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Eriks J. Gabliks,

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R3-ES-2021-0158;
FXES11140300000-212]

Draft Environmental Assessment and Proposed Habitat Conservation Plan; Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit, Sugar Creek Wind Project, Logan County, Illinois

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service,
Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request
for comment and information.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), have received an application from Sugar Creek Wind One, LLC (applicant), for an incidental take permit (ITP) under the Endangered Species Act, for its Sugar Creek Wind Project (project). The applicant requests the ITP, which would be for a 30-year period, for the take of the federally listed endangered Indiana bat and threatened northern long-eared bat incidental to the otherwise lawful activities associated with the project. The applicant proposes a conservation program to minimize and mitigate for the unavoidable incidental take as described in their habitat conservation plan (HCP). The Service requests public comment on the application, which includes the applicant's proposed HCP, and the Service's draft environmental assessment, prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. The Service provides this notice to seek comments from the public and Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments.

DATES: We will accept comments received or postmarked on or before February 25, 2022.

ADDRESSES:

Document availability: Electronic copies of the documents this notice announces, along with public comments received, will be available online in Docket No. FWS-R3-ES-2021-0158 at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Comment submission: In your comment, please specify whether your comment addresses the proposed HCP, draft EA, or any combination of the aforementioned documents, or other

supporting documents. You may submit written comments by one of the following methods:

- *Online:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Search for and submit comments on Docket No. FWS-R3-ES-2021-0158.

- *By hard copy:* Submit comments by U.S. mail to Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R3-ES-2021-0158; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: PRB/3W; Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kraig McPeck, Field Supervisor, Illinois-Iowa Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1511 47th Ave., Moline, IL 61265; telephone: 309-757-5800, extension 202; or Andrew Horton, Regional HCP Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Interior Region 3, 5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990, Bloomington, MN 55437-1458; telephone: 612-713-5337.

Individuals who are hearing impaired or speech impaired may call the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 for TTY assistance.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and its implementing regulations prohibit the “take” of animal species listed as endangered or threatened. “Take” is defined under the ESA as to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect [listed animal species], or to attempt to engage in such conduct” (16 U.S.C. 1538). However, under section 10(a) of the ESA, we may issue permits to authorize incidental take of listed species. “Incidental take” is defined by the ESA as take that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity. Regulations governing incidental take permits for endangered and threatened species, respectively, are found in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 17.22 and 50 CFR 17.32.

Applicant's Proposed Project

The applicant requests a 30-year ITP for take of the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and federally threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The applicant determined that wind farm activities on this land are reasonably certain to result in incidental take of these federally listed species. Activity that could result in incidental take of Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats is the operation of 57 wind turbines

occurring in Logan County, Illinois across approximately 12,120 acres of private land. The estimated level of take from the project is up to 90 Indiana bats and 60 northern long-eared bats over the 30-year project duration.

The proposed conservation strategy in the applicant's proposed HCP is designed to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the impacts of the covered activity on the covered species. The biological goals and objectives are to minimize potential take of Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats through on-site minimization measures and to provide habitat conservation measures for Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats to offset any impacts from operations of the project. On-site minimization measures include feathering turbine blades until wind speeds reach 3.0 meters per second (m/s) when temperatures are above 40 degrees Fahrenheit during the spring, summer, and fall (March 15 to November 15). Additionally, on-site minimization measures include feathering of turbine blades until wind speeds reach 5.0 m/s during fall (August 1 to October 15) when temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Minimization measures will be implemented nightly from sunset to sunrise. To offset the impacts of the taking of Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats, the applicant proposes to protect known maternity colony habitat for both covered species. The Service requests public comments on the permit application, which includes a proposed HCP, and an EA prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*).

The applicants' HCP describes the activities that will be undertaken to implement the project, as well as the mitigation and minimization measures proposed to address the impacts to the covered species. Pursuant to NEPA, the EA analyzes the impacts the ITP issuance would have on the covered species and the environment.

National Environmental Policy Act

The issuance of an ITP is a Federal action that triggers the need for compliance with NEPA. We prepared a draft EA that analyzes the environmental impacts on the human environment resulting from three alternatives: A no-action alternative, the applicant's proposed action, and a more restrictive alternative consisting of feathering at a rate of wind speed that results in less impacts to bats.

Next Steps

The Service will evaluate the permit application and the comments received to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the ESA. We will also conduct an intra-Service consultation pursuant to section 7 of the ESA to evaluate the effects of the proposed take. After considering the above findings, we will determine whether the permit issuance criteria of section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA have been met. If met, the Service will issue the requested ITP to the applicant.

Request for Public Comments

The Service invites comments and suggestions from all interested parties during a 30-day public comment period (see **DATES**). In particular, information and comments regarding the following topics are requested:

1. The direct, indirect, or cumulative effects that implementation of any alternative could have on the human environment;
2. Whether or not the significance of the impact on various aspects of the human environment has been adequately analyzed; and
3. Any other information pertinent to evaluating the effects of the proposed action on the human environment.

Availability of Public Comments

You may submit comments by one of the methods shown under **ADDRESSES**. We will post on <http://regulations.gov> all public comments and information received electronically or via hardcopy. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record associated with this action. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request in your comment that we withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public disclosure in their entirety.

Authority

We provide this notice under section 10(c) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.22) and the NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4371 *et seq.*) and its implementing

regulations (40 CFR 1506.6; 43 CFR part 46).

Lori Nordstrom,

Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

**[2221A2100DD/AAK001030/
A0A501010.999900 253G; OMB Control
Number 1076–0149]**

Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget for Review and Approval; Class III Gaming Procedures

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of information collection; request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, we, the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs (AS–IA) are proposing to renew an information collection.

DATES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before February 25, 2022.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments on this information collection request (ICR) to the Office of Management and Budget's Desk Officer for the Department of the Interior by email at OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov; or via facsimile to (202) 395–5806. Please provide a copy of your comments to Steven Mullen, Information Collection Clearance Officer, Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action—Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1001 Indian School Road NW, Suite 229, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87104; or by email to comments@bia.gov. Please reference OMB Control Number 1076–0149 in the subject line of your comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To request additional information about this ICR, contact Ms. Paula Hart, Director, Office of Indian Gaming, AS–IA, telephone: 202–219–4066. You may also view the ICR at <http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, we provide the general public and other Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on new, proposed, revised, and continuing collections of information. This helps us assess the

impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. It also helps the public understand our information collection requirements and provide the requested data in the desired format.

A **Federal Register** notice with a 60-day public comment period soliciting comments on this collection of information was published on August 12, 2021 (86 FR 44401). No comments were received.

As part of our continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burdens, we are again soliciting comments from the public and other Federal agencies on the proposed ICR that is described below. We are especially interested in public comment addressing the following:

- (1) Whether or not the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether or not the information will have practical utility;
- (2) The accuracy of our estimate of the burden for this collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;
- (3) Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- (4) How might the agency minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, *e.g.*, permitting electronic submission of response.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Abstract: The collection of information will ensure that the provisions of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) and other applicable requirements are met when federally recognized Tribes submit Class III procedures for review and approval by the Secretary of the Interior. Sections 291.4, 291.10, 291.12 and 291.15 of 25 CFR 291, Class III Gaming Procedures, specify the information collection requirement. An Indian Tribe must ask the Secretary to issue Class III gaming