



Photograph 21: South of proposed structure 64, facing southwest, and looking down Stream 13 – an intermittent tributary to Sandusky River.



Photograph 22: Near proposed structure 66, facing southwest and overlooking Wetland 07. The wetland adjoins the southeast side of Stream 14 (not in the photo) and extends outside of the right of way. The pole in the background is to be replaced.





Photograph 23: Near proposed structure 66, facing southwest, and overlooking Stream 14 - Sandusky River.



Photograph 24: South of proposed structure 90, facing northeast, and looking up Stream 15 – an intermittent tributary to Sandusky River.





Photograph 25: South of proposed structure 101, facing south and looking up Stream 16 - an intermittent tributary to Sandusky River.



Photograph 26: South of proposed structure 105, facing north, and overlooking Wetland 08. The wetland extends outside of the right of way to the east and to approximately 1,500 feet beyond the pole in the background.





Photograph 27: Near proposed structure 107, facing north, and overlooking Wetland 08. The wetland extends north into the fenced and gated area, which is a federally restricted site.



Photograph 28: South of proposed structure 117, facing southeast and looking up Stream 17 - Indian Creek, a perennial tributary to Sandusky River.





Photograph 29: North of proposed structure 132, facing north, and looking down Stream 18 – an intermittent tributary to Sandusky River.



Photograph 30: Near proposed structure 138, facing north, and overlooking Wetland 09. The fence in the center of the photo divides the right of way into mowed (left side) and not mowed (right side) areas. The wetland extends outside of the right of way but appears to be isolated.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES REVIEW  
REPORT**

**FREMONT AREA IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

**TIFFIN CENTER – FREMONT CENTER 138kV TRANSMISSION LINE**

**SENECA AND SANDUSKY COUNTIES, OHIO**

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## 1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

AEP Ohio Transco's proposed Tiffin Center – Fremont Center 138kV transmission line project consists of rebuilding the Tiffin Center – Fremont Center line from a single wood pole line to a new double-circuit 138kV line with single steel poles from the existing Tiffin Center station off of State Route 101 (Portland Road) in Clinton Township, Seneca County, Ohio, to the existing Fremont Center station off of Yingling Road in Ballville Township, Sandusky County, Ohio. This line crosses Seneca and Sandusky counties, Ohio. The Tiffin Center – Fremont Center line is part of AEP's Fremont Area Improvement Plan, a transmission reinforcement effort designed to help AEP maintain adequate transmission reliability in northwestern Ohio. The project extends for approximately 12.6 miles. The project is located in Seneca and Sandusky counties, Ohio, as shown on Figure 1.

As part of the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) Letter of Notification (LON) requirements, AEP is required to describe the environmental impacts of the proposed project, as stated in Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Rule 4906-11-01(E)(1). This rule states:

(E) *Environmental data. Describe the environmental impacts of the proposed project. This description shall include the following information:*

- (1) *A description of the applicant's investigation concerning the presence or absence of federal and state designated species (including endangered species, threatened species, rare species, species proposed for listing, species under review for listing, and species of special interest) that may be located within the area likely to be disturbed by the project, a statement of the findings of the investigation, and a copy of any document produced as a result of the investigation.*

AEP Ohio Transco retained Commonwealth Associates, Inc. (Commonwealth) to conduct a threatened and endangered species review within the area crossed by the proposed project and a field review of the existing and proposed right of way (100 feet in width). Commonwealth's findings are documented in this report, which will be used to assist the OPSB in evaluation of the project and to assist AEP Ohio Transco's efforts to avoid impacts to threatened and endangered species potentially present in the project area.

## 2.0 METHODS

Commonwealth began this survey by a review of online data from the State of Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In addition, Commonwealth submitted a request to the ODNR Biodiversity Database for GIS records of species of concern in proximity to the project. The GIS shapefiles were added to the project GIS maps as an overlay where they were in proximity to the project area.

Coordination letters soliciting comments on the project were submitted to the ODNR and USFWS. Copies of responses from these agencies are included as Appendix A.



Information on these species was reviewed to ascertain habitat types these species are known to utilize. This information was used during photo interpretation and in-the-field review to assess the potential of these species to occur in or near the project area.

### 3.0 RESULTS

Commonwealth environmental planner Doug Longpre and engineering technician Cassandra Kussow, along with Tim Walters, Ph.D., of EnviroScience, Inc., conducted a habitat suitability review in conjunction with the review of access for construction and stream and wetland review performed in August and September, 2013.

