



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services  
420 South Garfield Avenue, Suite 400  
Pierre, South Dakota 57501-5408

June 13, 2008

Ms. Linda DeVine  
HQ ACC/A7PP  
129 Andrews Street, Suite 122  
Langley Air Force Base, Virginia 23665-2769

Re: Powder River Training Complex,  
Environmental Impact Statement,  
Multiple Counties in South Dakota

Dear Ms. DeVine:

This letter is in response to your request dated June 3, 2008, for environmental comments regarding the above referenced project involving the expansion and enhancement of the existing Powder River Complex near Ellsworth Air Force Base. The area under consideration includes Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Reservations and Butte, Corson, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, and Ziebach Counties in South Dakota.

Please consult National Wetlands Inventory maps (available online at <http://wetlands.fws.gov/>) for any wetlands that exist in the area of proposed activity. If a project may impact wetlands or other important fish and wildlife habitats, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347) and other environmental laws and rules, recommends complete avoidance of these areas, if possible; then minimization of any adverse impacts; and finally, replacement of any lost acres; in that order. Alternatives should be examined and the least damaging practical alternative selected. If wetland impacts are unavoidable, a mitigation plan addressing the number and types of wetland acres to be impacted and the methods of replacement should be prepared and submitted to the resource agencies for review.

Work requiring the alteration or disturbance of wetlands or streams may require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) according to the regulations set forth in section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act or section 404 of the Clean Water Act. You may contact the Corps' Regulatory Office at 28563 Powerhouse Road, Room 118, Pierre, South Dakota 57501, Telephone No. (605) 224-8531.

Enclosed is a list of endangered species by county. In accordance with section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq., we have determined that the following federally listed species may occur in the project area (this list is considered valid for 90 days):

<u>Species</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Expected Occurrence</u>
Whooping crane ( <u>Grus americana</u> )	Endangered	Migration.
Least tern ( <u>Sterna antillarum</u> )	Endangered	Migration, Nesting.
Piping plover ( <u>Charadrius melodus</u> )	Threatened	Migration, Nesting.
Black-footed ferret ( <u>Mustela nigripes</u> )	Endangered/Proposed (Experimental Populations Only)	Potential Resident in Pennington County
Topeka shiner ( <u>Notropis topeka</u> )	Endangered	Known Resident.
Bald eagle ( <u>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</u> )	Delisted	Migration, Winter Resident, Possible Nesting.

Whooping cranes migrate through South Dakota on their way to northern breeding grounds and southern wintering areas. They occupy numerous habitats such as cropland and pastures; wet meadows; shallow marshes; shallow portions of rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and stock ponds; and both freshwater and alkaline basins for feeding and loafing. Overnight roosting sites frequently require shallow water in which they stand and rest. Should construction/activities occur during spring or fall migration, the potential for disturbances to whooping cranes exists. Disturbance (flushing the birds) stresses them at critical times of the year. We recommend that you remain vigilant for these birds. There is little that can be done to reduce disturbance besides ceasing construction at sites where the birds have been observed. The birds normally do not stay in any one area for long during migration. Any whooping crane sightings should be reported to this office.

Least terns and piping plovers are known to nest on the Missouri River and the Cheyenne River, and they may occur along the Moreau River. These species use sparsely vegetated interchannel sandbars, islands, and shorelines for nesting, foraging, and brood-rearing. They are sensitive to human disturbances which often limit reproduction. Surveys for nesting piping plovers and least terns should be performed prior to any construction, and no construction should take place within one-quarter (1/4) mile of any known piping plover or least tern nest. The birds typically breed in South Dakota between the dates of May 1 and August 15.

Several populations of black-footed ferrets have been reintroduced into South Dakota. Sustainable black-footed ferret populations are exclusively dependent on black-tailed prairie dog colonies for food and habitat. Any black-tailed prairie dog towns >80 acres in size or any towns that are part of a ≥1,000 acre complex of prairie dog colonies may be considered black-footed ferret habitat, and surveys for black-footed ferrets may be required prior to any construction on colonies meeting the above requirements.

Topeka shiners are known to occupy numerous small streams within eastern South Dakota, and most are concentrated within the Big Sioux, Vermillion, and James River watersheds. If any work/activities will be conducted in streams, please contact our office to determine which best management practices would minimize potential adverse impacts to the Topeka shiner.

