



## Questions and Answers: Buckeye Wind Farm Incidental Take Permit and Habitat Conservation Plan

### 1. What action is the Service taking?

The Service has issued an incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act to Buckeye Wind LLC, a subsidiary of Pittsburgh-based EverPower Wind Holdings. The permit allows for the incidental take of a small number of endangered Indiana bats at its proposed wind power project in Champaign County, Ohio. To offset any loss of Indiana bats at its project, Buckeye Wind must follow the approved habitat conservation plan designed specifically for the Indiana bat.

### 2. What is an incidental take permit?

Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act prohibits the “take” of endangered species (take is harming, harassing or killing), whether intentional or not. An incidental take permit allows the permit-holder to legally proceed with an activity that may take a listed species, if the take is not the purpose of the activity but is an incidental effect of the activity.

### 3. What is a habitat conservation plan?

A habitat conservation plan is required in order to apply for an incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act. A habitat conservation plan outlines measures that the applicant will take to avoid and minimize take where possible, and steps that will be taken to mitigate impacts to the listed species. Mitigation measures often include habitat conservation, habitat restoration or other actions that ensure the listed species will be conserved and that contribute to its recovery.

### 4. Why is this incidental take permit significant?

This is the first time the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued an incidental take permit for Indiana bats at a wind facility. It represents the Service’s strategy of working with the wind energy industry, an important renewable energy source, to reduce bat mortality while securing commitment from wind energy developers to conserve endangered species, at their facilities.

### 5. Why is an incidental take permit needed for the Buckeye facility?

There have been documented instances of Indiana bat mortality at wind facilities in the Midwest. Buckeye has chosen to design its operations to minimize the likelihood of killing Indiana bats as well as other bat and bird species. In addition, by implementing its habitat conservation plan, Buckeye will ensure long-term conservation of Indiana bats in the area.

### 6. How does Buckeye’s habitat conservation plan conserve bats?

The plan calls for measures to avoid and minimize take, as well as mitigation to offset the incidental take of Indiana bats authorized under the habitat conservation plan. Four risk categories were identified on the Buckeye site; areas with the highest risk of taking Indiana bats will have the most restrictions.

The plan calls for “feathering” the turbine blades below a specified cut-in speed (the wind speed at which the turbines begin to generate electricity). Feathering causes the turbine blades to be

motionless, or nearly so, below these wind speeds, thus reducing impacts to bats flying through the facility. Buckeye will feather their turbines at night during periods of risk (spring, summer and fall, when Indiana bats are most likely to be flying). Mitigation will include preservation and enhancement of land surrounding an Indiana bat hibernation site in Ohio, which will protect valuable fall roosting, foraging and swarming habitat for the Indiana bat as well as other bat species that use the site. The habitat conservation plan also requires monitoring of the mitigation land.

**7. Was there an opportunity for the public to comment on the permit?**

There were several opportunities for the public to provide input on the habitat conservation plan and the request for an incidental take permit. The Service is required to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, which includes evaluating the environmental effects of issuing an incidental take permit. During that process, the public was invited to provide comment on the scope of the environmental impact statement, the draft habitat conservation plan and draft environmental impact statement, and the final documents.

**8. Where can I find more information about the draft HCP and draft EIS?**

More information, including copies of the draft HCP and draft EIS, is available at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/permits/hcp/buckeyewind/index.html>