#### 3.1 State Species of Concern

TABLE 1  
STATE-LISTED SPECIES THAT COULD INHABIT THE PROJECT AREA  
IN SENECA AND SANDUSKY COUNTIES, OHIO

Scientific Name	Common Name	Category	Status
<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	American Bittern	Bird	State Endangered Species
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Northern Harrier	Bird	State Endangered Species
<i>Fundulus diaphanous menona</i>	Western Banded Killifish	Fish	State Endangered Species
<i>Lynx rufus</i>	Bobcat	Mammal	State Endangered Species
<i>Moxostoma valenciennesi</i>	Greater Redhorse	Fish	State Threatened and Federal Species of Concern
<i>Moxostoma carinatum</i>	River Redhorse	Fish	State Threatened and Federal Species of Concern
<i>Rallus elegans</i>	King Rail	Bird	State Endangered Species
<i>Sistrurus catenatus</i>	Eastern Massasauga	Snake	State Endangered and Federal Candidate Species

**American Bittern:** Correspondence with the ODNR noted that Sandusky County is within the range of the American bittern. A wading bird and member of the heron family, the American bittern occupies wet meadows and shrub swamps near open water, preferring undisturbed densely vegetated areas not dominated by trees. Preferred habitat for this species was not noted along the project corridor. The project is not likely to impact this species.

**Northern Harrier:** Correspondence with the ODNR noted that Sandusky County is within the range of the Northern harrier. A variety of hawk, this bird of prey is often found in wide-open

grasslands, marshes or fields. Preferred habitat for this species was not noted along the project corridor. The project is not likely to impact this species.

**Western Banded Killifish:** Correspondence with the ODNR noted that Sandusky County is within the range of the western banded killifish. This small native fish is usually found in glacial lakes, slow-moving streams, and bays and marshes along Lake Erie. In Sandusky County, this species has been noted in the Miller Blue Hole Wildlife Area near Vickery, Ohio. This is over 10 miles north and east of the project area. No in-water work is proposed in the Sandusky River or tributaries. The project is not likely to impact this species.

**Bobcat:** Correspondence with the ODNR noted that Sandusky County is within the range of bobcats. Bobcats are rarely seen by people due to their elusive and nocturnal habits, but they are estimated to be the most abundant native wildcat in North America. They adapt well to a variety of habitats, including forests, swamps, and suburban areas. No bobcats have been documented in the project area. If they are present, the project is not anticipated to impact them, as this species has the ability to move away from or avoid the corridor during construction.

**Greater Redhorse and River Redhorse:** Review of the ODNR Natural Heritage Database identified an occurrence of two species of redhorse in the Sandusky River south of the existing river crossing. The greater redhorse is found in medium to large rivers in the Lake Erie drainage system, while the river redhorse is found in the largest rivers of the Ohio and Lake Erie drainage systems. Both are larger species of redhorse, with the river redhorse being the largest of the species found in Ohio. Redhorse spawn in April and May. They migrate into smaller streams and spawn at night at the top and bottom ends of shallow riffles. They are bottom-feeder suckers and intolerant of pollution and turbid (murky) water.

No in-water work is proposed in the Sandusky River or tributaries. Best management practices of soil erosion control, including silt fence, construction tracking surfaces, dust control, maintaining a construction buffer along the river, and check dams, will help ensure that the project does not encourage turbidity in the river. Mitigation of potential impacts will include: crossings of tributaries to the Sandusky River will be matted/bridged above the flow line; installation and removal of crossings will be before March or after June; and streams will not be forded to protect possible spawning areas.

**King Rail:** Correspondence with the ODNR noted that Sandusky County is within the range of the king rail. This marsh bird nests in clumps of grass just above water and forages along the shore and shallow waters of marsh and tidal areas. This type of habitat is not encountered along the project corridor. The project is not likely to impact this species.

**Eastern Massasauga:** Review of the ODNR Natural Heritage Database did not identify any species of concern in the project area. The ODNR noted that both counties traversed by the project are within the historic range of the eastern massasauga rattlesnake.



In the spring, these snakes are found in open, shallow wetlands or shrub swamps and adjacent uplands. In the summer months, they are more likely to be found in the adjacent upland open shrub forests and are known to be observed in open fields, grassy meadows or farmed areas seeking the warmth of sunny spots (sunning). Suitable wetland habitat was not noted in the project area. Construction is proposed during the early spring when the snakes are not likely to be found in open fields, grassy meadows or farmed areas. Furthermore, once the project is complete, there will be little change to the existing habitat features. The ODNR concurs that, due to the lack of records in the area, the type of habitat being affected, and the type of work proposed, this project is not likely to impact this species.

