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June 17, 2013

Dear DRECP Stakeholders and Covered Species Working Group Members:

The Renewable Energy Action Team (REAT) agencies have revised the Draft Covered Species List that was posted on March 25, 2013. These refinements are based on further analysis by the REAT agency staff.

The attached list does not address whether, or if, a list of species will be developed for planning purposes (Planning Species). The REAT agencies are still evaluating species that may be appropriate for that purpose.

Also attached is the "Selection of DRECP Covered Species: Process and Methods Overview" (draft), a summary of the steps taken to develop the list.

The list is provided to you now as early information, and we are not asking for additional comment on the list at this time. The list represents the species that the REAT agencies are moving forward with in the development of the public draft DRECP. We will welcome your comments on the list during the public review period of the draft DRECP. The final list of covered species will be determined after the public review of the draft DRECP and EIR/EIS.

Thank you again for your participation in the planning process. Please free to call or email if you have any questions.

Best regards,  
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# JUNE 2013

## SELECTION OF DRECP COVERED SPECIES: PROCESS AND METHODS OVERVIEW

This document provides a brief summary of the process and methods used to create the proposed Covered Species List (CSL) for the DRECP. The CSL is being developed through an iterative planning process incorporating input from agency experts and reviews from the public, stakeholders, and independent scientists, using best professional judgment of available information on species ecology and life history. In short, the process involved using a combination of analyses of all reviewed taxa as well as taxon-specific analyses where necessary. A more detailed technical description of the current process and methods will be provided with the public draft of the DRECP. The CSL will continue to be evaluated and revised throughout development of the DRECP.

Proposed Covered Species are those taxa for which the applicants will seek permits under Section 2835 of the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA) and/or Section 10 of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) for incidental take resulting from Covered Activities. The DRECP must address each Covered Species according to NCCPA and ESA standards. For a review of regulatory considerations related to Covered Species, please see the tutorial posted at [www.drecp.org](http://www.drecp.org).<sup>1</sup>

### Master Species List and Filtering

Early in the planning process, the DRECP agencies assembled the Covered Species Working Group<sup>2</sup>, which was a subset of the DRECP Stakeholder Committee, to make recommendations on the CSL. In late 2010, the stakeholder Covered Species Working Group developed a species “filtering” tool, whereby taxa of potential concern would be evaluated according to a series of criteria to determine if they should be carried forward for consideration as Covered Species. The Master Species List (MSL) of taxa from 2010 was presented in the *Natural Communities and Covered Species Preliminary Description for the DRECP*.<sup>3</sup> This document compiled taxa from the following sources:

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<sup>1</sup>[http://drecp.org/meetings/2011-07-13\\_meeting/presentations/DRECP\\_Covered\\_Species\\_Tutorial.pdf](http://drecp.org/meetings/2011-07-13_meeting/presentations/DRECP_Covered_Species_Tutorial.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Membership included representatives from the consultant team, electric utilities, environmental organizations, military, Renewable Energy Action Team (REAT) agencies, renewable energy industry, and other interest groups.

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.drecp.org/meetings/2010-11-17\\_meeting/presentations/DRECP\\_Covered\\_Species\\_Preliminary\\_Description.pdf](http://www.drecp.org/meetings/2010-11-17_meeting/presentations/DRECP_Covered_Species_Preliminary_Description.pdf)

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- *DRECP Planning Agreement*<sup>4</sup> Species of Planning Interest List. (REAT agency biologists reviewed planning documents and resource management plans in conjunction with species range maps, occurrence data, and professional knowledge.)
  - Recommendations from the Independent Science Advisors (ISA 2010)
  - Information gathered from wildlife agency (*i.e.*, CDFW and USFWS) occurrence data (e.g., California Natural Diversity Database [CNDDDB]).

The 2010 filtering tool formed the foundation for subsequent CSL work by an interagency technical expert group, referred to as the Covered Species Group (CSG), which was assembled in late 2012. The CSG supplemented the MSL described above with taxa recommended by the Independent Science Panel (ISP 2012), updated CNDDDB data, and additional taxa suggested by stakeholders and others from 2009 through early 2013.

