

**FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY**

Safe Harbor Agreement -- Agreement Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual SHA Template language**

The template Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) on the following pages is intended as a recommended format for SHAs with individual property owners. Regions may modify this format as long as all necessary sections are included in each SHA. In the following template, all text in bold font is standardized template language that we strongly recommend using in all SHAs, regardless of what format is used; [ ] indicates instructions.

**SAFE HARBOR AGREEMENT for [insert title of agreement]**

**This SHA, effective and binding on the date of last signature below, is between [insert name of Participating Property owner], [insert name of any other Cooperators such as county, State or Federal agencies, or conservation entity] (Cooperators), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service):**

**Cooperator:** [Insert name of Property owner and other Cooperators].

**Service:** **The Service designates the following as the Agreement Contact:** [Insert name, title, phone, and address of the relevant Service individual (usually the Field Supervisor or a Regional Coordinator)].

**Tracking Number:** [Assign a unique identifier to be used as a tracking number for the SHA.]

**Summary of Purpose of the SHA**

**The purpose of this agreement is to outline conservation actions that Participating Property owners will implement and monitor on their enrolled properties for [list the common and scientific name of the species to be covered by the SHA]. The goal of the agreement is to provide a net conservation benefit to recovery.**

[Insert additional short summary paragraph which describes the enrolled property and includes acreage, duration of agreement current habitat condition, brief description or list of key threats that the conservation measures will address.]

[insert page break]

**INTRODUCTION**

**Purpose of this SHA**

**The purpose of this SHA is to join with the Service and [insert name of participating property owner] to implement conservation measures for the [list the common and scientific name of the species to be covered by the SHA] by [very briefly mention the measures and expected conservation benefit(s)].**

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### **Regulatory Framework**

Sections 2, 7, and 10 of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended, allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to enter into this SHA. Section 2 of the Act states that encouraging interested parties, through Federal financial assistance and a system of incentives, to develop and maintain conservation programs is a key to safeguarding the Nation's heritage in fish, wildlife, and plants. Section 7 of the Act requires the Service to review programs that we administer and to utilize such programs in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. By entering into this SHA, the Service is utilizing our Recovery Program to further the conservation of the Nation's fish and wildlife. Lastly, section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Act authorizes the issuance of permits to "enhance the survival" of a listed species.

### **SHA Standard**

Before entering into a SHA, the Service must determine that the conservation measures to be implemented will contribute to recovering the species by providing a net conservation benefit.

### **Assurances Provided**

The assurances listed below apply to the Property Owner in this SHA where the conservation measures specified are being properly implemented. The assurances apply only with respect to the species covered by the SHA. Through this SHA, the Service provides [insert name of cooperating Property Owner] with assurances that no additional conservation measures or additional land, water, or resource use restrictions, beyond those voluntarily agreed to and described in the "Conservation Measures" section of this SHA. These assurances will be authorized with the issuance of an enhancement of survival permit under section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act. If they chose, a Property Owner, may return the enrolled property back to the baseline established in this agreement at the end of the agreement.

### **Parties to the Agreement**

[Provide a list of the agencies, organizations, etc. that have agreed to play a role in the implementation of the SHA.]

### **Relationship to Other Agreements**

[If, appropriate, discuss the relationship of the SHA to other agreements, such as Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Endangered Species Incentives Program, cooperative agreements, or various Farm Bill programs, etc.]

### **STATUS AND BACKGROUND OF [INSERT NAME(S) OF COVERED SPECIES]**

[Note: A summary of biological and background information pertinent to this agreement should be included to tie conservation actions to the species or habitat needs and known threats. More information including descriptions of the species' status, reasons for decline or references are not necessary to include in detail in the SHA, however it may be appropriate to include in the Service's separate SHA standard determination in the Findings document.]

### **Status and Distribution**

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**Life History and Habitat Requirements**

**Threats and Limiting Factors**

**Survival and Recovery Needs**

**Conservation and Recovery Efforts to Date**

[Briefly summarize actions taken for the species both range wide and locally including agencies and cooperators involved.]

**DESCRIPTION OF THE COVERED LANDS**

**Covered Lands**

[Include county and describe boundaries of the geographical area to be covered by the SHA. Include a map noting the area to be covered by the SHA. If the property owner is not enrolling the entire property in the SHA, explicitly indicate areas that are not included.]

