



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ecological Services, Eastern North Carolina Field Office
3916 Sunset Ridge Rd.
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27607

Date:

Online Self Certification for Communication Tower Projects in North Carolina

Project Name: _____

Thank you for using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Raleigh Field Office Communication Towers Projects Review Procedures (enclosed). By printing this letter, you are certifying that you have completed the review procedures for the referenced project in accordance with all instructions provided, using the best available information to reach your conclusions.

_____ is proposing a communication tower project in _____ County(ies), North Carolina, located at _____ latitude by _____ longitude.

The referenced communication tower project has incorporated the Service's recommendations to avoid and minimize impacts to migratory birds to the extent practicable and meets the criteria for the "no effect" determination to federally listed threatened and endangered species and is "unlikely to disturb" bald eagles as outlined in the Service's project review procedures.

To minimize potential impacts to aquatic resources, the Service recommends strict sediment and erosion control measures as defined in applicable guidance or regulations specific to your location.

This letter completes the review of your project in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, 87 Stat. 884), as amended (ESA); Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712, 40 Stat. 755), as amended (MBTA); and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668c, 54 Stat. 250) as amended (Eagle Act). A copy of this letter must be email to **Raleigh@fws.gov** for this certification to be valid.

Sincerely,

NICOLE
SIKULA

Digitally signed by
NICOLE SIKULA
Date: 2026.09.28 11:24:41
-05'00'

for Jennifer Archambault, Ph.D.
Acting Field Supervisor

Enclosure: Communication Tower Projects Review Procedures

Communication Towers Projects Review Procedures

The following no effect criteria, and avoidance and minimization measures define the scope of the Self-certification letter. Use of these procedures beyond its intended scope and purpose will invalidate biological conclusions pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, 87 Stat. 884), as amended (ESA); the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712, 40 Stat. 755), as amended (MBTA); and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668c, 54 Stat. 250), as amended (Eagle Act). These procedures also provide information for project reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, 83 Stat. 852), as amended.

Step 1. Federally listed threatened and endangered species and bald eagles.

Determine if the project will have "no effect" on federally proposed/listed threatened or endangered species, federally designated critical habitat, and are "unlikely to disturb" bald eagles by evaluating whether the project meets one or more of these criteria:

(A). Proposed actions have an action area¹ outside federally listed species range, as defined by the Service's [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPAC\)](#) project planning tool, or the action area does not include any suitable habitat for listed species or bald eagles, as determined by a suitable habitat assessment².

(B). Activities will occur greater than 660 feet (330 feet if forested and outside breeding season) from a bald eagle nest.

(C). Proposed actions are co-located, with new equipment or antennae or any infrastructure improvements at an existing structure (e.g., light pole, billboard, tower, water tank, building, etc.), where all ground disturbance occurs within cleared or regularly mowed areas. Co-location work must not include:

- Additional ground disturbance (including access road), or
- Increasing tower height to above 199 feet overall (including appurtenances).

(D). Proposed actions have an action area that is entirely within a previously disturbed³ area.

¹ Action Area is defined by regulation as all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action (50 CFR §402.02). Action area is not limited to the "footprint" of the action, nor is it limited by the Federal action agency's authority.

² Suitable habitat assessments provide information on the natural communities present and help determine which federally listed species may occur in the action area. Assessments involve data from desktop evaluations and field visits, comparing suitable habitat components to existing conditions to determine whether suitable habitats are present for the species of interest. Habitat components must exist in sufficient quantity, quality, and arrangement to support a species for the habitat to be considered suitable.

³ Previously disturbed is where human activity, such as construction, mining, agriculture, or infrastructure development, has significantly altered the natural soil profile, topography, native vegetation, water quality, stream substrate, biological processes, or has otherwise degraded habitats to the extent that they cannot support one or more

(E). Proposed actions have an action area that occurs within the footprint of an extant structure or within an extant road prism⁴, and the effects of the action⁵ do not extend beyond that footprint or prism.

(F). Repair, maintenance, or replacement of an existing communication tower. This work must not include:

- increasing the tower or associated infrastructure footprint (including access road),
- ground disturbance (including access road) outside the original footprint, or
- increasing the tower height to above 199 feet overall (including appurtenances).

(G). Transfer of ownership of existing towers.

Step 2. Migratory birds. To minimize adverse impacts to migratory birds, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) strongly encourages co-locating with other equipment and/or lowering tower height to the extent practicable, minimizing lighting, locating the tower in urbanized or developed areas or other areas that do not provide potential habitat for migratory birds, and incorporating as many recommendations from the [Service Guidance on the Siting, Construction, Operation and Decommissioning of Communication Towers](#) as practicable.

Step 3. For projects that meet the criteria in Steps 1-2, no further coordination with the Service is needed. Complete the self-certification letter and submit electronically to **Raleigh@fws.gov**. Please indicate in your email subject title you are submitting a **"Communication tower certification letter."**

Step 4. If the project does not meet the criteria in Steps 1- 2, follow the [Project Planning and Consultation](#) guidance on the Raleigh Field Office's website.

federally protected species. These sites often have compacted soil, invasive species, and a lack of original plant communities. Exceptions include rights-of-way where suitable habitat for prairie remnant species may occur.

⁴ Road prism is the total three-dimensional cross-section of a road, spanning from the top of the cut slope to the toe of the fill slope. It includes the driving surface, shoulders, ditches, slopes, and structural fill, representing the entire area directly disturbed by road construction.

⁵ Effects of the action are the direct and indirect effects of an action on the species or critical habitat, together with the effects of other activities that are interrelated or interdependent with that action.