

INFORMATION: Federal Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

11/8/94

Director, Office of Environment and Planning

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Regional Administrators
Federal Lands Highway Program Administrator

On September 28, the Administrator signed a new interagency MOU on implementation of the ESA, copy attached. The MOU emphasizes interagency coordination and advance planning to reduce conflicts between programs of different government agencies and better manage impacts to endangered species and their habitats. In addition to FHWA, the MOU was signed by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Mines, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service, Minerals Management Service, Department of Defense, Corps of Engineers, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Coast Guard, Federal Aviation Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The MOU establishes, in principal, regional interagency working groups that will coordinate agency actions to reduce conflicts over endangered species and create opportunities for conserving and recovering species that are listed or proposed for listing as endangered or threatened. The regional working groups will involve the public, States, Indian Tribal governments, and local governments as appropriate. Examples of such groups include the Desert Tortoise Group, which involves personnel from the FWS, BLM, and State agencies in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah; and the PACFish Group, which involves the Forest Service, BLM, and NMFS in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and northern California in an effort to develop long-range strategies to restore important aquatic habitat on Federal lands in the above States.

The MOU also establishes a national working group which will identify the geographic regions of the United States and its territories that will be used as the basis for organizing the regional interagency work groups, identify ways to improve the conservation of species listed under the ESA, perform an annual review of the previous year's progress and activities, and establish a program of work for subsequent fiscal years. The national working group will also identify and try to resolve national issues associated with interagency consultations undertaken pursuant to Section 7(a)(2).

The Environmental Quality Branch of the Office of Environment and Planning will represent FHWA on the national working group, and will provide field offices with up-to-date information concerning recommendations and activities of the national working group, as well as that concerning specific regional groups. The FHWA field offices, both regions and divisions, are encouraged to participate in early planning and coordination activities through the regional groups to maximize the two-way exchange of information required for planning and coordination concerning endangered species management. Please forward this memorandum to the division offices

and please call Mr. Paul Garrett of my staff at (202) 366-2067 if you need further information.

Kevin E. Heanue