[PROJECT NAME HERE]
[DISTRICT AND FOREST OR PARK NAME *OR* AGENCY NAME]

LOCATION:

[County Name] County, State
[Township, Range, and Section]
USGS [7 ½ minute quad name(s)] Quadrangle

Contact Person: [Your name here] Phone Number: [including area code]

Introduction

The purpose of this biological assessment is to review the proposed [project name] in sufficient detail to determine to what extent the proposed action may affect any of the threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species listed below. This biological assessment is prepared in accordance with legal requirements set forth under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1536 (c)), and follows the standards established in [your agency's NEPA guidance and ESA guidance].

The species considered in this document are:

Threatened, Endangered, Proposed Threatened or Proposed Endangered Species

common name (*Scientific name*) **T**
common name (*Scientific name*) **E**
common name (*Scientific name*) **PT**
common name (*Scientific name*) **PE**

Candidate Species, Sensitive Species and Species of Concern

common name (*Scientific name*)

List them all!!!

[Don't forget that Interior agencies often have additional responsibilities to help prevent these species from becoming listed. Check your agency's guidelines.]

Critical Habitat

The action addressed within this biological assessment falls within Critical Habitat for [identify]. Final ruling on Critical Habitat for the [common name (*Scientific name*)] was established by USFWS [date].

Consultation to Date

[Summarize and include meetings and correspondence that were important to the decision-making process.]

Current Management Direction

[Discuss and reference relevant Resource and Land Management Plans, and Action Plans, and the goals of the plans. Discuss and reference your agency's ESA policy.]

Description of the Proposed Action

[Describe (1) **WHAT** the project or action is; (2) **WHERE** the project is (refer to attached maps); (3) describe **WHEN** the action is going to take place, time line/implementation schedules; (4) specify **WHO** is going to do the action and under what authority, include name and address of the applicant; (5) include those measures that relate to **HOW** the action will be accomplished–*e.g.*, bulldozer, pile driver, feller-buncher, chain saw, steam roller; (6) include Conservation measures such as avoidance measures, seasonal restrictions, compensation, restoration/creation (on-site and in-kind, off-site and in-kind, on-site and out-of-kind, off-site and out-of-kind)]

Here are some examples of things to describe:

Type of project
Project location
Project footprint
Avoidance areas
Start and end times
Construction access
Staging/laydown areas
Construction equipment and techniques
Habitat status on site
Habitat between work areas and endangered species locations
Permanent vs. temporary impacts
If temporary, how long
Restoration areas
Conservation measures
Compensation and set-asides
Mitigation: what kind and who is responsible?

Dust, erosion, and sedimentation controls
Whether the project is growth-inducing
Whether the project is part of a larger project or plan
Surrounding land-use
Hydrology and drainage patterns

[Other potential information needed: type of equipment used, who is doing to work, what is happening up and down drainage.]

Action Area

[Describe all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action. Use the effects analysis below as the reasoning for your delineation of this area.]

Species Accounts and Status of the Species in the Action Area

[Include aspects of biology that relate to the impact of the action, such as sensitivity to noise, inundation, fire, etc.– *e.g.*, if the species is sensitive to loud sounds or vibration, and your project involves loud tools or equipment, reference that aspect of their biology.]

[Describe habitat use – *e.g.*, breeding, feeding, and sheltering. Describe habitat condition and habitat designations such as: critical habitat (provide unit name or number), essential habitat, important habitat, recovery area, recovery unit (provide unit name or number). Also discuss habitat use patterns, including seasonal use and migration (if relevant), and identify habitat needs.]

[Identify and quantify the listed-species habitat remaining in the action area. GIS layers are useful here, as are land ownership patterns – especially local land trusts and open space designations.]

[Identify any recovery plan implementation that is occurring in the action area, especially priority one action items from recovery plans.]

[Include survey information. For all monitoring and survey reports, please clearly identify how it was done, when, where, and by whom. If survey protocols were followed, reference the name and date of the protocol. If survey protocols were modified, provide an explanation of how the surveying occurred and the reasoning for modifying the protocol.]

[Keep it relevant. Please don't discuss biology that is totally unrelated to project impacts – *e.g.*, discussion of pelage color, teat number, and number of digits for and aft when the project is a seasonal wetland establishment.]