### 3.2 Federal Species of Concern

TABLE 2  
FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES THAT COULD INHABIT THE PROJECT AREA  
IN SENECA AND SANDUSKY COUNTIES, OHIO

Scientific Name	Common Name	Category	Status
<i>Calidris canutus rufa</i>	Red Knot	Bird	Proposed Federally Threatened
<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	Piping Plover	Bird	State and Federally Endangered
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle	Bird	Recovery
<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Northern Long-Eared Bat	Mammal	Proposed Federally Endangered
<i>Myotis sodalis</i>	Indiana Bat	Mammal	State and Federally Endangered
<i>Platanthera leucophaea</i>	Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid	Plant	Federally Threatened
<i>Setophaga kirtlandii</i>	Kirtland's Warbler	Bird	State and Federally Endangered
<i>Villosa fabalis</i>	Rayed Bean	Mussel	State and Federally Endangered

**Red Knot:** Based on our review of the USFWS website, the red knot has been identified as a proposed federally protected species in Sandusky County. The USFWS published a proposed rule to list the red knot as a threatened species on September 30, 2013, and the agency is considering comments received through November 29, 2013. This species, therefore, has the potential of being a listed species during the construction period of the Tiffin Center – Fremont Center project. This shore bird is known to stop briefly along the Great Lakes during its migration between the Canadian Arctic and the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. As this line is in the southern portion of Sandusky County, not near Lake Erie, we do not anticipate impact to this species.

**Piping Plover:** The USFWS has designated critical habitat for the Great Lakes breeding population of the piping plover in certain areas along the Great Lakes shorelines of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. As this line is in the southern portion of Sandusky County, not near Lake Erie, we do not anticipate the occurrence of any piping plover habitat in the project area.

**Bald Eagle:** Based on our review of the USFWS website, the bald eagle was identified as a federally protected species in both Seneca and Sandusky counties. Although this species is in recovery, it is also protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Bald eagles live along the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Great Lakes, and other major lakes and rivers. Their preferred nesting site is one where water with ample food (fish) is located within two miles of the nest. In northern Ohio eagles lay their eggs in February/March, hatch in about 35 days and fledge in 12 weeks. In the project area, they have been observed along the Sandusky River. The eagle nest noted in the ODNR review is in Section 16 of Ballville Township, two other older nest sites were included in the ODNR Biodiversity GIS shape files. These nest sites are near but not within the project's right of way.

AEP has adopted an Avian Protection Plan (APP) with the intent to decrease the incidence of bird interactions, prohibit bird take, and help conserve North American bird species. AEP's APP is based on the Avian Protection Plan Guidelines developed by the Edison Electric Institute Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) and the USFWS. These guidelines are contained within "Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines: State of the Art in 2006," prepared by Edison Electric Institute, APLIC, and the California Energy Commission.

The following APLIC criteria are to be incorporated into the design and location of the line:

- Phase-to-phase separation of the line is to be a minimum of 60 inches with similar separation between the shielding wire and the conductors
- No cross arms or platforms that encourage perching or nesting.
- No guy wiring
- Utilization of existing utility corridor; no incorporation of new fragmented woodland habitat

In addition to APLIC design and location criteria, AEP proposes have a buffer marked/flagged in the area near the nest before tree clearing activities to ensure clearing doesn't get too close. Tree clearing crews will be made aware of the concern for maintaining the buffer and protecting eagle's nests in the project area. Active construction in the area will be performed after fledging, between July 1 and February 1.

**Northern Long-Eared Bat and Indiana Bat:** Based on our review of the USFWS website, the northern long-eared bat has been identified as a proposed federally protected species in Sandusky and Seneca counties. The USFWS published a 12-month finding on the petition to list the northern long-eared bat as an endangered species and proposed a rule to list it as such on October 2, 2013. The agency is considering comments received through December 2, 2013. This



species, therefore, has the potential of being a listed species during the construction period of the Tiffin Center – Fremont Center project. In the summer, the bats typically roost singly or in colonies under bark, in cavities, and in crevices in live and dead trees. In the study area, trees suitable for habitat include Black Oak, Red Oak, Silver Maple, Sugar Maple, Black Locust, and American Beech. The bats may also summer roost in cooler locations such as caves and mines. They have also been found roosting under eaves on houses, behind window shutters, in bat-houses, and in open and enclosed buildings. They are documented to enter hibernation in October/November and leave in March/April. Bats have been known to hibernate in caves, mines and tunnels within 60 miles of their summer roosts.

