LETTER OF NOTIFICATION

Appendix F Environmental Features Inventory Report and Endangered Species Review May 1, 2014

Appendix F Environmental Features Inventory Report and Endangered Species Review

Proposed SCPC Blue Racer 138kV Transmission Line Project, Monroe County, Ohio

Environmental Features Inventory Report and Endangered Species Review



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Blue Racer Midstream, LLC (BRM) is proposing the SCPC Blue Racer 138 kV Transmission Line, located in Section 18, Township 6 North, Range 7 West, Franklin Township, Monroe County, Ohio (Location Map-Attachment A). The proposed transmission line project involves the installation of approximately 1,975 feet (0.3740 miles) of 138 kV single circuit, electrical transmission line. The proposed 138 kV transmission line connects SCPC's Blue Racer 138kV delivery point, which is located within American Electric Power (AEP) Blue Racer Switchyard, to the BRM proposed Cryogenic facility 138/13.8 kV distribution substation. The five structures in this transmission line outside of the Cryogenic facility and the switchyard include two 75-foot class 1 Douglas Fir poles, one 80-foot class 1 Douglas Fir pole, one 80foot class 1 Douglas Fir pole, and one 70-foot steel angle structure. The line will connect to a 90-foot steel structure in the Cryogenic facility, and to an AEP 138 kV dead-end at the switchyard. The line crosses, and then runs adjacent to, Swazey Road. The transmission line centerline will be approximately 35 feet from the centerline of Swazey Road, which will be five feet outside (east) of the County right-of-way (ROW). The electrical transmission line will be located on property owned by BRM.

Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. (Stantec) completed field surveys to address potential impacts to wetlands and waterbodies as well as threatened and endangered species. This report summarizes the results of the Stantec field investigations.

2.0 METHODS

Stantec conducted wetland, waterway, and preliminary threatened and endangered species habitat assessments including assessments for the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), and northern long-eared bat (*M. septentrionalis*) along the proposed transmission line project alignment on January 30 and February 26, 2014. The area of investigation included a corridor extending 50 feet on either side of the proposed transmission line centerline totaling 100 feet in width.

2.1 WETLANDS

Stantec completed wetland delineations in accordance with the *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual* (1987) and the *Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Eastern Mountains and Piedmont Region* (Version 2.0) (USACE 2012). If identified, the uppermost wetland boundaries and sample points were identified and flagged with pink, numbered flagging and were located with a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver capable of sub-meter accuracy. Representative photographs were taken, as appropriate, of each wetland resource.

2.2 WATERWAYS

Concurrent with the wetland delineation, a waterway survey was conducted along the Project corridor.



Streams that demonstrated a defined channel (bed and bank), Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM), and the disturbance of terrestrial vegetation were delineated if found to exist within the proposed transmission line project area. Delineated streams were classified as ephemeral, intermittent, and perennial per definition in the Federal Register/Vol. 67, No. 10. Functional assessment of streams was based on completion of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's Headwater Habitat Evaluation Index (HHEI) due to the small drainage areas (<1 square mile). The centerline of each waterway was identified and surveyed using GPS and mapped with GIS software. Streams approximately 15 feet wide or narrower were identified with a single line (centerline of waterway). For streams wider than 15 feet, the top of each bank was located. Representative photographs were taken of any resource identified.

2.3 RARE SPECIES

Prior to conducting field work, Stantec contacted the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for information regarding rare, threatened, or endangered species and habitats of concern within the vicinity of the proposed transmission line project (Appendix B).

In Ohio, the Indiana bat is listed as Endangered in all counties by the USFWS. The northern long-eared bat is presently proposed for listing as Endangered by the USFWS. Both species have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the proposed transmission line project area. To assess potential impacts to these species of bats, data was collected on potential summer roost trees and winter hibernacula observed within the proposed Project area. Potential summer roosting habitat for Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat includes

- 1. Dead or live trees and snags with peeling or exfoliating bark, split tree trunks or cavities that could serve as maternity roost areas;
- 2. Live trees such as shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) and oaks which have exfoliating bark;
- 3. Stream corridors, riparian areas, and upland woodlots which provide forage sites.

Potential winter hibernacula include caves, underground mines, or quarries.

Trees exhibiting suitable characteristics and potential winter hibernacula were located with a sub-meter GPS during field surveys. Species-specific surveys were not conducted. The level of information collected relative to threatened and endangered species during field surveys and desktop review is considered preliminary.

