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Date: 10/15/04 12:12PM
Subject: Point Beach Nuclear Plant - Piping Plover Habitat Baseline Survey

Paul,

Attached please find a Piping Plover habitat report for PBNP.

Kris

<<PBNP - Piping Plover Habitat Baseline Survey.pdf>>

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Subject: Point Beach Nuclear Plant - Piping Plover Habitat Baseline Survey
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Piping Plover Habitat on We Energies Property near the Point Beach Nuclear Plant

On 1 October 2004, Dr. Noel Cutright, We Energies' Senior Terrestrial Ecologist, performed a Lake Michigan shoreline evaluation of We Energies property at the Point Beach Nuclear Plant (PBNP). Dr. Cutright was accompanied by Mr. Kris McKinney, PBNP License Renewal Environmental Lead, and by Mr. Jim Knorr, PBNP License Renewal Project Manager (morning only).

Much of the approximately 3.8 km of shoreline owned by We Energies was visually examined by walking the shoreline; the remaining shoreline was viewed through binoculars while standing either on the shoreline or bluff adjacent to the shoreline. The evaluation was performed to reveal the presence or absence of factors or habitat elements that are relevant to making the shoreline attractive to the federally-endangered Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) for nesting.

The optimum Piping Plover breeding habitat requirements are:

1. beach width at least 50-m wide for 200 m along a continuous undisturbed shore of beach and dune complex that runs for at least 3 to 5 km;
2. sparsely vegetated beach with pockets of gravel used for lining the nest cup; and
3. plentiful supply of invertebrates in wash zone and along foredune.

The following provides a more detailed account of Piping Plover physical and biological habitat requirements for breeding on the Great Lakes. Such habitat must have a total shoreline length of at least 0.2 km of gently sloping, sparsely vegetated (< 50% herbaceous and low woody cover) sand beach with a total beach area of at least 2 ha. Appropriately sized sites also must have an area of at least 50 m in length where the beach width is more than 7 m, there is protective cover for nests and chicks, and the distance to the treeline (from the normal high water line to where the forest begins) is > 50 m. Beach width is defined as the distance from the normal high water line to the foredune edge or to the sand/vegetation boundary in areas where the foredune is absent. The beach width may be narrower than 7 m if an appropriate sand and cobble area of at least 7 m exists between the dune and the treeline.

Protective cover for nests and chicks consists of small patches of herbaceous vegetation, cobble > 1 cm diameter, gravel < 1 cm diameter, or debris such as driftwood, wrack, root masses, or dead shrubs. These areas must have a low level of disturbance from human activities and from domestic animals.

RESULTS OF EVALUATION

Although not optimum habitat as described above, portions of the shoreline evaluated appear to be suitable habitat for Piping Plovers to nest. There are stretches of this shoreline where beach width and length are adequate, vegetative

cover is sufficient, distance to treelines on the adjacent highlands is great enough, and protective cover is present. In addition, human disturbance, even outside of the restricted PBNP areas, appears to be minimal at this time. Plants noted during the survey that are dominant within Great Lakes Piping Plover habitat included *Ammophila brevigulata*, *Artemisia campestris*, *Potentilla anserine*, *Cakile edentula*, *Carex* spp., *Solidago* spp., *Populus deltoides*, and *Salix* spp.

Based upon these results, it is recommended that:

1. No measures should be taken to enhance habitat suitability along the stretch of beach owned by We Energies near the PBNP;
2. An annual Piping Plover breeding census should be conducted at this location between June 1 and June 15, with a target date of June 10 over the term of the new license;
3. The International Piping Plover Breeding Census (IPPBC) guidelines should be followed, and an IPPBC individual census report should be completed each year;
4. The Green Bay office of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Endangered Resources should be contacted on the same day that Piping Plovers are found nesting at this location; and
5. Contacts with the natural resource agency staffs described in 4) should be used to discuss beach access on the property, measures to protect the nest, and additional monitoring requirements of the nest site.

Submitted by Dr. Noel Cutright
October 13, 2004