are considered major factors causing its demise. Future activities on Federal lands or activities requiring Federal permits in the Snake Valley area would have to be taken under consultation to prevent further adverse impacts on the least chub or its habitat.

Impacts generally will be restricted to activities on Federal lands or on lands where proposed actions require Federal permits. The greatest impact would be on livestock grazing and its restriction in and around least chub habitat. Grazing would be limited within the general area occupied by least chub to prevent any further habitat degradation within proposed critical habitat. Drilling for water within proposed critical habitat would also be restricted. Presently, water regeneration within the Gandy Salt Marsh is adequate to allow for surface water use by livestock without impacting water levels within the marsh. Livestock could graze in pastures surrounding the proposed critical habitat areas if their access to aquatic habitats are prevented. Oil and gas exploration and production activities would be restricted within critical habitat. Surface activities and directional drilling are already restricted on BLM-owned lands that are designated as "Category 4" lands (these lands are already closed to leasing).

Presently, the recharging of ground water is sufficient to offset current withdrawals. Any federally funded or permitted water withdrawals (i.e., the Las Vegas Valley Water District permits for well drilling) would require section 7 consultation if it is shown that ground water withdrawals would impact critical habitat areas.

Section 4(b)(2) of the Act requires the Service to consider economic impacts of designating a particular area as critical habitat. The Service will prepare an economic analysis of the impacts of designating critical habitat for the least chub. Upon completion of the analysis, the Service will notify the public of its availability and will request public review and comments.

Available Conservation Measures

Conservation measures provided to species listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act include recognition, recovery actions, requirements for Federal protection, and prohibitions against take. Recognition through listing encourages conservation actions by Federal and State agencies and private individuals. The Act provides for possible land acquisition and cooperation with the States and requires that recovery actions be carried out for all listed species. The protection required of Federal agencies and the prohibitions against taking and harm are discussed, in part, below.

Section 7(a) of the Act, as amended, requires Federal agencies to evaluate their actions with respect to any species that is proposed or listed as endangered or threatened and with respect to its critical habitat, if designated. Regulations implementing this interagency cooperation provision of the Act are codified at 50 CFR Part 402. Section 7(a)(4) requires Federal agencies to confer with the Service on any action that is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a species proposed for listing or that would result in destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat. If the least chub is listed, section 7(a)(2) of the Act will require Federal agencies to insure that activities they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of this species or to destroy or adversely modify its critical habitat. If a Federal action could possibly affect the least chub or its critical habitat, the responsible Federal agency must enter into formal consultation with the Service.

Some portions of the least chub's proposed critical habitat are on private lands. The Federal Government has certain authority which may influence private undertakings in least chub critical habitat. Private activities that involve dredging and filling of wetlands would require a 404 permit (Federal Clean Water Act).

It is the policy of the Service to identify, to the extent known at the time a species is listed, specified activities that will not be considered likely to result in violation of section 9 of the Act. To the extent possible, activities that will be in violation also will be identified in as specific a manner as possible. The Service believes that the actions listed below might potentially result in a violation of section 9; however, possible violations are not limited to these actions alone:

(1) Unauthorized collecting or handling of the species;

(2) Destruction or alteration of the species habitat (i.e., water depletions that significantly modify spring functions; activities that change water quality or quantity; dredging or other physical modifications that impact the springs; introduction of nonnative species);

(3) Improper use of herbicides, fertilizers, or pesticides;

(4) Contamination of soil or ground water by spills, discharges or dumping of chemicals, silt, or other pollutants associated with agriculture and oil and gas activities; Questions regarding whether a specific activity will constitute a violation of section 9 should be directed to the Field Supervisor of the Service's Salt Lake City Field office (see **ADDRESSES** section). Requests for copies of regulations concerning listed animals and general inquiries regarding prohibitions and permits may be addressed to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colorado, (telephone 303/236–7398; facsimile 303/236/0027).

The Act and implementing regulations found at 50 CFR 17.21 set forth a series of general prohibitions and exceptions that apply to all endangered wildlife. These prohibitions, codified at 50 CFR 17.21, in part, make it illegal for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to take (includes harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, or collect; or to attempt any of these), import or export, ship in interstate commerce in the course of commercial activity, or sell or offer for sale in interstate or foreign commerce any listed species. It also is illegal to possess, sell, deliver, carry, transport, or ship any such wildlife that has been taken illegally. Certain exceptions apply to agents of the Service and State conservation agencies.

Permits may be issued to carry out otherwise prohibited activities involving endangered wildlife species under certain circumstances. Regulations governing permits are found at 50 CFR 17.22 and 17.23. Such permits are available for scientific purposes, to enhance the propagation or survival of the species, and/or for incidental take in connection with otherwise lawful activities. Requests for copies of the regulations on animals and inquiries regarding them may be addressed to the Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colorado 80225 (telephone 303/236-7398).

Public Comments Solicited

The Service intends that any final action resulting from this proposal will be as accurate and as effective as possible. Therefore, any comments or suggestions concerning biological information and potential threats to the least chub are requested from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party. Comments are sought particularly concerning:

(1) Biological, commercial trade, or other relevant data concerning any