3.0 Overview of Project Area

3.1 UPLAND CHARACTERIZATION

The proposed transmission line project begins west of Swazey Road at SCPC's Blue Racer 138kV delivery point within the AEP Blue Racer switchyard and ends at Blue Racer's proposed Cryogenic facility



distribution substation. Currently, all of the trees within the project Area have been cleared in conjunction with a Blue Racer proposed pipeline that follows the same corridor as the proposed transmission line project. A grassy field was on the east side of the project area, included little false bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), teasle (*Dipsacus sylvestris*), and unidentified, low lying grass. The remaining land within the proposed transmission line project area was previously disturbed.

3.2 SOILS

The Soil Survey of Monroe County, Ohio (USDA 1974) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey were consulted to assess soil types within the proposed transmission line project area. A copy of the soil map is included in Appendix A. Soils identified within or near the project Area included Chagrin silt loam (Cg), Guernsey-Westmore silt loam (GwE2 and GwD2), Guernsey-Upshur complex (GrD2, GsG), and Gilpin-Westmoreland silt loam (GoG2). Chagrin silt loam listed within the project area is considered to be hydric. The percentages of the soils identified within the project area can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Soil Types Known to Occur within the Proposed SCPC Blue Racer 138kVTransmission Line Project, Monroe County, Ohio.

Monroe County, Ohio (OH111)									
Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI	Hydric					
Cg	Chagrin silt loam	1.02	21%	Y					
GwE2	Guernsey-Westmore silt loams, 18 to 35 percent slopes, moderately eroded	0.98	21%	Ν					
GrD2	Guernsey-Upshur complex, 12 to 18 percent slopes, moderately eroded	0.95	20%	Ν					
GsG	Guernsey-Upshur complex, 18 to 70 percent slopes, landslip	1.27	26%	Ν					
GwD2	Guernsey-Westmore silt loams, 12 to 18 percent slopes, moderately eroded	0.51	11%	Ν					
GoG2	Gilpin-Westmoreland silt loams, 35 to 70 percent slopes, moderately eroded	0.01	1%	Ν					
	Totals for Area of Interest	4.74	100.0%						

4.0 RESULTS

Field surveys, including wetland and waterbody delineations and threatened and endangered species habitat assessments were completed on February 26, 2014. The ground was free of snow and frost at the



time of the field surveys. The following sections summarize the results of the field surveys. Attachment A includes a figure of the proposed transmission line project area.

4.1 WETLANDS

No wetlands were located within the proposed limits of disturbance for the proposed transmission line project.

4.2 WATERBODIES

Stantec delineated the boundaries of one perennial stream within the limits of disturbance associated with the proposed transmission line project (Table 2). Identified waterways include those features with a defined bed and bank and OHWM, regardless of whether water was present at the time of survey. The location of the delineated waterway is shown in Appendix A. An HHEI form was completed for the waterway and is included in Appendix C. Photographs of the identified waterway are included in the Photo Log in Appendix D.

Table 2. Summary of delineated waterway resources for Proposed SCPC Blue Racer 138kV Transmission Line Project, Monroe County, Ohio.

Feature	Evaluation	Score*	Classification	Delineated Stream Length within Investigation Area (feet)
Stream S02JP	HHEI	56	Perennial	810

*Values reported from field evaluations conducted on January 30 and February 26, 2014.

4.3 RARE SPECIES

Correspondence from the USFWS and ODNR relative to the potential effects of the proposed transmission line project to state and federally listed threatened and endangered species was addressed as part of the proposed SCPC Blue Racer transmission line. This correspondence is included as Appendix B. A summary of the correspondence is presented below.

4.3.1 Indiana Bat-State and Federally Endangered

Correspondence from both the USFWS and ODNR stated that the project is within the range of Indiana bat. Furthermore, the USFWS indicated that the project area is within the vicinity of known Indiana bat occurrences. Both the USFWS and ODNR stated that tree clearing of suitable habitat within the project should be conducted between October 1 and March 31 to avoid adverse impacts to Indiana bat.

4.3.1.1 Summer Habitat Requirements

Historically, it was believed that floodplain and riparian forests were the preferred habitats for roosting and foraging (Humphrey et al. 1977); however, recent studies have shown that upland forests are also used by Indiana bats for roosting and that suitable foraging habitats may include upland forests, old fields



(clearings with early successional vegetation), edges of croplands, wooded fencerows, and pastures with scattered trees and/or farm ponds (Clark et al. 1987; Gardner et al. 1991).

