

Instructions for Submitting Endangered Species Act Project Review Requests Using IPaC

USFWS Fish and Wildlife Service
Ohio Ecological Services Field Office
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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) developed the online Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool to help streamline the Endangered Species Act (ESA) review process. IPaC can assist users through the ESA 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 Ohio Ecological Services Field Office (OHFO) for projects located in the State of Ohio 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 project information into the Service's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system

- Log into IPaC: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>
- For a new project, click on "Get started"
- Enter the project location (upload a shapefile or enter lat/long/address and then draw the project area on the map), click "continue."
- Review the list of Endangered and Threatened species in your area, then click on "Define Project."
- Enter Project Name (up to 100 characters) in the format: **name of consulting firm (if applicable), agency or project proponent (if known) - project name - any project code and/or application/permit I.D. number** (e.g., Corps of Engineer permit number).
 - Example 1: Green Tree Consulting - Acme Development Company - Greenville Tall Tower Project - TTP7G
 - Example 2: Army Corps of Engineers - Acme Development Company - Acme Wetland Fill Project - PN 2022-01002
- Enter Project Description.
 - Enter a project description (i.e., a summary of the proposed action). If the project was assigned a TAILS number by FWS in the past, please include that in the project description.
- Click "save." Your project name and map should now appear.
- Click on "start review."
- Review the Step-by-Step Consultation process page, then click on "continue."
- Click on "yes, request a species list."
- Enter the information associated with the lead Federal (or state, etc.) agency for the project. Depending on your answers, you will be prompted to answer additional questions and provide your contact information and project type. Click "Submit official species list request."
- Your "Official Species List" will be automatically generated and available on your project's page shortly for viewing and downloading. Download a pdf copy of your Official Species List."

Step 2. Evaluate Applicable Determination Keys (dKeys)

- Click on "Next Step: Determination Keys." You may be presented with one or more dKeys that may streamline your consultation process.
- If the "All Ohio Determination Key" is available, we recommend that you utilize it. Use of this key may generate an immediate technical assistance letter and preclude the need for further coordination with our office. Click on "Evaluate."
- If the American Burying Beetle Determination Key is available, we recommend you complete this. Click on "Evaluate."
- If this is a Federal Highways project, you may use the "FHWA, FRA, FTA Programmatic Consultation for Transportation Projects affecting IBAT, NLEB, or TCB" dKey. Click on "Evaluate."
- If this is a Department of Defense project, you may use the "Department of Defense Determination Key for Indiana bat, Northern long-eared bat, and Tricolored Bat." Click on "Evaluate."

- The OHFO strongly advises that project proponents and federal agencies **do not use** the “Northern Long-eared Bat and Tricolored bat Rangewide Determination Key” for projects in Ohio.
- If no relevant dKeys are available, proceed to Step 3.
- We recommend concluding the use of IPAC after evaluating dKeys that are applicable to the project. Next, either move to Step 3 below if further consultation with the USFWS is needed, or present the information generated from IPAC and the dKeys to the lead federal agency for the project.
- “Next step: Analyze Project”—This link will take you to the Consultation Package Builder. We **do not** recommend this step for projects in Ohio at this time.

Step 3: Review Official Species List and dKey letters to determine if additional coordination is needed.

- If the All Ohio Determination Key is NOT available for your project, or if the letter resulting from the All Ohio Determination Key indicates that the proposed action falls outside the scope of the dKey, then the project description, map, and IPaC Official Species List should be submitted to Ohio@fws.gov for review.
- Use the subject line: Project submittal for review (IPaC#xxxx-xxxxxx)
- Include the following information in your email and attachments:
 - **You MUST attach a copy of your IPaC-generated species list to your email.**
 - A detailed project description, including layout of any new construction.
 - A detailed description of onsite habitat, including the size, location, and quality (when available) of streams, wetlands, forest and other natural areas, and details of anticipated impacts to these natural resources.
 - A description of the forest habitat onsite, including type of forest, and presence of dead trees, split branches or trunks, and exfoliating bark, and anticipated impacts to this habitat
 - Photographs representative of all cover types on the site and encompassing views of the entire site.

Our response

The Ohio Ecological Services Field Office will send a response email within approximately 30 days of receipt with technical assistance or further recommendations for specific species.

After receiving our email response if you have questions or need additional coordination:

- Please email Ohio@fws.gov or the biologist assigned to the project (if known).
- **Please include the IPaC Consultation Code in the email subject line and a copy of your IPaC output letter in your email to help expedite our review.**

Thank you for contacting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Ohio Ecological Services Field Office. For additional information please visit our website at <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/ohio/>.