The Indiana bat, a known inhabitant of Ohio, has a presumed presence in Seneca and Sandusky counties. The bat utilizes dead or dying trees with exfoliating bark for cover, roosts, and breeding/nursery activities during the warmer months of the year. Males generally spend the summer alone or in small groups. The females may form nursery colonies of 100 or more. During the colder winter months, the bats migrate to southern Indiana and northern Kentucky to hibernate and are not present in the project area at that time. Dead or dying trees will be utilized by the Indiana bat for only several breeding seasons at most, as the dying process will eventually take these trees down. They will be replaced in the future by other currently healthy trees.

The existing maintained right of way is approximately 50 feet wide. Adding a second circuit will require increasing the right of way width to 100 feet. Field reconnaissance shows that there are woods adjacent to the corridor to be cleared; clearing will be performed in the winter months between October 1 and March 31. There will continue to be trees immediately adjacent to the new wider right of way after the clearing. The make-up of the trees adjacent to the new wider right of way is similar to those adjacent to the existing right of way, some live, some dead, and some dying. No caves, mines, tunnels, or buildings will be disturbed as a result of the project. Therefore, we concluded that the project as proposed “is not likely to adversely affect” any northern long-eared or Indiana bats that may be in the area.

**Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid:** Based on our review of the USFWS website, the eastern prairie fringed orchid has been identified as a federally protected species in Sandusky County. The orchid most often occurs in mesic to wet, unplowed tallgrass prairies and meadows, bogs, fens, and sedge meadows. The observance of eastern prairie fringed orchids in Sandusky County has been in the area near Sandusky Bay in the northern portion of the county and not in the immediate project area. Evidence of the species was reviewed during the wetland field investigation, and none was found. Although no specimens were found, disturbance to potential habitat will be minimized by limiting access across any wetland. Where alternative access is not feasible, wetlands will be matted.

**Kirkland’s Warbler:** Correspondence with the ODNR noted that Sandusky County is within the range of the Kirkland’s warbler. This northern wood warbler is known to nest in northern Michigan (northern Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula), Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada, and winter in the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. The bird was first identified outside

Cleveland, Ohio, during its migration. As it is a migratory bird and does not nest in the study area, it is anticipated that the project will not have an impact on this species.

**Rayed Bean:** Correspondence from the ODNR noted the possibility of rayed bean mussels being located in the Sandusky River, Sugar Creek, and Morrison Creek, although no specimens have been recorded. The transmission line does not cross Morrison Creek. The Sandusky River and Sugar Creek crossings are aerial. As no in-water work is proposed, it is unlikely any mussels will be impacted.

#### 4.0 SUMMARY

AEP Ohio Transco retained Commonwealth to conduct a threatened and endangered species review within areas crossed by the proposed project and a field review within and adjacent to the existing maintained and proposed right of way (approximately 100 feet wide). This report will be used by AEP Ohio Transco to assist in efforts to avoid impacts to threatened and endangered species potentially present in the study area during construction activities.

No state species of concern, or signs of these species, and no unique habitats were observed during the field review. Impact to fish and mussel species is not anticipated, as no in-water work is proposed in the Sandusky River or tributaries. Best management practices of soil erosion control, including silt fence, construction tracking surfaces, dust control, maintaining a construction buffer along the river and other streams, and check dams, will help ensure that the project does not encourage turbidity. It is unlikely any state species of concern will be impacted by the proposed project.

Bald eagles have been observed in the project vicinity along the Sandusky River. AEP has adopted an Avian Protection Plan (APP) with the intent to decrease the incidence of bird interactions, prohibit bird take, and help conserve North American bird species. AEP's APP is based on the Avian Protection Plan Guidelines developed by the Edison Electric Institute Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) and the USFWS. APLIC criteria will be incorporated into the design and location of the line to minimize any potential impact to bald eagles.

Other bird species identified are not anticipated to nest in the study area, and it is unlikely there would be any adverse impact to these birds.

During the wetland field investigation evidence of eastern prairie fringed orchid was sought, but none was found. Disturbance to potential habitat will be minimized by limiting access across any wetland and matting wetlands where alternative access is not possible.

This project is located in counties with a presumed presence of the northern long-eared bat and the Indiana bat. As tree clearing will be during the winter months when the bats would not be roosting in trees, it is unlikely there will be adverse impact to any bats that may be in the area at other times of the year.



## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the nature of the project, review of available current literature, review of federal and state records of species of concern, contact with the USFWS and the ODNR, design and location of the line, and field observations conducted in August and September 2013, it is not expected that federal or state species of concern will be impacted by the project as currently planned. Best management practices of soil erosion control, including silt fence, construction tracking surfaces, dust control, maintaining a construction buffer along the river and other streams to protect in-water species, will be implemented. To prevent impact to potential bat habitat, clearing of trees along the right of way will be performed in the winter months between October 1 and March 31. AEP has adopted an Avian Protection Plan (APP) with the intent to decrease the incidence of bird interactions, prohibit bird take, and help conserve North American bird species, including the bald eagle. AEP's APP is based on the Avian Protection Plan Guidelines developed by the Edison Electric Institute Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) and the USFWS. APLIC criteria specific to the bald eagle have been incorporated into the design and location of the line.