The presence of Indiana bats during the summer appears to be determined largely by the availability of suitable, natural roost structures. The suitability of a particular tree as a roost site is determined by its condition (live or dead), the amount of exfoliating bark, the tree's exposure to solar radiation, its relative location to other trees, as well as a permanent water source and foraging areas (USFWS 2007). Dead trees are preferred as maternity roosts; however, live trees are often used as secondary roosts depending on microclimate conditions (USFWS 2007).

Documented roost trees most frequently used include northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*), cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), and shagbark hickory, which typically have been located within 1,600 feet of a perennial or intermittent stream (Hoffman 1996). However, the species of the roost tree appears to be less of a factor than the tree's structure (i.e. the availability of exfoliating bark with roost space underneath). Studies have shown that Indiana bats have strong fidelity to summer habitats. Females have been documented returning to the same roosts from one year to the next (Humphrey et al. 1977; Gardner et al. 1991; Callahan et al. 1997) and males have been recaptured foraging in habitat occupied during previous summers (Gardner et al. 1991).

Maternity colonies generally have several separate roost areas located near one another that collectively provide the colony with the necessary roosting resources (including cover and correct temperature provided by exfoliating bark under different environmental conditions. These colonies typically utilize one to a few primary roost trees (Callahan et al. 1997), which provide the proper roosting conditions most of the time. These roosts are normally large, dead trees with exfoliating bark that are exposed to abundant sunlight (Miller et al. 2002).

4.3.1.2 Status in the Project Area

Should any tree clearing be required as part of the Project, it is recommended that removal of trees occur between October 1 and March 31 when the bats are not be expected to be present. Currently, all of the trees within the Project Area have been cleared in conjunction with a Blue Racer proposed pipeline that follows the same corridor as the proposed transmission line project. Therefore, the Project is not likely to impact the Indiana bat.

4.3.2 Northern Long-eared Bat-Proposed Federally Endangered

Correspondence from the USFWS indicated that the proposed Project is within the range of northern long-eared bat and is within the vicinity of known occurrences. Similar to Indiana bat, the USFWS stated that clearing of trees within suitable northern long-eared bat habitat should only be conducted between October 1 and March 31 to avoid adverse impacts to this species.

4.3.2.1 Summer Habitat Requirements

During the summer maternity season, northern long-eared bats generally roost in trees, both live and snags, under the bark or in cavities. They have also been found roosting in manmade structures such as barns and buildings (USFWS 2013). They will roost both singly or in colonies that may include cooler locations such as caves or mines. Roost trees may be any species, live or dead, that have exfoliating bark,



cracks, or crevices. The northern long-eared bat is more opportunistic then the other *Myotis* species roosting in trees as small as 3 inches diameter at breast height (dbh). Overall, forested habitat for the northern long-eared bat has been characterized as having mixed deciduous species with interspersed open areas and edge habitat for foraging and travel (Owen et al. 2003).

According to the USFWS correspondence, suitable summer habitat requirements for northern long-eared bat include:

- Roosting habitat in dead or live trees and snags with cavities, peeling or exfoliating bark, split tree trunk and/or branches, which may be used as maternity roost areas;
- Occasional roosting habitat in structures such as barns and sheds; and
- Foraging habitat in upland and lowland woodlots and tree lined corridors.

4.3.2.2 Status in the Project Area

Should any tree clearing be required as part of the Project, it is recommended that removal of trees occur between October 1 and March 31 when the bats would not be expected to be present. Currently, all of the trees within the Project Area have been cleared in conjunction with a Blue Racer proposed pipeline that follows the same corridor as the proposed transmission line project. Therefore, the project is not likely to impact northern long-eared bat.

4.3.3 Black Bear-State Endangered

According to correspondence from the ODNR, the project is located within the known range of the black bear (*Ursus americanus*).

4.3.3.1 Habitat Requirements

Black bears, similar to other large mammals, require many different habitat types and large tracks of land. A combination of adjacent forest, riparian borders, forest edge, and forest openings spread over large, relatively remote areas provide are preferred habitat for this species (Jonkel and Cowan 1971, Evans 1981, Hamilton 1981, Allen 1987, Rogers and Allen 1987, Weaver 2000, Samson and Huot 1998, 2001, Stratman et al. 2001, Lyons et al. 2003, Kovalchik and Clausnitzer 2004). This species can be found in wide-open habitats, such as prairie grasslands, fields, and marshes during breeding, over-wintering, and migration. The species is commonly found during winter and migration. It is much rarer during breeding, when it breeds in large grasslands or marshes.