[Utilize the best scientific and commercial information available. Use and cite recent

publications/journal articles/agency data and technical reports. Include local information, relative to the action area, views of recognized experts, results from recent studies, life history, population dynamics, trends and distribution. Reference field notes, unpublished data, research in progress, etc. Include local population information.]

Things to consider:

Existing threats to species
Fragmentation
Urban growth area
Drainage patterns
Information on local sightings and populations
Population trends
Home range and dispersal
Sensitivity of endangered species to: dust, noise, heat, desiccation, etc.
Trap stress/mortality
Predators

Effects

[Elaborate on each effect. Carefully and fully ***quantify*** all effects. Effect determinations must be consistent with types of actions in the project description, the biology in the species accounts, and the habitat status and existing environment.]

[Remember: Direct and indirect effects under ESA are ***not*** the same as direct and indirect effects under NEPA. Be careful not to mix them up. Under ESA, direct effects are those that are caused by the proposed action and occur at the time of the action, and indirect effects are those that are caused by the proposed action and are later in time, but still are reasonably certain to occur.]

Here are some examples of effects:

Loss of habitat – direct and indirect
Mortality
Harassment
Disrupted reproduction and/or loss of reproduction
Loss of forage and/or foraging potential
Loss of shelter/cover
Loss of access through adjacent habitat/loss of corridors
Noise/light during construction
Noise/light after construction
Fragmentation of habitat
Urbanization induced or facilitated by the action
Increased predation, including predation by pets and feral animals
Impacted water quality (increased runoff, sedimentation, altered hydrology)

[Address all effects, including direct, indirect, interrelated and interdependent effects. Understanding and avoiding the common flaws in developing an effect determination will save

you considerable time. These common flaws are: The "Displacement" Approach (*i.e.*, the species will move out of the way; there are plenty of places for them to go); the "Not Known to Occur Here" Approach (*i.e.*, looking at survey results, or lack of results, instead of the Recovery Plan for the species); the "We'll Tell You Later" Approach (*i.e.*, if we find any, then we'll let you know and that is when we will consult); the "Leap of Faith" Approach (*i.e.*, the agency wants the Fish and Wildlife Service to accept a determination based on trust, rather than the best scientific and commercially available information.). Sticking to flawed determinations will cost everyone time, money, and aggravation.]

[Interrelated actions are those that are part of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification – *i.e.* this action would not occur "but for" a larger action. Describe the larger action and its effects.]

Interdependent actions are those that have no significant independent utility apart from the action that is under consideration – *i.e.* other actions would not occur "but for" this action. Describe the interdependent actions and their effects.]

[Reference other consultations in the action area, if known, and include Fish and Wildlife Service file number.]

[Describe the level to which Critical Habitat will be affected by the project. Include a description as to how Primary Constituent Elements of any listed Critical Habitat could be affected by the project.]

Cumulative Effects (State, Tribal, and private actions)

Cumulative effects include the effects of future State, Tribal, local or private actions that are reasonably certain to occur in the action area considered in this biological assessment. Future Federal actions that are unrelated to the proposed action are not considered in this section because they will be subject to separate consultation pursuant to section 7 of the Act.

[Present all known and relative effects to population, *e.g.*, fish stocking, fishing, hunting, other recreation, illegal collecting, private wells, some developments, grazing, local trust programs, etc. Include impacts to the listed and proposed species in the area that you know are occurring and that are unrelated to your action – *e.g.*, road kills from off-road vehicle use, poaching, trespass, etc.]

[Cumulative effects under ESA are ***not*** the same as the definition under NEPA. Be careful not to mix them up.]

Analysis of alternate actions

[This analysis is required for actions that involve preparation of an EIS. For all other actions, a summary of alternatives discussed in other environmental documents is useful.]

Conclusion and Determination

[This is where you put your overall effect determination after you have analyzed direct, indirect, cumulative, and interrelated and interdependent effects.]

The Service looks for one of the following statements:

Not likely to adversely affect, ***or***
Likely to adversely affect, ***or***
Likely to benefit

[If you make a "No effect" determination, you might have to defend it. Keep the document for your administrative record.]

[Once you have made your determination, summarize the high points that led you to it – *e.g.*, the action is not likely to adversely affect the . . . based on the following rationale: . . .]

Literature Cited

List of Contacts/Contributors/Preparers

Maps

[Please include an area map as well as a vicinity map. The vicinity map should be at a 1:24,000 scale with the USGS quad name included.]