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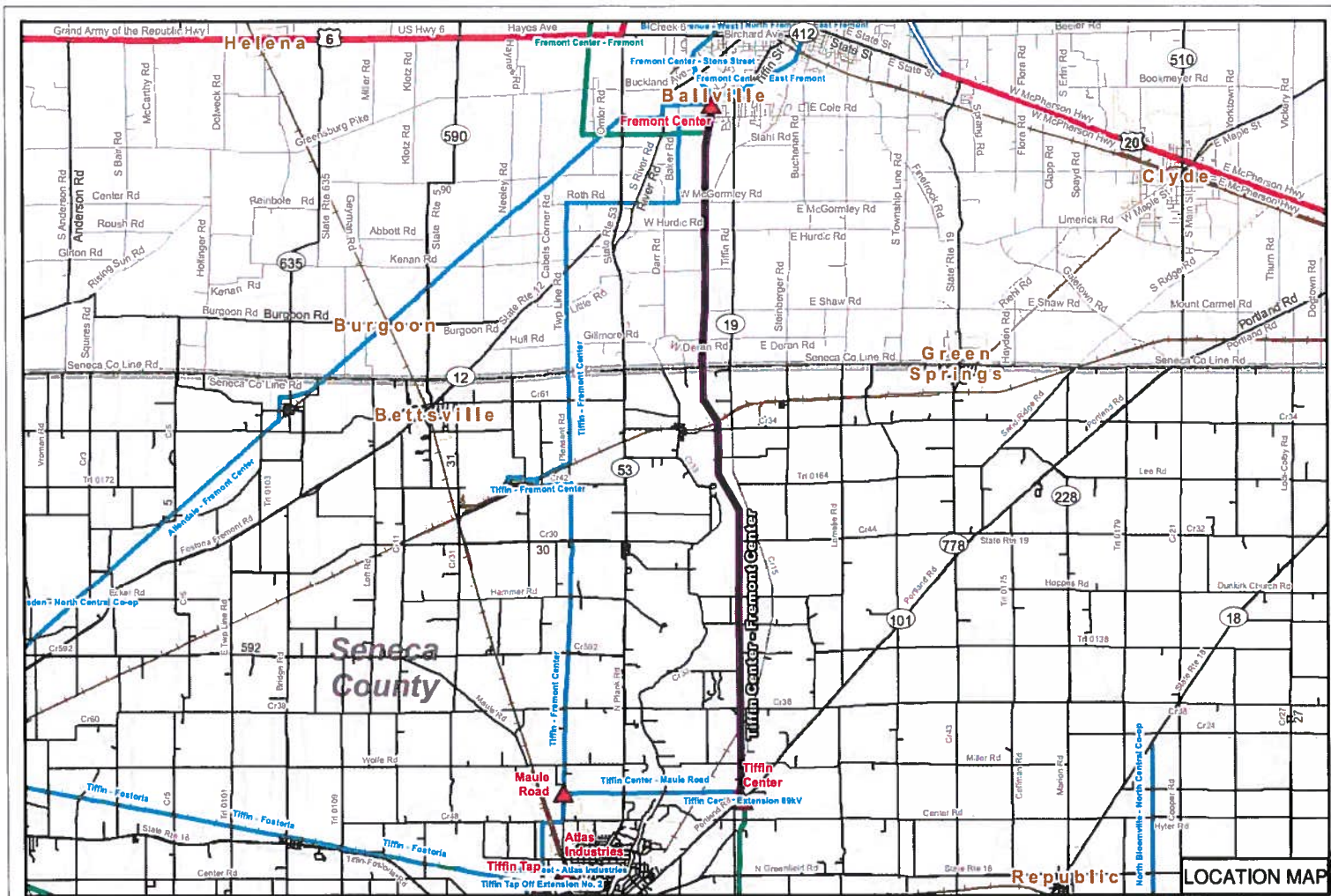
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LOCATION MAP

<p><b>Substation &amp; Transmission Line</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substation</li> <li>Existing Structure</li> <li>Proposed Structure</li> <li>Existing 66 kV</li> <li>Existing 88 kV</li> <li>Existing 115 kV</li> <li>Existing 138 kV</li> <li>Existing 161 kV</li> </ul>	<p><b>Transmission &amp; Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interstate</li> <li>Highway</li> <li>Railroad</li> <li>Major/Local Road</li> <li>River/Stream/Lake/Pond</li> <li>Decontaminated Stream</li> <li>Lake (Location Map)</li> <li>Watershed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Boundaries &amp; Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City/Township County</li> <li>New Entrance</li> <li>Map Index</li> <li>200' Right of Way</li> <li>2,000 ft Contour</li> <li>Agriculture District</li> <li>Contour 20'</li> </ul>	<p><b>Land Use/Land Cover</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Water</li> <li>Cropland &amp; Pasture</li> <li>Deciduous Forest</li> <li>Industrial &amp; Commercial</li> <li>Industrial &amp; Transportation</li> <li>Residential</li> <li>Wetland</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wildlife</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Palustrine Emergent</li> <li>Palustrine Forested</li> <li>Palustrine Scrub/Shrub</li> <li>Palustrine Unconsolidated Bottom</li> <li>Lacustrine/Rivine</li> <li>Decontaminated Wetland</li> </ul>	<p><b>AEP Ohio Transmission Company</b>  <b>Tiffin Center - Fremont</b>  <b>138 kV Transmission Line</b>          Sandusky &amp; Seneca County, Ohio          Projected Coordinate System: Ohio State Plane          Datum: North American Datum of 1983          Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic          Zone: North          Linear Unit: Feet</p>		<p>Scale: 1" = 2 Miles (1:125,000) Date: 8/16/2013</p> <p>Location Map</p> <p>0 0.75 1.5 Miles</p> <p>Commonwealth of Ohio  <b>AEP AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER</b></p>
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# Ohio Department of Natural Resources

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July 16, 2013

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Dear Ms. Stevens

I have reviewed the Natural Heritage Database for the Fremont Area Improvements Project area, including a one mile radius, in Seneca and Sandusky Counties, Ohio. We have records for rare species, managed areas and scenic rivers in your project area. I am attaching a shape file for the rare and endangered plants and animals, geologic features, high quality plant communities and animal assemblages. Fields included are scientific and common names, state and federal statuses and date of the most recent observation. State and federal statuses are defined as: E = endangered, T = threatened, P = potentially threatened, SC = species of concern, SI = special interest, FE = federal endangered, FT = federal threatened, FPE = federal potentially endangered, FC = federal candidate and FSC = federal species of concern, F = federal listing only. This data may not be published or distributed beyond the scope of the project description on the data request form without prior written permission of the Natural Heritage Program. I have also attached a shape file for managed areas that include state wildlife areas, nature preserves, parks and forests, national wildlife refuges, county metro parks, as well as sites owned by non-profit groups. Please be aware that the managed areas layer may not be complete. We are continually updating this layer as additional information becomes available to us. I have also attached a shape file showing a state designated scenic river.

Our inventory program has not completely surveyed Ohio and relies on information supplied by many individuals and organizations. Therefore, a lack of records for any particular area is not a statement that rare species or unique features are absent from that area. Although we inventory all types of plant communities, we only maintain records on the highest quality areas.

This letter only represents a review of rare species and natural features data within the Ohio Natural Heritage Database. It does not fulfill coordination under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and does not supersede or replace the regulatory authority of any local, state or federal agency nor relieve the applicant of the obligation to comply with any local, state or federal laws or regulations.

Please contact me at 614-265-6452 if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Schneider".

Greg Schneider, Administrator  
Ohio Natural Heritage Program



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Ecological Services  
4625 Morse Road, Suite 104  
Columbus, Ohio 43230  
(614) 416-8993 / FAX (614) 416-8994

August 8, 2013

CAI Engineering  
Attn: Ann Stevens  
P.O. Box 1124  
Jackson, MI 49204

TAILS# 03E15000-2013-TA-1326

Re: AEP – Tiffin Center 69kV Extension, Fremont, Seneca and Sandusky Counties in Ohio

Dear Ms. Stevens

We have received your recent correspondence requesting information about the subject proposal. There are no Federal wilderness areas, wildlife refuges or designated critical habitat within the vicinity of the project area. The following comments and recommendations will assist you in fulfilling the requirements for consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA).