The four questions (“species filters”) below were evaluated for taxa in the MSL to help identify appropriate taxa to be included as DRECP Covered Species. Other questions (*i.e.*, addressing adequacy of baseline information) were asked on a case-by-case basis when necessary to clarify filter results or to help inform more complicated decision-making that required consideration of additional factors. Expert consultation and other analyses were used to help minimize potential limitations associated with data sources used in this species filtering approach.

**Does the species occur in the Plan Area?** This question was answered through a spatial Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis on CNDDDB records and the Plan Area. To help determine the presence of each taxon likely distributed within the area but lacking records in the CNDDDB, the CSG utilized agency knowledge of the region and consulted several literature and online sources (including range maps and available species distribution models).

**Would Covered Activities affect the species?** This question was answered through a spatial GIS analysis on DRECP transmission alignments and Development Focus Areas for each draft alternative described in the December 17, 2012 *Description and Comparative Evaluation of Draft DRECP Alternatives* (“interim document”).<sup>5</sup>

**Is the viability and recovery of the species greatly dependent on conservation and management in the Plan Area?** This question was answered using the state and federal listing status as a proxy for viability and recovery information, which are not available for all taxa on the MSL. The state and federal listing status from the wildlife agencies were recorded and converted to a relative risk rank. That is, taxa designated (Candidate)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.energy.ca.gov/2009publications/REAT-1000-2009-034/REAT-1000-2009-034-F.PDF>

<sup>5</sup> <http://drecp.org/documents/#eval>

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Endangered or Threatened under the ESA or California Endangered Species Act (CESA) received a higher risk rank than those taxa with all other (or no) ESA/CESA listing status levels.

**Is the species currently listed or likely to become listed during the permit term based on current status, threats, and population trends?** This question was answered using the conservation status from five organizational special-status species lists to generate a relative index of concern. This index was used as a source of additional information for further discussion on some taxa.

## **Other Analyses Following Initial Filtering**

To incorporate input from those outside the CSG and to provide greater resolution within the filter results, several other analyses were conducted to determine whether other taxa, in addition to the taxa initially identified through the species filtering process, should be considered as Covered Species. Three analyses focused on expertise gathered from wider groups of individuals, and three analyses focused on the examination of published information. Numerical or qualitative summaries from the completed analyses helped inform final recommendations.

- **Agency staff input:** Analysis of answers to filter questions solicited from agency staff experts at BLM, CDFW, CEC, and USFWS.
- **Public comments:** Analysis of comment letters and stakeholder correspondence submitted since 2009 in response to DRECP documents.
- **Invertebrate expert input:** Outreach to invertebrate experts identified in the ISA (2010) report Appendix C (Individuals with Known Expertise Regarding Sensitive Invertebrates in the DRECP Planning Area) to solicit recommendations on invertebrate taxa to be further considered for inclusion on the CSL.
- **Multiple District Listing Workplan:**<sup>6</sup> Examination of this USFWS publication to provide information on potential federal listings in 2013–2018.
- **Statewide extreme rarity:** Ongoing analysis using CNDDDB and DRECP GIS data to examine potential cases of extreme rarity not immediately evident in the filter results.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving\\_ESA/listing\\_workplan\\_FY13-18.html](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/listing_workplan_FY13-18.html)

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- **Mammal Species of Special Concern:** Ongoing analysis of data in the *Terrestrial Mammal Species of Special Concern in California* (Bolster, ed. 1998) and the planned 2013 update, *California Mammal Species of Special Concern*.

## **REAT Manager Review**

Upon completion of all filtering and other analyses described in this methods description, a total of 1,029 taxa were considered by the CSG as of June 2013. The list of taxa that resulted from analyses described earlier (that is, the preliminary CSL as determined by the CSG), plus those on the December 2012 “interim document,” and those taxa requested for further discussion by agency staff (*i.e.*, despite initial species filter results or as a result of the additional analyses) were combined into a list for detailed examination. Working together, the CSG and the REAT Managers evaluated available information (*e.g.*, species filter results, agency staff rationale, natural history information) for these taxa before rendering joint recommendations. The June 2013 list of proposed Covered Species contains 52 taxa (see end of document).

## **Final Analysis and DRECP Agency Review**

The June 2013 CSL is being used to prepare the Administrative Draft. Before the DRECP is finalized, the filtering process described above will be repeated using updated GIS layers and CNDDDB data. Additional information and public comments will be analyzed to help identify any changes (additions or deletions) to the June 2013 CSL.

