

(1) Benefits of Inclusion

There is minimal benefit from designating critical habitat for the vernal pool species within the ecological reserves and wildlife management areas because these lands are already managed for the conservation of wildlife. One possible benefit of including these lands as critical habitat would be to educate the public regarding the conservation value of these areas and the vernal pool complex they support. However, critical habitat designation provides little gain in the way of increased recognition for special habitat values on lands that are expressly managed to protect and enhance those values. Additionally, the designation of critical habitat will not have any appreciable effect on the development or implementation of public education programs on these areas.

The designation of critical habitat would require consultation with us for any action undertaken, authorized, or funded by a Federal agency that may affect the species or its designated critical habitat. However, the management objects for State ecological reserves and wildlife management area already include specifically managing for targeted listed and sensitive species (CDFG in litt. 2003); therefore, the benefit from additional consultation is likely also to be minimal.

(2) Benefits of Exclusion

While the consultation requirement associated with critical habitat on the Ecological Reserves and Wildlife Management Areas add little benefit, it would require the use of resources to ensure regulatory compliance that could otherwise be used for on-the ground management of the targeted listed or sensitive species (CDFG in litt. 2003). Additionally, the State has expressed a concern that the designation of these lands and associated regulatory requirements may cause delays that could be expected to reduce the CDFG's ability to respond to vernal pool management issues that arise on the ecological reserves and wildlife areas. Therefore, the benefits of exclusion include relieving additional regulatory burden that might be imposed by the critical habitat, which could divert resources from substantive resource protection to procedural regulatory efforts.

(3) The Benefits of Exclusion Outweigh the Benefits of Inclusion

We believe that the potential disincentives to actively manage State trust resources that is provided by

designation of critical habitat are appreciably greater than the benefits to be derived from such designation. This is a result of the fact that these lands already are publically-owned and managed to protect and enhance unique and important natural resource values. We therefore conclude that the benefits of excluding CDFG ecological reserves and wildlife areas from the final critical habitat designation outweigh the benefits of including them. Such exclusion will not result in the extinction of the vernal pool species. Further, we do believe that such exclusion will increase the likelihood that activities would be proposed that would appreciably diminish the value of the habitat for the conservation of these species.

In accordance with section 4(b)(2) of the Act, we have excluded California Department of Fish and Game owned lands within the Battle Creek, Big Sandy, Grizzly Island, Hill Slough, North Grasslands, and Oroville Wildlife Areas and State-owned lands within Allensworth, Boggs Lake, Butte Creek Canyon, Calhoun Cut, Carrizo Plains, Dales Lake, Fagan Marsh, Phoenix Field, San Joaquin River, Stone Corral, and Thomes Creek Ecological Reserves. The total amount of land excluded for State-owned lands excluded within wildlife areas or ecological reserves is approximately 20,933 ac (8,373 ha).

Relationship of Critical Habitat to Military Lands

Section 4(b)(2) of the Act requires us to base critical habitat designations on the best scientific and commercial data available, after taking into consideration the economic and any other relevant impact of specifying any particular area as critical habitat. It also requires us to gather information regarding the designation of critical habitat and the effects thereof from all relevant sources, including the United States Air Force and the United States Army. The following discussions are provided on Travis AFB, Beale AFB, Camp Roberts, and Fort Hunter Liggett.

Travis Air Force Base

Travis AFB has several vernal pool complexes that support the vernal pool fairy shrimp and *Lasthenia conjugens* and also contain PCEs for *Neostapfia colusana*, Conservancy fairy shrimp, *Tuctorina mucronata*, and vernal pool tadpole shrimp. As a result of wetland surveys, Travis AFB had identified 235 vernal pools on approximately 40 ha (100 ac) of the 445 ha (1,100 ac) that are not developed on the base. To date, only *Lasthenia conjugens* and the vernal fairy

shrimp have been discovered on Travis AFB within these 40 ha (100 ac).

(1) Benefits of Inclusion

The benefits of designating critical habitat on Travis AFB are small because the vernal pool complexes on the base are already the focus of vernal pool conservation activities on the base; existing controls on base development already preserve habitat for listed species located there. Travis AFB has completed development of an INRMP to outline protection and management strategies for natural resources on the base, including vernal pool species and habitats. In addition, Travis AFB has provided private researchers and the general public opportunities for scientific and educational benefits, and controls access to the vernal pool complexes to avoid causing inadvertent harm to the species.

(2) Benefits of Exclusion

Designating critical habitat on Travis AFB would significantly impact their ability to: (1) Fulfill present and future mission systems and taskings supporting national defense; (2) adversely impact routine operations and maintenance activities; (3) hinder improvements with the base water supply; (4) hinder the time line for construction and increase the costs associated with the proposed 350-room visitor's quarters; (5) conflict with the management of the air space to support airfield safety; (6) impair the ability to protect military aircrew, aircraft, and public safety; (7) impede essential training; and (8) limit their ability to prevent or reduce aircraft bird strikes (Travis AFB, in litt. 2002). Additionally, designation of critical habitat would adversely impact civilian contracting in Solano County. Travis AFB is Solano County's largest employer and local contracting totaled \$75 million dollars in fiscal year 2002. Also, the designation of critical habitat will increase costs associated with environmental documentation of proposed projects, may restrict future critical training missions to jeopardize the bases's viability and operational capabilities, impact future associated economic benefits to the surrounding communities, and may affect future base closing decisions (Travis AFB in litt. 2002).

The main benefits of exclusion are ensuring that the mission execution and military training activities can continue without interruption at Travis AFB while the Habitat Conservation Management Plan (HCMP) for the base is being implemented. Additionally, future mission assignments to Travis