



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Colorado Ecological Services

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PREVIOUS: 65412-2012-TA-0078 and 06E24000-2015-TA-0077

October 11, 2017

Kirsta Scherff-Norris
Wildlife Biologist
Colorado Springs Utilities
121 Tejon Street, Fourth Floor
P.O. Box 1103, Mail Code 940
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80947-0940

Dear Ms. Scherff-Norris:

Thank you for your letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) dated September 27, 2017, requesting renewal of the **Colorado Springs City-Wide Block Clearance Zone** for the federally threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius preblei*). We reviewed your request under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

We agree with your determination that renewing the Preble's meadow jumping mouse block clearance zone for Colorado Springs within the boundaries established in 2012 is appropriate. We base this determination on the best available trapping records and habitat evaluations, which indicate that the Preble's meadow jumping mouse does not likely occur within the block clearance zone. Additionally, the block clearance zone is not likely important to the recovery of the subspecies due to the dense, urban development that dominates the zone.

In designating a block clearance zone, the Service eliminates the requirement that individuals and agencies coordinate with the Service before impacting potential Preble's meadow jumping mouse riparian or upland habitats inside the zone. Due to the likely absence of the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, activities within the block clearance zone that may impact riparian or upland habitats are not likely to adversely affect the subspecies.

Please remember that the block clearance zone does not remove the protections of the ESA for any Preble's meadow jumping mice that may occur within the block clearance zone. Although extremely unlikely, any individuals found within the block clearance zone retain all the

protections of the ESA and we would immediately modify the block clearance zone based on any new distribution information.

This continuation of the Preble's meadow jumping mouse block clearance zone for the Colorado Springs Area is effective for five years from the date of this letter. After five years, the clearance expires, and if you request renewal, we will review and update the block clearance zone as needed. The Service may adjust the boundaries of the block clearance zone at any time.

We will post updated maps and GIS shapefiles of the block clearance zone on our web site.

Although the wetlands and riparian habitats within the block clearance zone likely do not support the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, we emphasize that these habitats should be conserved, protected, and enhanced for migratory birds, fish, other wildlife, and for their ability to control floods, improve water quality, and provide recreational opportunities.

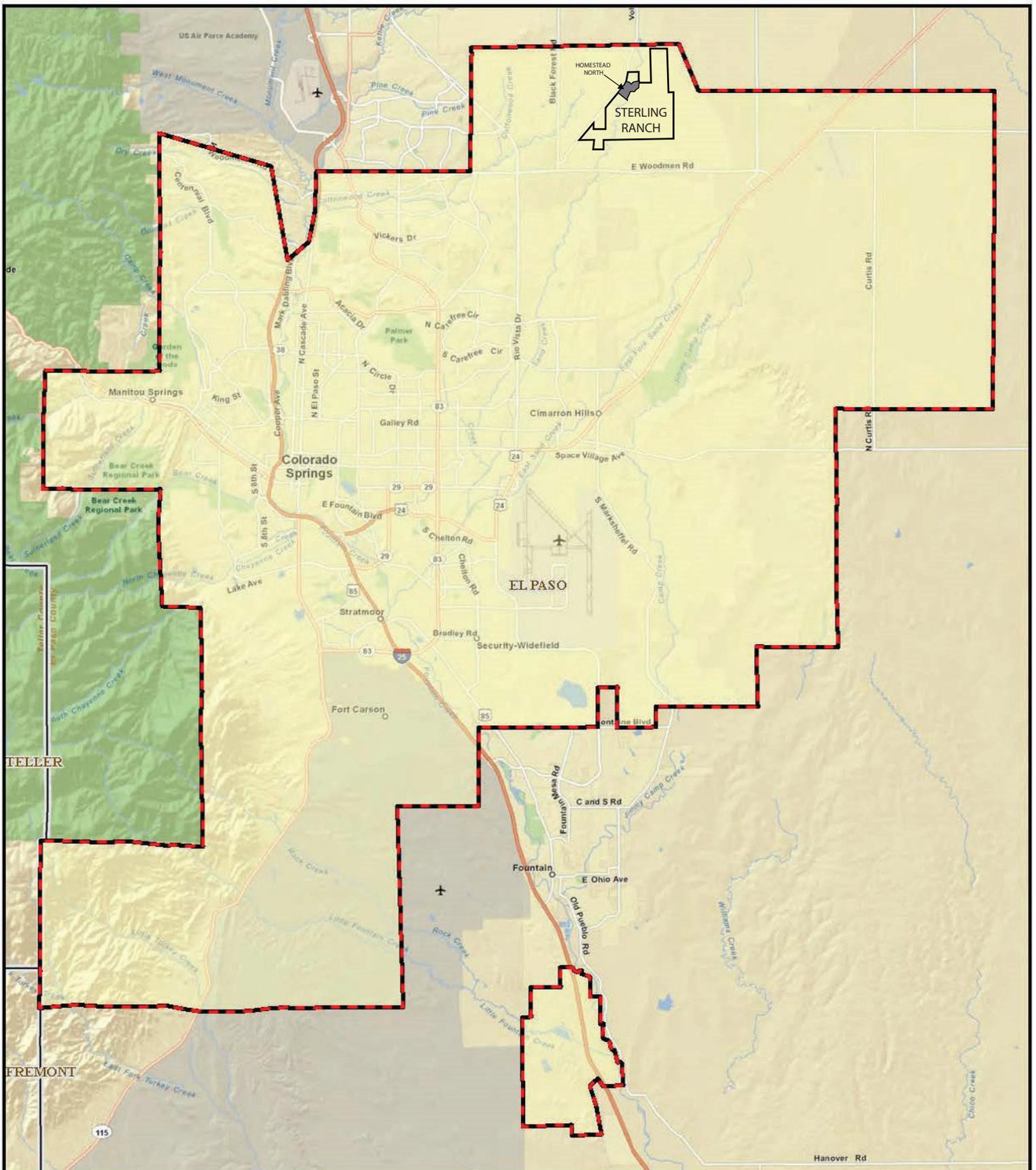
We appreciate the opportunity to work with Colorado Springs Utilities to conserve and protect the Preble's meadow jumping mouse. If the Service can be of any additional assistance, please contact Alison Deans Michael of the Colorado Field Office at (303) 236-4758. Thank you for your concern for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse and other natural resources.

Sincerely,

Drue L. DeBerry
Acting Colorado Field Supervisor

Enclosure: Color Map of the Preble's meadow jumping mouse Denver Metro Block Clearance Zone

ec: USACE, Southern Colorado Regulatory Office, Van Truan
CPW, Denver Headquarters, Tina Jackson
USFWS, Colorado Field Office, Alison Michael



PREBLE'S MEADOW JUMPING MOUSE BLOCK CLEARANCE MAP: COLORADO SPRINGS



Please contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Colorado Field Office, at (303) 236-4773 for assistance using this map. Visit <http://1.usa.gov/n5r48y> for more information on Preble's and the Block Clearance.



Block Clearance Area



County Boundaries

