

Project: Big Timber Road, Gilberts, IL
Client: Surya Powered, LLC
Consultant: Baxter & Woodman Natural Resources, LLC
RE: USFWS Section 7: Threatened & Endangered Species
BWNR #: 2401225.01

Surya Powered plans to build a solar farm at the southeast corner of Big Timber Road and Higgins Road in Gilberts, Illinois 60136. The proposed project is located in Section 22, Township 42N, Range 7E. The proposed project site is 46.47 acres, and the land is in the process of being owned by Surya Powered. The project will involve installation of solar panels, farm fencing, and a 20' wide access road with double gate.

On behalf of Surya Powered, Baxter & Woodman Natural Resources, LLC (BWNR) completed a review of the United States Fish & Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Section 7 Consultation guidance on August 30, 2024 via IPaC (Information for Planning & Consultation). According to USFWS Section 7 Consultation, endangered Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*), candidate Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), endangered Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*), and threatened Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*), are "Federally Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species" listed within the proposed project site (see map below) in Kane County, Illinois. The following documentation for each species and how the proposed solar farm project will have "no effect" on listed species is included below.



2022 Aerial image of Proposed Solar Farm project area (Source: ArcGIS Web)

Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*)

Whooping Cranes currently exist in the wild at only 3 locations and in captivity at 12 sites with an estimated population of 383 in 2010. There is only one self-sustaining wild population, the Aransas-Wood Buffalo National Park population. In addition, there is a small captive-raised, non-migratory population in central Florida, and a small migratory population of individuals introduced beginning in 2001 that migrate between Wisconsin and Florida in an eastern migratory population.

The project site could potentially be in the path of the Whooping Crane migrating population between Wisconsin and Florida. The proposed project is planned on land that is currently in row crop production. Row crop does not provide ideal migratory landing habitat. The proposed solar farm would change the existing land use but would not improve or decrease potential landing preference. Therefore, Whooping Cranes will not be exposed directly or indirectly to the proposed project resulting in “no effect” and no further consultation required.

Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)

Monarch Butterflies are large and conspicuous, with bright orange wings surrounded by a black border and covered with black veins. During the breeding season, monarchs lay their eggs on their obligate milkweed host plant and larvae emerge after two to five days and develop through five larval instars over a period of 9 to 18 days, feeding on milkweed. The larva then pupates into a chrysalis before emerging 6 to 14 days later as an adult butterfly.

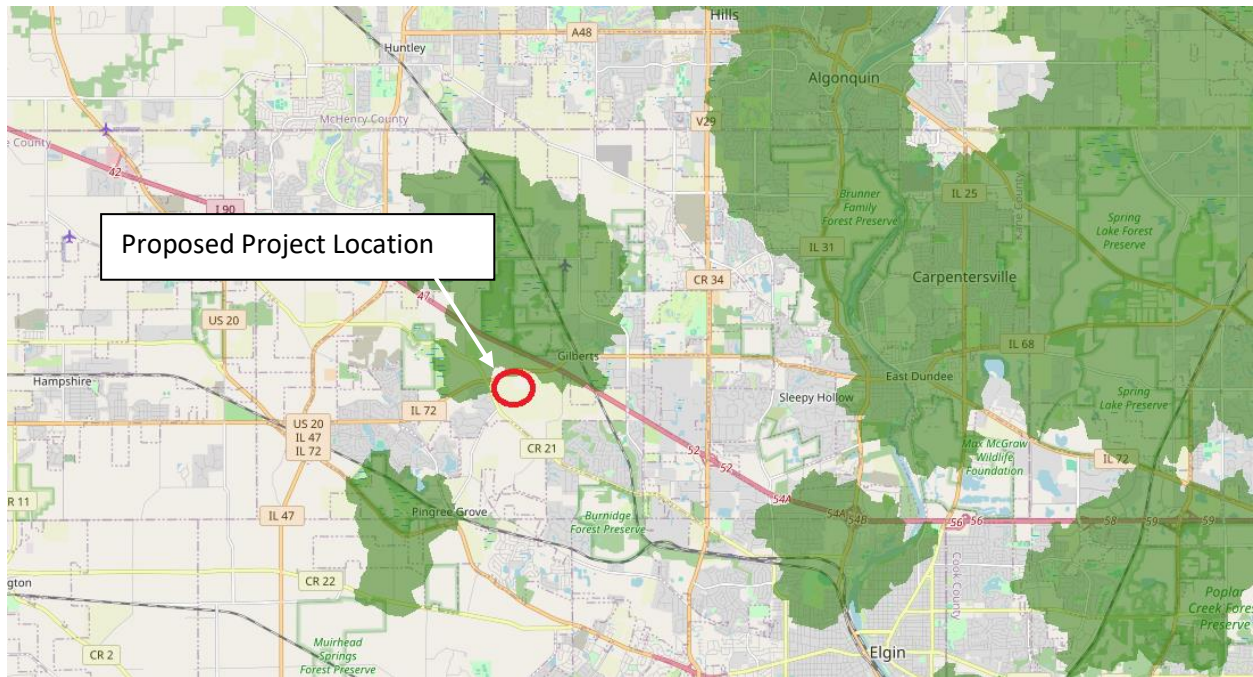
Monarchs in temperate climates undergo long-distance migration. This migration can take monarchs distances of over 3,000 km and last for over two months. In early spring (February-March), surviving monarchs break diapause and mate at the overwintering sites before dispersing. The same individuals that undertook the initial southward migration begin flying back through the breeding grounds and their offspring start the cycle of generational migration over again.

The project site is within the Monarch’s breeding and migratory zones. The proposed project is planned on land that is currently in row crop production that does not contain milkweed plants and does not provide ideal habitat. The proposed solar farm would change the existing land use and improve potential habitat preference due to milkweed in the seed mix. Therefore, the Monarch Butterfly will not be exposed directly or indirectly to the proposed project resulting in “no effect” and no further consultation required.

Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*)

Rusty Patched Bumble Bee lives in organized colonies of up to 1,000 individuals. Their annual cycle begins in early spring with colony initiation by the queen with breeding occurring in mid to late summer/early fall. The Rusty Patched Bumble Bee is found in habitats such as prairies, woodlands, marshes, agricultural landscapes, and residential parks and gardens but ultimately needs a habitat with a sufficient nectar source from diverse and abundant flowers. Undisturbed nesting sites in close proximity to floral resources is critical.

Although the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee is found in McHenry County, Illinois, the proposed project is in row crop production and does not contain a nearby nectar source. The proposed project will plant native pollinator species that will improve the landscape making it a more suitable habitat. Therefore, Rusty Patched Bumble Bee will not be exposed directly or indirectly to the proposed project resulting in “no effect” and no further consultation required.



Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*)

Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is found in high quality (Floristic Quality Index > 20 and/or Native Mean C > 3.5) mesic to wet prairies, sedge meadows, marsh edges, and bogs.

The project area is currently in row crop production. The project site does not offer preferred high-quality wet prairie habitat. The proposed project will plant native pollinator species that will improve the landscape making it a more suitable habitat. Therefore, Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid will not be exposed directly or indirectly to the proposed project resulting in “no effect” and no further consultation required.