

United States Senate

October 26, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:


We write to request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service withdraw the draft General Conservation Plan (GCP) and associated draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for oil and gas activities in Santa Barbara County, California. Instead of proceeding with these drafts, we urge the Fish and Wildlife Service to continue to require new oil and gas proposals to be reviewed under project-specific Habitat Conservation Plans. We are especially concerned that, if implemented, the GCP could lead to insufficient information about how proposed oil or gas projects may adversely affect the community, air and water quality, and endangered species in the County.

We understand from local stakeholders that the Fish and Wildlife Service's March 2020 General Conservation Plan does not account for the basic requirements under the *Endangered Species Act*. Specifically, the Plan states that it would "streamline the application for an incidental take permit under section 10(a)(1)(B) by allowing the Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a single general conservation plan for a local area." This approach is concerning as it would cover a wide range of complex oil and gas activities and an overly-broad planning area consisting of more than 674,000 acres, from agricultural lands to urban developments and parts of the Santa Barbara coastline.


Further, we are concerned that streamlining the process for issuing incidental take permits for oil and gas projects would harm or kill three species protected or endangered under the *Endangered Species Act*—the California red legged frog, California tiger salamander, and Lompoc yerba santa—and would bypass the much more rigorous requirements of Habitat Conservation Plans.

Given the environmental concerns associated with oil and gas activities, as well as their potential to harm threatened or endangered species, we believe any applications for new oil and gas activities should be vetted to the most thorough extent possible. Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator