

FWS/RIFO

March 16, 2004

Jim Becker
Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
902 Battelle Boulevard, P.O. Box 999
Richland, Washington 99352

Dear Mr. Becker:

We have reviewed your February 18, 2004, request for information concerning federally listed threatened or endangered species in regard to the proposed development of a nuclear power station in DeWitt, Ogle, Grundy, LaSalle, or Rock Island Counties in Illinois. The preferred site is at the Clinton Nuclear Power Station in DeWitt County. We have the following comments.

To facilitate compliance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, Federal agencies are required to obtain from the Fish and Wildlife Service information concerning any species, listed or proposed to be listed, which may be present in the area of a proposed action. Therefore, we are furnishing you the following list of species which may be present in the concerned area:

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Habitat</u>
Protected	Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Wintering
Endangered	Indiana bat	<i>Myotis sodalis</i>	Caves, mines; small stream corridors with well developed riparian woods; upland forests
Endangered	Karner blue butterfly	<i>Lycaeides Melissa samuelis</i>	Pine barrens and oak savannas on sandy soils and containing wild lupines (<i>Lupinus perennis</i>), the only known food plant of the larvae

Threatened	Prairie bush clover	<i>Lespedeza leptostachya</i>	Dry to mesic prairies with gravelly soil
Threatened	Eastern prairie fringed orchid	<i>Platanthaera leucophaea</i>	Mesic to wet prairies
Threatened	Decurrent false aster	<i>Boltonia decurrens</i>	Disturbed alluvial soils

The threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is listed as wintering along large rivers, lakes and reservoirs in De Witt, Grundy, LaSalle, Ogle, and *Rock Island Counties (* counties that contain night roosts). During the winter, this species feeds on fish in the open water areas created by dam tailwaters, the warm water effluents of power plants and municipal and industrial discharges, or in power plant cooling ponds. The more severe the winter, the greater the ice coverage and the more concentrated the eagles become. They roost at night in groups in large trees adjacent to the river in areas that are protected from the harsh winter elements. They perch in large shoreline trees to rest or feed on fish. There is no critical habitat designated for this species. The eagle may not be harassed, harmed, or disturbed when present nor may nest trees be cleared.

In Illinois, the endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) is listed as potentially occurring throughout the state. The bat is known to occur and there is critical habitat listed for LaSalle County at the Blackball Mine. During the summer, the Indiana bat frequents the corridors of small streams with well developed riparian woods as well as mature upland forests. It forages for insects along the stream corridor, within the canopy of floodplain and upland forests, over clearings, with early successional vegetation (old fields), along the borders of croplands, along wooded fencerows, and over farm ponds and in pastures. It has been shown that the foraging range for the bats varies by season, age, and sex and ranges up to 81 acres (33ha). It roosts and rears its young beneath the loose bark of large dead or dying trees. It winters in caves and abandoned mines.

An Indiana bat maternity colony typically consists of a primary roost tree and several alternate roost trees. The use of a particular tree appears to be influenced by weather conditions (temperature and precipitation). For example, dead trees found in more open situations were utilized more often during cooler or drier days while interior live and dead trees were selected during periods of high temperature and/or precipitation. It has been shown that pregnant and neonatal bats do not thermoregulate well and the selection of the roost tree with the appropriate microclimate may be a matter of their survival. The primary roost tree, however, appears to be utilized on all days and during all weather conditions by at least some bats. Indiana bats tend to be philopatric, i.e., they return to the same roosting area year after year.

Suitable summer habitat in Iowa and Illinois is considered to have the following characteristics within a ½ mile radius of the project site:

- 1) forest cover of 15% or greater;
- 2) permanent water;

- 3) one or more of the following tree species: shagbark and shellbark hickory that may be dead or alive, and dead bitternut hickory, American elm, slippery elm, eastern cottonwood, silver maple, white oak, red oak, post oak, and shingle oak with slabs or plates of loose bark;
- 4) at least 1 potential roost tree per 2.5 acres;
- 5) potential roost trees must have greater than 10% coverage of loose bark (by visual estimation of peeling bark on trunks and main limbs).

If the project site contains any habitat that fits the above description, it may be necessary to conduct a survey to determine whether the bat is present. If Indiana bats are known to be present, they must not be harmed, harassed, or disturbed when present. Minor alterations of Indiana bat habitat (i.e. clearing) may be accomplished between the dates of October 1 and March 31. Large-scale habitat alterations within known or potential Indiana bat habitat should not be permitted without a bat survey and/or Section 7 consultation.

The endangered Karner blue butterfly (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*) is currently known to occur only in Lake County, Illinois. However, potential habitat may be found in Ogle County based on the historic distribution of the wild lupine plant *Lupinus perennis*. This plant is the only known food source for the larval stage of this species.

The prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) is listed as threatened in Ogle County in Illinois. It occupies dry to mesic prairies with gravelly soil. There is no critical habitat designated for this species. Federal regulations prohibit any commercial activity involving this species or the destruction, malicious damage or removal of this species from Federal land or any other lands in knowing violation of State law or regulation, including State criminal trespass law. This species should be searched for whenever prairie remnants are encountered.

The eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*) is listed as threatened for Grundy, County in Illinois. It may potentially occur in Ogle County, Illinois, based on historical records and habitat distribution. It occupies wet grassland habitats. There is no critical habitat designated for this species. Federal regulations prohibit any commercial activity involving this species or the destruction, malicious damage or removal of this species from Federal land or any other lands in knowing violation of State law or regulation, including State criminal trespass law. This species should be searched for whenever wet prairie remnants are encountered.

The decurrent false aster (*Boltonia decurrens*) is listed as threatened and it is considered to potentially occur in any county bordering the Illinois River and the counties bordering the Mississippi River between the mouths of the Missouri River and the Ohio River. It occupies disturbed alluvial soils in the floodplains of these rivers. There is no critical habitat listed for this species in Illinois.

The Corps of Engineers is the Federal agency responsible for wetland regulation, and we recommend that you contact them for assistance in delineating any wetland types and acreages within the project boundary. Priority consideration should be given to avoid impacts to wetland areas. Any future activities in the study area that would alter wetlands may require a Section 404

permit. Unavoidable impacts will require a mitigation plan to compensate for any losses of wetland functions and values. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Clock Tower Building, P.O. Box 2004, Rock Island, Illinois, 61201, should be contacted for information about the permit process.

These comments provide technical assistance only and do not constitute the report of the Secretary of the Interior on the project within the meaning of Section 2(b) of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, do not fulfill the requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, nor do they represent the review comments of the U.S. Department of the Interior on any forthcoming environmental statement.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments early in the planning process. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Heidi Woeber of my staff.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Nelson
Supervisor

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