

4.6 FEDERALLY LISTED ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES AND BLM SENSITIVE SPECIES***Proposed Action*****Direct Impacts**

No federally listed endangered, threatened, and candidate species occur in the project area. Therefore, there would not be impacts to federally listed species or their habitat. A biological assessment has been written which supports this finding (BAE#007-07).

Table 3-1 lists species identified by BLM as sensitive species, and none of these 24 species have been recorded within the project area. Further, reconnaissance-level biological surveys conducted by Tetra Tech biologists in October 2006 and by an EMPS biologist in November 2006 did not document any sensitive plant or wildlife species. However, baseline surveys documented one burrowing owl on lands adjacent to the project area (WESTEC 1988), and a potential burrow was noted at one of the sites in 2006.

The proposed project would disturb up to 38.23 acres of land. Much of the land surrounding the proposed drilling sites is undisturbed and similar in habitat function. Burrowing owls most likely would occur within the 38.23 acres to be affected under maximum expansion of the project actions. However, there is suitable burrowing owl habitat throughout the project area and surrounding lands. Therefore, a preconstruction survey would occur at the sites to ensure that burrowing owls are not present. If burrowing owls are present within the construction footprint area, conservation measures and BMPs for closing burrows and relocating individual owls would be employed. Depending on the owls' proximity to the construction area, the birds would either be relocated to other suitable habitat nearby or left in place if construction activities could avoid the burrow. Construction windows would have to occur outside of the nesting and breeding period.

Presence or absence of any of the nine bat species potentially occurring in the project area is not known. There is no roosting habitat for these species within the proposed drilling sites or proposed roads. Roosting habitat potentially occurs in the rocky outcrop areas closer to the base of the Bunejug Mountains. Therefore, use of the habitat in the project area by bat species is likely limited to foraging.

Due to the limited footprint of the proposed project, minimal impacts would occur to neotropical migratory birds associated with this project. Very little land would be disturbed, and as such, shrubs needed for nesting would remain virtually intact and prey species habitat would not be affected.

Indirect Impacts Based on a Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario

If the proposed geothermal wells indicate evidence of significant geothermal activity, it is assumed that a geothermal power plant would be constructed in the vicinity to process and deliver power. Although no such plant is proposed as part of this review, if it were constructed, impacts would be similar to those that would occur as a result of construction of the wells. However, since it is assumed that the geothermal power plant would cover an area larger than the sum of the well pads; impacts would potentially be more extensive. Loss

of sensitive species habitat would be avoided by performing preconstruction surveys for such habitat and avoiding such habitat if it were found. If active burrowing owl burrows were detected and it was not possible to avoid them during construction, the same measures for relocating owls would be taken as described for impacts from geothermal well construction.

Subsequent NEPA analysis would determine the actual impact to Federally Listed, Endangered and Threatened species and BLM Sensitive Species.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative there would be no impacts to special status species.