



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

North Dakota Ecological Services
3425 Miriam Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58501



February 12, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for your email dated January 30, 2024, notifying the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that the 30-day scoping period for the Petro Hunt 153-95 5A Multi Well Pad proposal has opened and allowing us to provide comments. We understand that the intent of this proposal by the United State Forest Service (USFS) Dakota Prairie Grasslands is to honor Petro Hunt's existing rights for the development, production, and transportation of mineral resources for this land in McKenzie County, North Dakota. We recognize that the future development for this proposed project would be subject to additional environmental review and analysis in coordination with the FWS. With that context, the FWS would like to provide the following comments to the USFS to assist with early environmental review and analysis.

The FWS plans to coordinate with the USFS McKenzie Ranger District to implement appropriate conservation measures for the proposed project to ensure development is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The proposed project area contains suitable habitat for federally listed species. The majority of the area where development is proposed contains habitat with high suitability for the threatened Dakota skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*). The nearest known Dakota skipper population is less than two miles away and two parcels of critical habitat for the Dakota skipper area less than 5 miles away. Although partially fragmented by other development and woody draws, the area contains a significant amount of contiguous suitable habitat for the species between the project area and known populations.

Other FWS trust species may be present in or near the proposed project area as well. The proposed project area is within three miles of historic piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) nests and piping plover critical habitat. Additionally, the pad placement appears as if tree removal would be required. With close proximity to Lake Sakakawea, trees in the project area have potential to be suitable for the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) maternity roosting. Any tree removal would need to follow FWS timing recommendations to avoid impacts to the northern long-eared bat. Lastly, there several historic golden eagle nests in the surrounding area and undisturbed habitat in the region is known to harbor other raptors and migratory birds of conservations concern.

The FWS appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and work with USFS to ensure the conservation of federal listed species as part of our joint responsibilities under ESA to conserve threatened and endangered species and their habitats. If you have any additional questions or

concerns, please contact Seth Jones at (701) 355-8508 or via email at seth_jones@fws.gov or contact me at (720) 793-6797 or luke_toso@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Luke Toso
North Dakota Field Office Supervisor