



United States Department of the Interior

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REGION 3

Chicago Ecological Services Field Office

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IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/AES-CIFO/

June 10, 2016

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001
Docket No. FD 35952

Dear Mr. Navecky:

This letter responds to your Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and your request for comments on the draft scope of study for the proposed construction and operation of the Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. (GLBT) freight rail line. The GLBT rail line would operate in Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

We provide general comments as they relate to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) trust resources (*e.g.*, Federally listed species, interjurisdictional fish, and migratory birds) that may be affected by the project. We recommend that the final scope of study for the EIS and the EIS fully address the concerns identified in this letter.

General comments

The EIS should fully disclose potential impacts to Service trust resources and aquatic resources found within the project corridor. We reviewed the information provided with your NOI. The GLBT rail line would be 278 miles long, possess a 200 foot wide right-of-way, and cross four major rivers in the State of Illinois (the Illinois, Kankakee, Fox, and Rock rivers). We checked our records for the presence of Service trust resources that may be affected by the proposed project. Based on our review we have concerns about the proposed project and its potential effects on various trust resources. Our concerns are identified below.

Federally listed species

Federally listed species are known to occur in the counties identified in the NOI for the potential corridor. Information about Federally listed species can be found on the Service's Region 3 Section 7 webpage, (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/>) to assist the Surface Transportation Board to determine if species listed in Indiana, Illinois, or Wisconsin, could be impacted by the proposed project. The Surface Transportation Board should ensure that effect determinations are made for the species listed in each county where the rail line would be constructed in all three states.

Migratory birds

The Service is authorized to protect migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat for migratory birds is located along the proposed corridor on public and private land. The EIS should fully disclose impacts to migratory birds and their habitat.

Wildlife Habitat

In addition to Service trust resources, wildlife habitat is located within the project corridor. These terrestrial (*e.g.*, upland forests and prairies) and aquatic (*e.g.*, wetland and streams) areas provide suitable habitat for Service trust resources.

The EIS should fully disclose all potential impacts, including indirect and cumulative impacts, to wildlife habitat/natural areas (*e.g.*, acreage amounts, fragmentation effects, etc.) within the project corridor. The EIS should also disclose how impacts to habitat and Service trust resources could be avoided, minimized, and mitigated (for unavoidable impacts). In addition we recommend that the EIS include:

- floristic quality assessments for all wetlands that could be impacted;
- stream ratings for all stream crossings;
- a discussion of measures proposed to prevent chemical spills and contingency plans to deal with spills if they occur;

Finally, we recommend that STB consider holding periodic stakeholders meetings to address environmental concerns of all stakeholders involved with the GLBT rail line project.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. This letter provides comment under the authority of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852, as amended P.L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1956 (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (40 Stat. 755, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.).

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Shawn Cirton at (312) 216-4728.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise Clemency". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Louise Clemency
Field Supervisor

cc: OPEC, Carol Braegelmann
NISO, Elizabeth McCloskey
RIFO, Heidi Woeber
TCFO, Nick Utrup