**Conditions on Covered Lands**

[Describe the population levels of the covered species existing at the time the SHA is being developed (if known or obtainable,) identify existing and anticipated threats and describe habitat use by the species. Describe the existing habitat characteristics on the enrolled lands or waters covered by the agreement. If available, reference the recovery plan or other conservation plans and strategies for the covered species and include relevant information, maps, and management recommendations. To avoid potential management conflicts, reference all other listed and candidate species that occur on the property and management actions for these species.]

**[Insert name of covered species] Habitat on Covered Lands**

[Briefly summarize.]

**[Insert name of covered species] Presence/Numbers on Covered Lands**

[Briefly summarize.]

**Role of the Covered Lands in the Conservation of [insert name of covered species]**

[Briefly describe the role of the property enrolled in the SHA in the overall conservation of the species. If a recovery plan has been developed for the species, briefly describe how the SHA links to the recovery goals and objectives. You may compare the enrolled property to the entire species range or to a smaller management unit if the species is wide-ranging. Metrics that are relevant to include might be what percent of the habitat available to the species throughout the species range or management unit, is found on the covered lands. Also how does the habitat quality and intactness (lack of fragmentation) compare to other areas locally and within the species range or management unit. Also are the covered lands in the middle of the range or on the fringes. Then do the same for population numbers, in other words, what percent of the rangewide (or other relevant unit) population is on the covered lands. Using the

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enrolled lands information and comparing it to the species range or management unit as a whole provides a good sense of the relative importance of the enrolled lands to the conservation of the species.]

### **Threats on Covered Lands**

[Describe all of the threats on the property and indicate which threat(s) are the most significant. If possible, specify why and where they are occurring.]

### **Baseline Determination**

**The Parties agree that the baseline conditions applicable to this Agreement are as follows:**

[Describe baseline conditions in terms appropriate for each covered species. Baseline conditions may in some instances be expressed as measures of the utilization of the enrolled property by the covered species (e.g., numbers of individuals, occupied breeding territories, etc.), particularly where such measures typically experience little seasonal or year-to-year variability. More commonly, baseline conditions will be expressed as measures of the quantity and/or quality of habitat suitable for or occupied by the covered species.]

### **COVERED ACTIVITIES**

#### **Current and Proposed Land Uses and Activities (Ongoing and Planned Management Activities)**

[Describe the existing (ongoing) and planned management and development activities on the property. These are separate from the conservation measures that will be undertaken as part of the agreement. Examples include timber management, agricultural production, recreational use, and existing and additional infrastructure (barns, houses, roads).]

#### **Conservation Measures/Management Activities**

**Permit Holder:** [Explain how the conservation measures are appropriate for the covered species and are expected to provide a net conservation benefit to recovery to the species on the enrolled property. Describe the nature, extent, timing, and other pertinent details of the conservation measures that Participating Property owners enrolled will need to undertake, including a timeline for implementation, and specify the types of land uses on the enrolled property that will allow the property owner to continue to meet the conservation goal specified of the SHA. Also acknowledge any potential changes in management that the Property Owner agrees not to engage in that could adversely impact the species and its habitat.]

#### **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management**

[Describe what will be monitored, how monitoring will be conducted, by whom, and include a schedule or list or performance milestones, as appropriate.]

#### ***(1) Compliance Monitoring.***

**The Service will be responsible for specified monitoring and reporting related to implementation of the SHA and fulfillment of its provisions, including implementation of agreed-upon conservation measures, and take authorized by the permit. The SHA will grant the Service, after reasonable prior notice to a Property Owner, the right to enter the enrolled lands to ascertain compliance with the SHA.**

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**(2) Biological Monitoring.**

[Describe any periodic surveys that will be conducted, by whom, how and when they will be conducted to determine the status of populations, improved/restored habitats, management effectiveness, etc.]

**(3) Incidental Take Monitoring**

**The Service is responsible for working with the Property Owner to record and monitor any Incidental Take for the duration of the agreement.**

**(4) Evaluation and Adaptive Management**

[Describe how the monitoring efforts will be evaluated using an adaptive management approach. Adaptive management relies on an iterative cycle of monitoring, assessment, and decision making to clarify the relationships among the conservation measures and the response of habitat and, ultimately, the covered species abundance. The results of monitoring efforts should be considered from an adaptive management perspective.

An adaptive, outcome-based approach may be used when limited management information for a particular species is available to allow conservation measures to be updated based on changing conditions or new information. The consequences of prescriptive conservation measures cannot be predicted with certainty. The SHA provides a framework for making objective decisions in the face of uncertainty. If the expected results are not achieved, the conservation measure can either be modified or an alternative measure undertaken in order to achieve the expected results.]