Although the bald eagle has been delisted from the Endangered Species List, it is still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Bald eagles occur throughout South Dakota, and new nests are appearing each year. The birds are associated with large trees, such as cottonwoods, and large lake or river systems, such as the Missouri River. New nests may have been constructed this spring. The best means of avoiding impacts to these birds is by performing activities outside the nesting season of January to August. No construction should occur within one-quarter (1/4) mile of any known active bald eagle nest, and the Service requests notification if any nests are found within one (1) mile of a proposed construction site. Any nests found should be reported to this office.

If the Federal action agency or their designated representative determines that the project "may adversely affect" listed species in South Dakota, it should request formal consultation from this office. If a "may affect - not likely to adversely affect" determination is made for this project, it should be submitted to this office for concurrence. If a "no effect" determination is made, further consultation may not be necessary. However, a copy of the determination should be sent to this office. For more information regarding Federal action agency responsibilities as related to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, please refer to the Service's Endangered Species Act Consultation Handbook, available online at <http://endangered.fws.gov/consultations/index.html>.

If changes are made in the project plans or operating criteria, or if additional information becomes available, the Service should be informed so that the above determinations can be reconsidered.

The Service appreciates the opportunity to provide comments. If you have any questions on these comments, please contact Charlene Bessken of this office at (605) 224-8693, Extension 231.

Sincerely,



Pete Gober  
Field Supervisor  
South Dakota Field Office

Enclosure

cc: Corps/Regulatory; Pierre, SD  
(Attention: Steve Naylor)  
SAIC; Carpinteria, CA  
(Attention: Dr. Thomas W. Mulroy)



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

*Mountain-Prairie Region*  
South Dakota Ecological Services Field Office

### ENDANGERED SPECIES BY COUNTY LIST

(updated 18 December 2007)

#### STATE: SOUTH DAKOTA

The Bald Eagle was removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife effective August 8, 2007. The protections provided to the bald eagle under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act will continue to remain in place after the species is delisted. [National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines](#) have been developed. This rule change does not affect the bald eagle's status as a threatened or endangered species under State laws or suspend any other legal protections provided by State law.

T - Threatened

XN - Proposed/Experimental Population

E - Endangered

CH - Critical Habitat

PCH - Proposed Critical Habitat

COUNTY	GROUP	SPECIES	CERTAINTY OF OCCURRENCE	STATUS
AURORA	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
BEADLE	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
BENNETT	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	INSECT	BEETLE, AMERICAN BURYING <sup>2</sup>	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
BON HOMME	BIRD	PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
BROOKINGS	INSECT	BEETLE, AMERICAN BURYING <sup>2</sup>	POSSIBLE	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E

	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
BROWN	BIRD	CURLEW, ESKIMO	EXTREMELY RARE	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
BRULE	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	POSSIBLE	T
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
BUFFALO	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	POSSIBLE	T
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
BUTTE	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
CAMPBELL	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	POSSIBLE	E
CHARLES MIX	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
CLARK	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	KNOWN	E
CLAY	BIRD	PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)

		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
		STURGEON, PALLID	POSSIBLE	E
	MOLLUSK	MUSSEL, SCALESHELL <sup>6</sup>	HISTORICAL, MISSOURI RIVER	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
CODINGTON	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	POSSIBLE	E
CORSON	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	HISTORICAL	E
		STURGEON, PALLID	POSSIBLE	E
CUSTER	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED	KNOWN	E
DAVISON	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
DAY	BIRD	PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T
DEUEL	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	KNOWN	E
DEWEY	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E

	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	HISTORICAL	E
		STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	KNOWN	XN
DOUGLAS	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
EDMUNDS	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
FALL RIVER				
FAULK	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
GRANT	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	POSSIBLE	E
GREGORY	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	INSECT	BEETLE, AMERICAN BURYING <sup>2</sup>	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	POSSIBLE	XN
HAAKON	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	INSECT	BEETLE, AMERICAN BURYING <sup>2</sup>	POSSIBLE	E
HAMLIN	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	KNOWN	E
HAND	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
HANSON	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
HARDING				
HUGHES	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)

