

Instructions for Conducting Endangered Species Act Project Reviews Using IPaC

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Indiana Ecological Services Field Office
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Under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), a Federal agency or its designated representative must determine whether their proposed projects may affect threatened and endangered species or designated critical habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) developed the online Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool to help streamline the ESA review process. IPaC can assist users through the section 7 consultation process when a Federal agency authorizes, funds, permits, or carries out an action. Other project proponents without a Federal nexus may also use IPaC to review proposed projects for potential impacts to Federally listed threatened and endangered species. The following instructions outline the process for how to use IPaC to obtain an official species list and use available assisted determination keys in order to help make determinations on effects to listed species.

This guide is intended to help Federal action agencies or their designated representatives, project proponents, and consultants complete project reviews under the ESA and obtain official documentation to ensure that their proposed projects will be in compliance with the ESA. These instructions were developed by the Service's Indiana Ecological Services Field Office (INFO) for projects located in the state of Indiana and may not be applicable to other states.

Before entering a project into IPaC, it is important to define the action and action area of your project and be able to adequately describe all project activities. The action area includes all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the action (*i.e.*, all areas affected by what you are doing, whether it is a project, activity, program, permitting, leasing, granting, etc.) and not merely the immediate area involved in the action. For example, for a culvert replacement that will change water-level elevations, the action area not only includes the areas where the culvert replacement will occur, but also the areas where water-levels will change. When describing project activities, it is important that the Service understands the project in terms of what it might mean for wildlife and aquatic resources. For example, in plain, non-technical terms, describe what the project involves. How far will construction vehicles be driving off paved roads? How many trees or how much vegetation is being removed? When will work begin and end? Are there staging areas? What measures are being implemented to reduce potential wildlife and aquatic habitat impacts?

With this information, please follow the steps below to assess your project's impacts to listed species.

Step 1: Enter your project into the Service's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system

- Log into IPaC: <https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/>
- Enter the project action area by uploading a shapefile, entering GPS coordinates or address, or drawing the action area on the map. Then click “confirm.”
- Review the list of Endangered and Threatened species in your area, then click on “Define Project.”
- Enter Project Name (up to 100 characters). Suggested format consists of consultant or agency name, project proponent, project name, project code or application/permit I.D. number (e.g., Corps of Engineer permit number, INDOT Des. number) and county name.
 - Example 1: Green Tree Consulting, Acme Development Company, Greenville Tall Tower Project, TTP7G, Monroe County
 - Example 2: Army Corps of Engineers, Acme Development Company, Acme Wetland Fill Project, PN 2022-01002, Hendricks and Marion Counties
- Enter a detailed project description including: a summary of the proposed action; a description of onsite habitat, including the size, location, and quality of streams, wetlands, forests and other natural areas that are proposed to be impacted; a description of potential bat roosting habitat (e.g., dead or living trees with split branches, split trunks, cavities, and/or exfoliating bark) and any cave/mine openings; and any proposed measures to avoid and minimize impacts to federally listed species. Please indicate if any trees will be cleared and include the number of trees or acreage of potential tree clearing. If the project was previously assigned a TAILS number by FWS in the past, please include that as well.
- Click “save.” Your project name and map should now appear.
- To upload additional information: Click on “2 Document” button. Upload any photos, layout maps, etc. that may assist in our review. After uploading, click on “Project Home.”
- Click on “start review.” On the Step-by-Step Consultation process page, click on “continue.”
- At this point, there are a series of questions related to the project such as what action agency is involved, your role in the project, what agency you work for, who is the lead agency, etc., Then IPAC will step through your contact info and the lead agency contact info (optional), and then ask for you to select the project type. Finally, after that, you can hit the “Submit Official Species List Request” button.
 - Your species list will be automatically generated and available shortly on your project's Documents page for viewing and downloading. A copy will also be sent to the e-mail address associated with your IPaC account. **You will need your official species list and project tracking number if you need to request a review of your project by our office.** Your project's official species list is valid for 90 days.
 - To update an Official Species List in IPaC, first log in to IPaC. From the My Projects page, find the project, expand the row, and click Project Home. In the What's Next box on the project home page, there is a

Request Updated List button to update your species list. Be sure to select an "official" species list for all projects.

Video Resources

- Request an Official Species List: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIgs_UeNws4
- IPaC Extended Overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WAbubFKyFY>

Step 2. Analyze project impacts

- Evaluate applicable determination keys (dKeys): If this is a federal transportation project with funding from FHWA, FRA, or FTA, you may use the FHWA, FRA, FTA Programmatic Consultation for Transportation Projects affecting NLEB or Indiana Bat dKey. Any projects may use the NLEB 4(d) dKey; however, for most projects, completing the NLEB dKey at this early stage of project review is not necessary unless tree clearing between April 1 and September 30 is proposed.
- Internal evaluation: Once you obtain your official species list you can make an effects determination on your own for any species not covered under a dKey. There are three potential determinations that can be made: “no effect,” “not likely to adversely affect,” and “likely to adversely affect.”
- For additional assistance you may use the Indiana Field Office’s Section 7 Technical Assistance Guidance ([INFO Section 7 Technical Assistance Guidance.pdf | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](#)) which will help you make an effects determination.
- Use of the Consultation Package Builder is not recommended for most projects in Indiana at this time.

Step 3. USFWS review

- If your completed review indicates a "no effect" determination for all listed species, document your findings in your files to record your compliance with the Endangered Species Act. As a reminder, no concurrence from the Service is provided if you make a “no effect” determination.
- For Federal projects with a “not likely to adversely affect” determination, you will need to email your project to IndianaFO@fws.gov. In your email be sure to include the IPaC project code (in the subject line), a project description, and include your determination (and justification) for federally listed species. Our concurrence becomes valid if you do not hear otherwise from us after a 30-day review period.
- For all other determinations, we will send you an email response within 30 days of receipt with technical assistance or further recommendations for specific species.

Step 4 (if needed). If you have questions or need additional coordination:

- Please email IndianaFO@fws.gov or the biologist assigned to the project.
- **It is very important to include the IPaC Project Code in the email subject line and a copy of your IPaC species list with your email to help expedite our review.**