**ANTICIPATED EFFECTS**

**Level/Type of Take/Impacts**

[Describe the existing and planned management and development activities on the property, and any possible incidental take of individuals or occupied habitat that may be associated with those activities during the SHA's term; (i.e., identify the specific permit-covered activities which may result in incidental take, and the area within which this take would be authorized; describe any actions the Property Owner will take to avoid and minimize the likelihood of take, including continuing the existing management program.)]

**Proposed Authorized Take**

[Insert a description of the specific take estimate for the area covered by the SHA. This is based on the species abundance, the total area of species habitat in the area covered by the SHA, and the effect of the conservation measures and routine land management activities carried out on the property on the species.]

**The Service recognizes that this level of take is consistent with the overall goal of providing a net conservation benefit to recovery of the species on the enrolled property.**

**Conservation Benefits to the Species**

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[Describe the benefits to the species and the habitat that are expected to accrue as a result of the implementation of the conservation measures on the enrolled land, as well as the approximate timing of the benefits (near term versus long term).]

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**Responsibilities of the Parties**

[Identify and outline the responsibilities of the agreement administrator and any other party involved in implementation of the SHA.]

**Duration of SHA and Permit**

**The SHA will be in effect for duration of [x] years following its approval and signing by the Parties. The section 10(a)(1)(A) permit authorizing take of the species will have a term of [x] years from the effective date of the permit. The permit and SHA may be extended beyond the specified terms through renewal or amendment, upon agreement of the Parties.**

**Notification Requirement**

**For planned actions that might result in incidental take, [insert name of Property Owner] agrees to provide the Service and cooperators with an opportunity to rescue individuals of the covered species before any authorized incidental take occurs. Notification that take is likely to occur must be provided by the Property owner to the Service at least [30] days in advance of the action.** [This language could be modified if permitted take is on an ongoing basis (e.g., as a result of mowing, timber harvest) and the Service agrees that notification can be in the form of annual timber harvest plans, or other appropriate means of notification. In addition, depending on the life history traits of the species, it may not be feasible to actually rescue individuals before incidental take occurs. In these cases, the notification may be modified to not include references to rescue but simply to notify the Service of an impending action and perhaps to reduce the advanced notification timing to a shorter length of time.]

**Availability of Funds**

**Implementation of this programmatic SHA is subject to the requirements of the Anti-Deficiency Act and the availability of appropriated funds. Nothing in this SHA will be construed by the Parties to require the obligation, appropriation, or expenditure of any funds from the U.S. Treasury. The Parties acknowledge that the Service will not be required under this SHA to expend any Federal agency's appropriated funds unless and until an authorized official of that agency affirmatively acts to commit to such expenditures as evidenced in writing.**

**Notices and Reports**

**Any notices and reports, including monitoring and annual reports, required by this SHA shall be delivered to the persons listed below, as appropriate:**

[Insert name of field office]

[Insert name of field supervisor and title]

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Reports will be due [date] of each year and copies will be made available to all Parties.

**Assurances Provided to enrolled Property Owners in Case of Changed or Unforeseen Circumstances**

(1) *Changed circumstances provided for in the SHA.* If additional conservation measures are necessary to respond to changed circumstances and the measures were set forth in the SHA's operating conservation program, the enrolled Property Owner will implement the measures specified in the SHA.

(2) *Changed circumstances not provided for in the SHA.* If additional conservation measures not provided for in the SHA's operating conservation program are necessary to respond to changed circumstances, the Service will not require any conservation measures in addition to those provided for in the SHA without the consent of the enrolled Property Owner, provided the SHA is being properly implemented.

(3) *Unforeseen circumstances.*

(A) If additional conservation measures are necessary to respond to unforeseen circumstances, the Service may require additional measures of the enrolled Property Owner where the SHA is being properly implemented, but only if such measures are limited to modifications within the SHAs conservation strategy for the affected species, and only if those measures maintain the original terms of the SHA to the maximum extent possible. Additional conservation measures will not involve the commitment of additional land, water, or financial compensation, or additional restrictions on the use of land, water, or other natural resources available for development or use under the original terms of the SHA without the consent of the enrolled Property Owner.

