) 414-6600.

Sincerely,

Daniel Welsh
Acting Field Supervisor

cc:
Jamie N. Visinoni, Beale AFB, CA

Reference

Beale Air Force Base (Beale AFB). 2011. (October). *Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, Beale Air Force Base, California, August 2011 to August 2016*. Final. Updated by Beale Air Force Base, 9th Civil Engineer Squadron, Environmental Element. Beale AFB, CA.