



News Release

Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region External Affairs Office

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Input on Developing Indiana Bat Habitat Conservation Plan for Wind Facility in Benton County.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will host an open house Tuesday, June 7, 2011, to gather comments and answer questions about development of a Habitat Conservation Plan for the Fowler Ridge Wind Energy Facility operated by Fowler Ridge Wind Farm LLC, Fowler Ridge Wind Farm II LLC, Fowler Ridge Wind Farm III LLC, and Fowler Ridge Wind Farm IV LLC in Benton County, Indiana. The open house will be from 6 pm to 9 pm at the Benton County Government Annex located at 410 S. Adeway, Suite A, in Fowler, Indiana.

Representatives from the Service and from BP Wind Energy will be on hand at the open house to answer questions about the planning effort and to hear ideas and opinions about potential impacts of the facility on the endangered Indiana bat. The Indiana bat is protected under the Endangered Species Act and occurs at the site.

BP Wind Energy, Sempra Generation and Dominion Energy are working with the Service to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan to address possible impacts to the Indiana bat. The plan will describe the wind energy facilities, natural resources, and measures the Fowler Ridge Wind Energy Facility will implement to protect and conserve bats.

A Habitat Conservation Plan developed by BP Wind Energy, Sempra Generation and Dominion Energy and approved by the Service would include measures for long-term conservation of Indiana bats and will be used by Fowler Ridge Wind Farm LLC, Fowler Ridge Wind Farm II LLC, Fowler Ridge Wind Farm III LLC, and Fowler Ridge Wind Farm IV LLC to apply for a Service permit to exempt an otherwise lawful activity (operation of a wind energy facility) from the prohibition of take under the Endangered Species Act. Take, under the Act, means harming, harassing, or killing endangered or threatened species.

As part of the Service's review of the plan, and Fowler Ridge Wind Farm LLC, Fowler Ridge Wind Farm II LLC, Fowler Ridge Wind Farm III LLC, and Fowler Ridge Wind Farm IV LLC's request for an incidental take permit, the Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement evaluating effects of the project.

The Service encourages participation in the open house to solicit information on issues, concerns, or other information that should be considered in the Environmental Impact Statement. The forum will also serve as an opportunity to identify or provide information on historic or cultural resources that should be considered in the assessment.

The Fowler Ridge Wind Energy Facility currently includes 355 wind turbines in Benton County, with plans for additional turbines. Two occurrences of Indiana bat mortality have been discovered and reported by the Fowler Ridge Wind Energy Facility during routine surveys of the facility.

The Indiana bat was listed as endangered in 1967, under the precursor to the current Endangered Species Act, because of large population declines believed to be from disturbance of caves where bats hibernate during the winter. The Indiana bat is found across much of the eastern and central United States. From late fall through winter Indiana bats hibernate in caves. During the summer, Indiana bats use living, injured (e.g. split trunks and broken limbs from lightning strikes or wind), dead or dying trees for roosting throughout the state. Indiana bats forage for flying insects (particularly moths) in and around floodplain, riparian and upland forests. During the spring and fall Indiana bats migrate between the caves where they hibernate and forested areas where they spend the summer. It is during this time that Indiana bats appear to be most vulnerable to mortality by wind turbines.

More information on the Fowler Ridge Wind Energy Facility HCP can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/permits/hcp/r3hcps.html>

For more information on the Indiana bat and habitat conservation plans, visit the Service's website at www.fws.gov/endangered

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>