(B) The Service will have the burden of demonstrating that unforeseen circumstances exist, using the best scientific and commercial data available. These findings must be clearly documented and based upon reliable technical information regarding the status and habitat requirements of the affected species. The Service will consider, but not be limited to, the following factors:

- (1) Size of the current range of the affected species;
- (2) Percentage of range adversely affected by the SHA;
- (3) Percentage of range conserved by the SHA;
- (4) Ecological significance of that portion of the range affected by the SHA;
- (5) Level of knowledge about the affected species and the degree of specificity of the species' conservation program under the SHA; and
- (6) Whether failure to adopt additional conservation measures would appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the affected species in the wild.

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After approval of an individual SHA, the Service may not impose any new requirements or conditions on, or modify any existing requirements or conditions applicable to, an enrolled Property Owner or successor in interest to the owner, to compensate for changes in the conditions or circumstances of any species or ecosystem, natural community, or habitat covered by the SHA except as stipulated in 50 CFR 17.22(c)(5) and 17.32(c)(5).

### **Modification of the SHA**

Any party may propose modifications or amendments to this SHA, as provided in 50 CFR 13.23, by providing written notice to, and obtaining the written concurrence of, the other Parties. Such notice shall include a statement of the proposed modification, the reason for it, and its expected results. The Parties will use their best efforts to respond to proposed modifications within 60 days of receipt of such notice. Proposed modifications will become effective upon the other Parties' written concurrence.

### **Amendment of the Permit**

The permit may be amended to accommodate changed circumstances in accordance with all applicable legal requirements, including but not limited to the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Service's permit regulations at 50 CFR 13 and 50 CFR 17. The party proposing the amendment shall provide a statement describing the proposed amendment and the reasons for it.

### **Termination of the SHA**

As provided for in Part 8 of the Service's SHA Policy (64 FR 32726, June 17, 1999), the Participating Property owner may terminate implementation of the SHA's voluntary management actions prior to the SHA's expiration date, even if the expected benefits have not been realized. If the SHA is terminated, the Participating Property owner is required to surrender the enhancement of survival permit at termination, thus relinquishing his or her take authority and the assurances granted by the permit. Prior to relinquishing the permit, the Participating Property owner may take their property back to the baseline conditions described in this agreement (see Baseline Determination). The Participating Property owner is required to give 30-days written notice of its intent to terminate the SHA, and must give the Service an opportunity to relocate affected species within 60 days of the notice.

### **Suspension or Revocation**

The Service may suspend or revoke the permit for cause in accordance with the laws and regulations in force at the time of such suspension or revocation (50 CFR 13.28(a)). The Service may also, as a last resort, revoke the permit if continuation of permitted activities would likely result in jeopardy to covered species (50 CFR 17.22/32(c)(7)). The Service will revoke because of jeopardy concerns only after first implementing all practicable measures to remedy the situation.

### **Remedies**

Each party shall have all remedies otherwise available to enforce the terms of the SHA and the permit, except that no party shall be liable in damages for any breach of this SHA, any



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performance or failure to perform an obligation under this SHA or any other cause of action arising from this SHA.

**Dispute Resolution**

The Parties agree to work together in good faith to resolve any disputes, using dispute resolution procedures agreed upon by all Parties.

**Succession and Transfer**

This SHA shall be binding on and shall inure to the benefit of the Parties and their respective successors and transferees, (i.e., new owners) in accordance with applicable regulations (50 CFR 13.24 and 13.25). The rights and obligations under this SHA shall run with the ownership of the enrolled property and are transferable to subsequent non-Federal Property Owners pursuant to 50 CFR 13.25. The enhancement of survival permit issued to the Property Owner also will be extended to the new owner(s). As a party to the original SHA and permit, the new owner(s) will have the same rights and obligations with respect to the enrolled property as the original owner. The new owner(s) also will have the option of receiving SHA assurances by signing a new SHA and receiving a new permit. The Property Owner shall notify the Service of any transfer of ownership, so that the Service can attempt to contact the new owner, explain the particular responsibilities applicable to the property, and seek to interest the new owner in signing the existing SHA or a new one to benefit the specific species addressed in the SHA. Assignment or transfer of the permit shall be governed by Service regulations in force at the time.

**No Third-Party Beneficiaries**

This SHA does not create any new right or interest in any member of the public as a third-party beneficiary, nor shall it authorize anyone not a party to this SHA to maintain a suit for personal injuries or damages pursuant to the provisions of this SHA. The duties, obligations, and responsibilities of the Parties to this SHA with respect to third parties shall remain as imposed under existing law.



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## **References**