



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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Bruce Rauner, Governor
Wayne A. Rosenthal, Acting Director

February 2, 2015

Mr. Brien Sheahan, Chairman
527 E. Capitol St.
Springfield IL 62701

**RE: Grand Prairie Gateway 345-kV Transmission Line
Endangered Species Consultation Program
EcoCAT Review #1508565**

Dear Chairman Sheahan:

The Department has received from Stantec, on behalf of Commonwealth Edison, a submission for the purpose of consultation between the Department and the Commission pursuant to the *Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act* [520 ILCS 10/11], the *Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act* [525 ILCS 30/17], and Title 17 *Illinois Administrative Code Part 1075*.

EcoCAT Review #1508565 covers a route segment southwest of Kirkland, DeKalb County, which crosses Owens Creek, a tributary of the South Branch Kishwaukee River. Where Owens Creek joins the South Branch, the Kishwaukee River supports populations of the state-listed threatened **Gravel Chub**, *Erimystax x-punctatus*, and the **Black Sandshell Mussel**, *Ligumia recta*.

While these species have not been recorded from Owens Creek, it may be because Owens Creek has not been sampled with the same intensity as the South Branch. In particular, Owens Creek contains suitable habitat for the Gravel Chub, a minnow-like fish about four inches long. The **American Brook Lamprey**, *Lethenteron appendix*, pending listing at “threatened” in Illinois, occurs elsewhere in the Kishwaukee River drainage, and may potentially occur in Owens Creek, as well.

The Department recommends that construction activities should avoid any disturbance of the channel of Owens Creek, such as the construction of low-water crossings or temporary culverts. If such disturbances are deemed necessary they should be preceded by both a fish and mussel survey extending at least 100-meters upstream and downstream from the proposed crossing point, with an emphasis on surveying riffles in the stream. If either species is present, the applicant should consider seeking an Incidental Take Authorization from the Department pursuant to Part 1080 of the Administrative Rules.

Where the proposed route crosses the channel of Owens Creek some tree-removal may be necessary to establish required clearances. Due to a pending federal decision to list the **Northern Long-Eared Bat**, *Myotis septentrionalis*, as “endangered” or “threatened,” and because this species is believed to occur in DeKalb County, *the Department recommends tree removal should follow standard guidelines for avoiding adverse impacts to Northern Long-Eared Bats, or should be immediately preceded by mist-netting surveys to assure the trees to be removed are not occupied by protected species.*

This consultation is valid for two years unless new information becomes available which was not previously considered; or the proposed action is substantially modified; or additional species, essential habitats, or Natural Areas are identified in the vicinity. If the project has not been implemented within two years of the date of this letter, or any of the above-listed conditions develop, a new consultation is necessary.

The natural resource review primarily reflects the information existing in the Illinois Natural Heritage Database at the time of this consultation, and should not be regarded as a final statement on the site being considered, nor should it be a substitute for detailed site surveys or field surveys required for environmental assessments.

If additional protected resources are encountered during the project’s implementation, the applicant must comply with the applicable statutes and regulations. Also, note that closing consultation does not imply IDNR's authorization or endorsement of the proposed action. Please contact me if you have questions regarding this review.

Sincerely,



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cc: Brian Bub, Stantec