The Service recommends that proposed developments avoid and minimize water quality impacts and impacts to high quality fish and wildlife habitat (e.g., forests, streams, wetlands). Additionally, natural buffers around streams and wetlands should be preserved to enhance beneficial functions. If streams or wetlands will be impacted, the Corps of Engineers should be contacted to determine whether a Clean Water Act section 404 permit is required. Best management practices should be used to minimize erosion, especially on slopes. All disturbed areas should be mulched and revegetated with native plant species. Prevention of non-native, invasive plant establishment is critical in maintaining high quality habitats.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES COMMENTS:** All projects in the State of Ohio lie within the range of the **Indiana bat** (*Myotis sodalis*), a federally listed endangered species. Since first listed as endangered in 1967, their population has declined by nearly 60%. Several factors have contributed to the decline of the Indiana bat, including the loss and degradation of suitable hibernacula, human disturbance during hibernation, pesticides, and the loss and degradation of forested habitat, particularly stands of large, mature trees. Fragmentation of forest habitat may also contribute to declines. During winter, Indiana bats hibernate in caves and abandoned mines. Summer habitat requirements for the species are not well defined but the following are considered important:

- (1) dead or live trees and snags with peeling or exfoliating bark, split tree trunk and/or branches, or cavities, which may be used as maternity roost areas;
- (2) live trees (such as shagbark hickory and oaks) which have exfoliating bark;
- (3) stream corridors, riparian areas, and upland woodlots which provide forage sites.

Should habitat exhibiting the characteristics described above be present at the proposed project site, we recommend that they, as well as surrounding trees, be saved wherever possible. However, if these trees cannot be avoided, they should only be cut between October 1 and March 31. If implementation of the

seasonal tree cutting restriction is not possible, summer surveys should be conducted to document the presence or likely absence of the Indiana bat within the project area during the summer. The survey must be conducted by an approved surveyor and be designed and conducted in coordination with the Endangered Species Coordinator for this office. Summer surveys must be conducted between May 15 and August 15, when the presence of maternity colonies of Indiana bats could be detected.

If there is a Federal nexus for the project (e.g., Federal funding provided, Federal permits required to construct), no tree clearing on any portion of the parcel should occur until consultation under section 7 of the ESA, between the Service and the Federal action agency, is completed. We recommend that the Federal action agency submit a determination of effects to this office, relative to the Indiana bat, for our review and concurrence.

Due to the project type, size, and location, we do not anticipate adverse effects to any other federally endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate species. Should the project design change, or during the term of this action, additional information on listed or proposed species or their critical habitat become available, or if new information reveals effects of the action that were not previously considered, consultation with the Service should be initiated to assess any potential impacts.

These comments have been prepared under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended, and are consistent with the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mitigation Policy. This letter provides technical assistance only and does not serve as a completed section 7 consultation document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Knapp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Knapp, Ph.D.  
Field Supervisor



# Ohio Department of Natural Resources

JOHN R. KASICH, GOVERNOR

JAMES S. ZEHRINGER, DIRECTOR

## Office of Real Estate

*Paul R. Baldrige, Chief*  
2045 Morse Road – Bldg. E-2  
Columbus, OH 43229  
Phone: (614) 265-6649  
Fax: (614) 267-4764

August 20, 2013

Commonwealth Associates, Inc.  
2700 West Argyle Street  
Jackson, MI 49204

**Attn:** Ann M. Stevens

**Re:** 13-387 Fremont Area Improvements Transmission Line Project

**Project:** The project involves upgrades to AEP's electrical transmission facilities, including upgrading the existing Tiffin Center 69 kV extension transmission line and the existing Tiffin Center-Fremont Center 69 kV transmission to double circuit 138 kV transmission lines.

**Location:** These improvements will be made in Eden, Clinton, and Pleasant Townships within Seneca County and Ballville Township in Sandusky County.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has completed a review of the above referenced project. These comments were generated by an inter-disciplinary review within the Department. These comments have been prepared under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), the National Environmental Policy Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, Ohio Revised Code and other applicable laws and regulations. These comments are also based on ODNR's experience as the state natural resource management agency and do not supersede or replace the regulatory authority of any local, state or federal agency nor relieve the applicant of the obligation to comply with any local, state or federal laws or regulations.

**Fish and Wildlife:** The Division of Wildlife (DOW) has the following comments.

The ODNR Natural Heritage Database has a record for a nesting bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), federal species of concern, within a wood lot in section 16, Ballville Township, Sandusky County.

The bald eagle is no longer a state or federally listed endangered or threatened species. However, it is still federally protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The USFWS should be consulted for guidance for reducing impacts to this nest.

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/CurrentBirdIssues/Management/BaldEagle/NationalBaldEagleManagementGuidelines.pdf> and/or,

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle/guidelines/index.html>.



