



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

Bruce Rauner, Governor
Wayne A. Rosenthal, Acting Director

February 10, 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 #1508577**

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 #1508577 covers a route segment which passes through the southern environs of the Village of Burlington in Kane County. EcoCAT indicated this segment may be in the vicinity of a nest of the State-listed endangered **Swainson's Hawk**, *Buteo swainsoni*. In fact, this segment will pass through woods which support the nest of one of only two known breeding pairs of this species in Illinois. Quite apart from affecting the woodland, the power line itself will present a collision hazard to Hawks within the foraging radius of this nest, which may extend as far as ten miles from the nest in any direction.

The total population of this bird in Illinois has seldom exceeded 25 birds at any one time, and in recent decades has likely been fewer. Increasing urban development of its breeding grounds in northern Kane County and southwestern McHenry County has been problematic. Although this species is generally tolerant of human activity, at some point development converts enough of the nesting territory so that it no longer supports a nesting pair, and they must relocate. The species also faces stiff competition for nesting sites from other raptors, such as the Red-Tailed Hawk. The Swainson's Hawks migrate all the way to Argentina, and are late arrivals, not appearing until May, when other raptors may be well-established on their territory and must be driven off.

The Swainson's Hawk hunts primarily over grasslands, croplands, and wetlands, using isolated or edge trees for nesting. Occasionally feeding on rodents and snakes, their prey primarily consists of large insects, such as grasshoppers and dragonflies.

The Department understands the nest sites of this pair have been clearly identified by the applicant and will be avoided by the applicant during construction. *However, consideration should be given to marking the constructed line with bird diverters to minimize the risk of collisions with the power line.*

Some tree-removal will be necessary in this segment 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 Kane County, *the Department recommends tree removal should follow standard guidelines for avoiding adverse impacts to Indiana Bats/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,



Keith M. Shank
Division of Ecosystems and Environment
keith.shank@illinois.gov
(217) 785-5500

cc: Brian Bub, Stantec