

## APPENDIX B:

### **GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETION OF PROGRAMMATIC BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT PROJECT AND SPECIES CONSISTENCY EVALUATION FORMS UPPER GREAT PLAINS REGION WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

The following narrative provides an explanation and rationale for the Project and Species Consistency Evaluation forms for the Upper Great Plains Region Wind Energy Programmatic Biological Assessment (BA) and guidance for completion of the forms. The Project and Species Consistency Evaluation forms are provided in this appendix. The forms can also be downloaded from the Western Area Power Administration's (Western's) Upper Great Plains Region Web site (<http://www.wapa.gov/ugp/Environment/default.htm>) as electronic forms in PDF format. The BA identifies conservation measures for federally listed, candidate, or proposed species; these measures include programmatic Best Management Practices (BMPs) and avoidance and minimization measures that would be required of project applicants during each phase of a wind energy project (i.e., site characterization, construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning) if the project applicants choose to benefit from Western's expedited programmatic Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This information is provided within the BA narrative for each species. The BMPs are summarized in table 4.5-1 of the BA, whereas the species-specific impacts and avoidance and minimization measures are summarized in table 5-1 of the BA. A voluntary commitment by the project proponent to fully implement all of the measures would result in an effects determination of "no effect" or "not likely to adversely affect" for each species and would meet Western's responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). If a project proponent cannot or chooses not to implement the BMPs and the avoidance and minimization measures for the species identified for a project, the programmatic consultation cannot be used and an individual project-specific National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) analysis and ESA Section 7 consultation will be required.

Thus, compliance with the programmatic BA can result in considerable savings of time and expense for a company by tiering from Western's programmatic NEPA process and the programmatic endangered species consultation with the USFWS for wind energy projects in the Upper Great Plains Region. It also provides an up-front confirmation of expectations relative to conservation measures for federally listed, candidate, or proposed species.

For the programmatic consultation, a Project Consistency Evaluation Form (project CEF) and individual Species Consistency Evaluation Forms (species CEFs) have been developed for the listed, candidate, or proposed species that may occur within the Upper Great Plains (UGP) Region. These forms are included in this appendix. The project and species CEFs will be used for documenting and verifying that project proponents have complied with the requirements of the Programmatic BA (i.e., that the project will not have adverse effects on listed, candidate, or proposed species) and are consistent with Tiers I, II, III of the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines* (USFWS 2012c). The USFWS and Western will independently review the forms to document or verify compliance or non-compliance with the BA. The process for complying with the elements resulting from the programmatic consultation specific to wind energy projects in the UGP Region is represented by the flow chart in figure 2-1 of the programmatic BA.

## **B.1 PROJECT CONSISTENCY EVALUATION FORM**

The project CEF provides basic project information for an overview of the project and federally listed, candidate, or proposed species of concern. The form requires basic information about the project proponent, Federal agency contacts, project description overview, land cover types affected, applicable species, and maps of the project area and any species habitat and needed buffer zones. Checkboxes are available to document familiarity with associated wind energy and resource documents, as well as signatory blocks for the project proponent's commitment to implement the applicable general BMPs, species-specific BMPs, and the avoidance and minimization measures into the project design, construction, operation, and decommissioning. The form also has signatory blocks for Western and the USFWS for verification of compliance with the programmatic BA.

## **B.2 SPECIES CONSISTENCY EVALUATION FORMS**

At the early stages of project consideration and planning (consistent with Tiers I, II, and III of the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines* [[http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/docs/WEG\\_final.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/docs/WEG_final.pdf)]), project proponents are encouraged to coordinate with the local USFWS Ecological Services Field Office or other agencies as appropriate. In each of the species narratives in the BA, this coordination is referenced as "preconstruction evaluations and/or surveys." Through this coordination, the project proponent and the USFWS will address available information, presence/absence of listed, candidate, or proposed species and their habitats, and evaluate the need for and current protocol for surveys or monitoring. At that time, the proponent should begin to fill out the project CEF and applicable species CEFs and coordinate with Western and the USFWS as warranted (see flow chart in figure 2-1) to discuss the conservation measures and determine whether they can meet the requirements of the programmatic consultation. A single project CEF and only the applicable species CEFs should be completed for each project. Forms should be self-explanatory with check boxes and information lines.

One species CEF is provided for each of the 28 listed, candidate, or proposed threatened and endangered species that can be found within the UGP Region. Each of the species CEFs includes sections on BMPs (general and species-specific), species-specific avoidance measures, species-specific minimization measures, impact information, and effects. The project proponent should check each box in the first three sections to document that their project will meet all these conservation measures, and then provide responses in the Impact Information section. A narrative must be provided in the "Effects" section of the appropriate CEFs to explain what the project proponents have done or will do for the conservation of the species and how that is consistent with meeting the effects determination in the programmatic BA (i.e., either "no effect" or "is not likely to adversely affect" the species). Western and the USFWS will use these forms for each species to verify compliance with the conservation measures identified in the programmatic BA and to fulfill the requirements of the programmatic ESA consultation.