		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
HUTCHINSON	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
HYDE	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
JACKSON	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	POSSIBLE	XN
JERAULD	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	KNOWN	E
JONES	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
KINGSBURY	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	KNOWN	E
LAKE	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
LAWRENCE	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
LINCOLN	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
LYMAN	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	POSSIBLE	T
MARSHALL				
MCCOOK	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
MCPHERSON	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
MEADE	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
MELLETTE	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	POSSIBLE	XN
MINER	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE	POSSIBLE	T



		FRINGED <sup>1</sup>		
MINNEHAHA	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
MOODY	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
PENNINGTON	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	KNOWN	XN
PERKINS	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
POTTER	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
ROBERTS	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
SANBORN	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
SHANNON	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	KNOWN	XN
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
SPINK	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	POSSIBLE	E
STANLEY	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
SULLY	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	KNOWN	E
TODD	INSECT	BEETLE, AMERICAN BURYING <sup>2</sup>	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL		KNOWN	XN

		FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>		
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
TRIPP	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
	INSECT	BEETLE, AMERICAN BURYING <sup>2</sup>	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	POSSIBLE	XN
TURNER	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
UNION	BIRD	PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	INSECT	BEETLE, AMERICAN BURYING <sup>2</sup>	POSSIBLE	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA	KNOWN	E
		STURGEON, PALLID	POSSIBLE	E
	MOLLUSK	MUSSEL, SCALESHELL	Historic, Missouri River	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
WALWORTH	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	STURGEON, PALLID	POSSIBLE	E
YANKTON	BIRD	CURLEW, ESKIMO	EXTREMELY RARE	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	FISH	SHINER, TOPEKA <sup>3</sup>	POSSIBLE	E
		STURGEON, PALLID	POSSIBLE	E
	MOLLUSK	MUSSEL, SCALESHELL <sup>6</sup>	Historic, Missouri River	E
		PEARLYMUSSEL, HIGGINS EYE <sup>5,6</sup>	One Dead Specimen Found	E
	PLANT	ORCHID, WESTERN PRAIRIE FRINGED <sup>1</sup>	POSSIBLE	T
ZIEBACH	BIRD	CRANE, WHOOPING	KNOWN	E
		PLOVER, PIPING	KNOWN	T (CH)
		TERN, LEAST	KNOWN	E
	MAMMAL	FERRET, BLACK-FOOTED <sup>4</sup>	POSSIBLE	XN

<sup>1</sup> The counties indicated for the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid are counties with potential habitat. Currently, there are no known populations of this species in South Dakota. Status surveys have been completed for the orchid in South Dakota. However, because of the ecology of this species, there is a possibility that plants may be overlooked.

<sup>2</sup> The American Burying Beetle is presently known to occur in Gregory, Tripp and Todd counties. One specimen was recently trapped in Bennett County. A comprehensive status survey has never been completed for the American burying beetle in South Dakota. Until status surveys have been completed, the beetle could and may occur in any county with suitable habitat. Suitable habitat is considered to be any site with significant humus or topsoil suitable for burying carrion.

<sup>3</sup> Although Topeka Shiners have not been formally documented within Clark, Grant, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Spink, or Yankton Counties, the shiners may still occur in these areas because the counties contain portions of known Topeka Shiner inhabited rivers and/or tributary streams.

<sup>4</sup> Block clearance is a strategy developed by the Service to determine the likelihood of black-footed ferret occurrence in a geographic area and provide sufficient information to allow the Service to assess an area for the biological potential for contributing to recovery of the ferret. The act of block clearing an area negates the need to conduct future ferret surveys to comply with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The exception is for National Park Service lands and US Fish and Wildlife Service lands - ferrets are considered threatened in those areas. Black-footed ferrets have been reintroduced in Badlands National Park, Buffalo Gap National Grasslands and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation.

<sup>5</sup> A fresh dead shell of a Higgins Eye Pearlymussel was found below Gavins Point Dam on October 27, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Shells of these species have been found, but no populations have been located.

Any corrections or additions to this list should be submitted to Pete Gohar, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Dakota Field Office, Ecological Services, 420 South Garfield Avenue, Pierre, SD; Telephone (605)224-8693, ext. 224.

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