## **Literature Cited**

- Bolster, B.C., editor. 1998. *Terrestrial Mammal Species of Special Concern in California*. Draft Final Report prepared by P.V. Brylski, P.W. Collins, E.D. Pierson, W.E. Rainey and T.E. Kucera. Report submitted to California Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Management Division, Nongame Bird and Mammal Conservation Program for Contract No. FG3146WM.
- ISA (Independent Science Advisors). 2010. *Recommendations of Independent Science Advisors for the California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)*. Public Review Draft. Prepared for the Renewable Energy Action Team: California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and California Energy Commission. August 2010.
- ISP (Independent Science Panel). 2012. *Independent Science Review for the California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)*. Final Report. Prepared for the Renewable Energy Action Team: California Department of Fish and Game, U.S.

## June 2013 DRECP Administrative Draft Proposed Covered Species List<sup>7</sup>

<b>Amphibians and Reptiles</b>	
Arroyo toad	<i>Anaxyrus californicus</i>
Tehachapi slender salamander	<i>Batrachoseps stebbinsi</i>
Agassizi's desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>
Flat-tailed horned lizard	<i>Phrynosoma mcallii</i>
Mojave fringe-toed lizard	<i>Uma scoparia</i>
<b>Birds</b>	
Tri-colored blackbird	<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>
Mountain plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>
Western yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>
Willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax trailii</i> (all subspecies, including <i>extimus</i> )
Greater sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis tabida</i>
California condor	<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>
California black rail	<i>Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus</i>
Gila woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>
Elf owl	<i>Micrathene whitneyi</i>
Yuma clapper rail	<i>Rallus longirostris yumanensis</i>
Bendire's thrasher	<i>Toxostoma bendirei</i>
Bell's vireo (Arizona)	<i>Vireo bellii arizonae</i>
Bell's vireo (Least)	<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>
<b>Fishes</b>	
Desert pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon macularius</i>
Owens pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon radiosus</i>
Mohave tui chub	<i>Siphateles bicolor mohavensis</i>
Owens tui chub	<i>Siphateles bicolor snyderi</i>

<sup>7</sup> The June 2013 Covered Species List (CSL) is not yet the final CSL. It represents the CSL that is being used to prepare the Administrative Draft. The DRECP agencies may further modify the CSL before publication of the public review draft based on additional information or analyses.

<b>Mammals</b>	
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>
California leaf-nosed bat	<i>Macrotus californicus</i>
Mojave River vole	<i>Microtus californicus mohavensis</i>
Burro deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus eremicus</i>
Bighorn sheep (all distinct population segments, including the Peninsular Ranges)	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>
Desert kit fox	<i>Vulpes macrotis arsipus</i>
Mohave ground squirrel	<i>Xerospermophilus mohavensis</i>
<b>Plants</b>	
Lane Mountain milk-vetch	<i>Astragalus jaegerianus</i>
Triple-ribbed milk-vetch	<i>Astragalus tricarinatus</i>
Alkali mariposa-lily	<i>Calochortus striatus</i>
Flat-seeded spurge	<i>Chamaesyce platysperma</i>
Munz's cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia munzii</i>
Desert cymopterus	<i>Cymopterus deserticola</i>
Mojave tarplant	<i>Deinandra mohavensis</i>
Bare-stem larkspur	<i>Delphinium scaposum</i>
Parish's daisy	<i>Erigeron parishii</i>
Cushenbury buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum ovalifolium</i> var. <i>vineum</i>
Barstow woolly sunflower	<i>Eriophyllum mohavense</i>
Little San Bernardino Mountains linanthus	<i>Linanthus maculatus</i>
Mojave monkeyflower	<i>Mimulus mohavensis</i>
Bakersfield cactus	<i>Opuntia basilaris</i> var. <i>treleasei</i>
White-margined beardtongue	<i>Penstemon albomarginatus</i>
Parish's phacelia	<i>Phacelia parishii</i>
Parish's alkali grass	<i>Puccinellia parishii</i>
Owens Valley checkerbloom	<i>Sidalcea covillei</i>
Palmer's jackass clover	<i>Wislizenia refracta</i> ssp. <i>palmeri</i>