



January 21, 2026

Tej Patel
141 W Jackson BLVD STE 1692
Chicago, IL 60605

**RE: McHenry Solar Farm
Consultation Program
EcoCAT Review #2609076
McHenry County**

Dear Applicant:

The Department has received your submission for this project for the purposes of consultation 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.

The proposed action consists of a 5mWAC maximum community solar farm in McHenry County.

The Illinois Natural Heritage Database shows the following protected resources may be in the vicinity of the project location:

State Threatened or Endangered Species
Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*)

Due to the project scope and proximity to protected resources the Department recommends the following actions be taken to avoid adversely impacting listed species and or protected natural areas in the vicinity of the project:

Blanding's Turtle

EcoCAT has indicated records for the state-listed Blanding's Turtle in vicinity of the project area. The Department recommends:

- Work on the project occurs during the turtle's inactive season from approximately November 1st to March 1st. If work must occur during the active season:
- Educate personnel working on site about the Blanding's Turtle. Post photos of juvenile and adult Blanding's Turtles at a central location. State-listed species may not be handled without the appropriate permits pursuant to the *Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act*.

- Install exclusionary silt fence by the end of March and maintain it through October (if needed) to prevent turtles from entering the construction area. Conduct daily inspections during construction to ensure that exclusionary fencing is properly installed (dug into the ground) and to check if turtles are present.
- Cover trenches at the end of each workday. Before starting each workday, trenches and excavations should be routinely inspected to ensure no turtles (or other amphibians and reptiles) have become trapped within them.
- If Blanding's turtles are encountered, crews should stop work immediately, allow the turtle to move out of the way and contact IDNR at (217) 785-5500.

Given the above recommendations are adopted the Department has determined that impacts to these protected resources are unlikely. The Department has determined impacts to other protected resources in the vicinity of the project location are also unlikely.

In accordance with 17 Ill. Adm. Code 1075.40(h), please notify the Department of your decision regarding these recommendations.

Consultation on the part of the Department is closed, unless the applicant desires additional information or advice related to this proposal. Consultation for Part 1075 is valid for two years unless new information becomes available which was not previously considered; the proposed action is modified; or additional species, essential habitat, or Natural Areas are identified in the vicinity. If the action 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 reflects the information existing in the Illinois Natural Heritage Database at the time of the project submittal and should not be regarded as a final statement on the project being considered, nor should it be a substitute for detailed site surveys or field surveys required for environmental assessments. If additional protected resources are unexpectedly encountered during the project's implementation, the applicant must comply with the applicable statutes and regulations.

This letter does not serve as permission to take any listed or endangered species. As a reminder, no take of an endangered species is permitted without an Incidental Take Authorization or the required permits. Anyone who takes a listed or endangered species without an Incidental Take Authorization or required permit may be subject to criminal and/or civil penalties pursuant to the *Illinois Endangered Species Act*, the *Fish and Aquatic Life Act*, the *Wildlife Code* and other applicable authority.

The Department also offers the following conservation measures be considered to help protect native wildlife and enhance natural areas in the project area:

- The Department strongly recommends that the project proponent establish pollinator-friendly habitat as groundcover wherever feasible. Solar Site Pollinator Establishment Guidelines can be found here:
<https://dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/pollinatorscorecard.html>
- The site should be de-compacted before planting.

- Long term management of the site should be planned for prior to development to ensure successful native pollinator habitat establishment and prevent the spread of invasive species throughout the lifetime of this project. An experienced ecological management consultant should be hired to assist with long-term management.
- If tree clearing is necessary, the Department recommends removing trees between November 1st and March 31st to avoid impacts to the state-listed bats and birds.

If temporary or permanent lighting is required, the Department recommends the following lighting recommendation to minimize adverse effects to wildlife:

- All lighting should be fully shielded fixtures that emit no light upward.
- Only “warm-white” or filtered LEDs (CCT < 3,000 K; S/P ratio < 1.2) should be used to minimize blue emission.
- Only light the exact space with the amount (lumens) needed to meet facility safety requirement.
- If LEDs are to be used, avoid the temptation to over-light based on the higher luminous efficiency of LEDs.

If erosion control blanket is to be used, the Department also recommends that wildlife-friendly plastic-free blanket be used around wetlands and adjacent to natural areas, if not feasible to implement project wide, to prevent the entanglement of native wildlife.

Please contact Isabella Allyn (Isabella.Allyn@illinois.gov) with any questions about this review.

Sincerely,



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