### Sandusky and Seneca Counties

The project is within the range of the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a state and federally endangered species. The following species of trees have relatively high value as potential Indiana bat roost trees: Shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), Shellbark hickory (*Carya laciniosa*), Bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), Black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), Green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), White ash (*Fraxinus americana*), Shingle oak (*Quercus imbricaria*), Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), Slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), Eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), Silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), Post oak (*Quercus stellata*), and White oak (*Quercus alba*). Indiana bat habitat consists of suitable trees that include dead and dying trees with exfoliating bark, crevices, or cavities in upland areas or riparian corridors and living trees with exfoliating bark, cavities, or hollow areas formed from broken branches or tops. If suitable trees occur within the project area, these trees should be conserved. If suitable habitat occurs on the project area and trees must be cut, cutting must occur between October 1 and March 31. If suitable trees must be cut during the summer months, a net survey must be conducted between June 15 and July 31, prior to cutting. Net surveys shall incorporate either two net sites per square kilometer of project area with each net site containing a minimum of two nets used for two consecutive nights, or one net site per kilometer of stream within the project limits with each net site containing a minimum of two nets used for two consecutive nights. If no tree removal is proposed, the project is not likely to impact this species.

The project is within the range of the rayed bean (*Villosa fabalis*), a state endangered and federal endangered mussel species. The project must not have an impact on freshwater native mussels in the area. This project crosses the Sandusky River, Sugar Creek, and Morrison Creek. These three streams have been classified as group one streams within the Ohio Mussel Survey Protocol. Surveys and other information regarding the location of mussels in Ohio are limited. This includes information regarding the possibility of mussels being located in these three streams. Therefore, the possibility of mussels within the area of the project cannot be eliminated. If there is no in-water work planned, this project is not likely to impact these species. However, if mussels are encountered during the project, work should immediately be stopped and John Navarro of the DOW should be contacted at (614) 265-6346.

The project is within the historic range of the Eastern massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus*), a state endangered and a federal candidate snake species. Due to the lack of records in the area, the type of habitat being affected, and the type of work proposed, this project is not likely to impact this species.

### Sandusky County

The project is within the range of the piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), a state and federally endangered bird species, and the Kirtland's warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*), a state and federally endangered species. These species do not nest in the state but only utilize stopover habitat as they migrate through the region. Therefore, the project is not likely to have an impact on these species.

The project is within the range of the Western banded killifish (*Fundulus diaphanous menona*), a state endangered species. The DOW recommends no in-water work in perennial WWH streams from April 15 to June 30 to reduce impacts to aquatic species and their habitat.

The project is within the range of the bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), a state endangered species. Due to the mobility of this species, the project is not likely to have an impact on this species.

The project is within the range of the American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), a state endangered bird. A statewide survey has not been completed for this species. A lack of records does not indicate the species is absent from the area. Nesting bitterns prefer large undisturbed wetlands that have scattered small pools amongst dense vegetation. They occasionally occupy bogs, large wet meadows, and dense shrubby swamps. Due to the location, and the type of work proposed, this project is not likely to impact this species.

The project is within the range of the king rail (*Rallus elegans*), a state endangered bird. A statewide survey has not been completed for this species. A lack of records does not indicate the species is absent from the area. Unlike other rails, this species is often rather bold, venturing beyond the dense confines of cattails and other marsh vegetation where they can be readily observed. Due to the location, and the type of work proposed, this project is not likely to impact this species.

The project is within the range of the Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), a state endangered bird. This is a common migrant and winter species. Nesters are much rarer, although they occasionally breed in large marshes and grasslands. Harriers often nest in loose colonies. The female builds a nest out of sticks on the ground, often on top of a mound. Harriers hunt over grasslands. Due to the location, and the type of work proposed, this project is not likely to impact this species.

The ODNR Natural Heritage Database has no other records for rare or endangered species at this project site. We are unaware of any unique ecological sites, geologic features, animal assemblages, scenic rivers, state wildlife areas, nature preserves, parks or forests, national wildlife refuges or other protected natural areas within the project area. Our inventory program does not provide a complete survey of Ohio wildlife, and relies on information supplied by many individuals and organizations. Therefore, a lack of records for any particular area is not a statement that rare species or unique features are absent from that area.

ODNR appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments. Please contact John Kessler at (614) 265-6621 if you have questions about these comments or need additional information.

ODNR Office of Real Estate  
2045 Morse Road, Building E-2  
Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693  
[John.Kessler@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:John.Kessler@dnr.state.oh.us)

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities**

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**3/7/2014 2:56:20 PM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 14-0143-EL-BLN**

Summary: Letter of Notification Tiffin Center Fremont Center (Part 7 of 7) electronically filed by Mr. Matthew J Satterwhite on behalf of AEP Ohio Transmission Company