4.3.3.2 Status in the Project Area

In previous years black bears have been documented in Monroe County (ODNR 2011). Due to the small size of the project area, potential habitat for this species did not occur within the project area. However, if they were present, due to the mobility of the black bear, the project is not likely to impact this species.

4.3.1 Bobcat-State Threatened

According to correspondence from the ODNR, the project is located within the known range of the bobcat (*Lynx rufus*).



4.3.1.1 Habitat Requirements

The habitat preferences of the bobcat depend on the range location within North America. Bobcats in the northern part of its range prefer confer and mixed forests. In the southeastern U.S., bobcats are found in swamp areas, especially in Florida. In the southwestern areas of North America, bobcats prefer desert and scrubland. Bobcats will typically avoid heavily farmed and developed areas (CWFNJ 2012). Most bobcats are nocturnal, but can sometimes be diurnal and they are always secretive. Their diet consists of various rodents, rabbits, ground-nesting birds, turkeys, and small or sick deer (CWFNJ 2012).

Bobcats prefer to den in crevices of rocks or under fallen logs and beneath root masses (CWFNJ 2012) with breeding typically occurring from December through May.

4.3.1.2 Status in the Project Area

In previous years bobcats have been documented Monroe County (ODNR 2011). Bobcats are a nonmigratory species and in the northern part of its range prefer confer and mixed forests with interspersed early successional habitats. Due to the small size of the Project area, potential habitat for this species did not occur within the Project area. However, if they were present due to the mobility of the bobcat, the Project is not likely to impact this species as this species has the ability to move away from or avoid the corridor during construction.

4.3.2 Eastern Hellbender-State Endangered

According to correspondence from the ODNR, the project is located within the known range of the eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*).

4.3.2.1 Habitat Requirements

Hellbenders prefer highly oxygenated, fast-flowing perennial streams with little turbidity (Grobman 1943). They prefer riffle areas with flat rocks, logs or other cover to support breeding and feeding activities (Mayasich et al. 2003). Hellbenders are nocturnal and require cover to be concealed from predators and prey during daylight hours (Smith 1907). Prey consists of a variety of vertebrates and invertebrates, but crayfish are their primary food (Blaustein and Kiesecker 2002).

4.3.2.2 Status in the Project Area

One perennial stream was located within the project area that could provide potential habitat for the hellbender. However, the project will avoid impacts to this perennial stream channel. Due to the location of the project and that there is no in-water work planned, the project is not likely to impact this species.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Wetland and waterway delineations and preliminary assessments for threatened and endangered species within the proposed transmission line project area were completed by Stantec on January 30 and



February 26, 2014. One perennial stream was delineated within the investigation area with no findings of wetlands. The stream will not be impacted by the proposed project. BRM plans to utilize an existing access road for equipment crossings and avoid impacts to the stream channel during construction of the proposed transmission line. Adjacent uplands are primarily composed of mixed deciduous tree line and riparian area, grassy pasture vegetation and disturbed areas.

Based on the nature of the proposed transmission line project, review and coordination with federal and state agencies on endangered and threatened species with USFWS and ODNR, and field observations, it is not expected that federal or state endangered or threatened species will be impacted by the project as currently planned. The project area includes limited forested areas that are potentially suitable habitat for Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat. Due to the presence of potentially suitable habitat for these species, the USFWS and ODNR recommend clearing trees between October 1 and March 31 to avoid adverse impacts to these species. The forested areas occurring within the project area have been cleared according to the recommended clearing dates by USFWS for a natural gas pipeline that follows the same corridor as the project area.

The information provided by Stantec regarding wetland and stream boundaries is based on an analysis of the wetland and upland conditions present on the site at the time of the fieldwork. The delineations were performed by experienced and qualified professionals using regulatory agency-accepted practices and sound professional judgment. The ultimate decision on wetland boundaries rests with the USACE and, in some cases, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. As a result, there may be adjustments to boundaries based upon review by a regulatory agency. An agency determination can vary from time to time depending on various factors including, but not limited to, recent precipitation patterns and the season of the year. In addition, the physical characteristics of the site can change over time, depending on the weather, vegetation patterns, drainage activities on adjacent parcels, or other events. Any of these factors can change the nature and extent of water resources on the site.



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ATTACHMENT A FIGURES















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Case No(s). 14-0750-EL-BLN

Summary: Letter of Notification Letter of Notification South Central Power Company Blue Racer 138kV Transmission Line Project on behalf of Blue Racer Midstream, LLC Part 4 of 5 electronically filed by Mrs. Kim D Carter on behalf of Wilson, Sean Mr. and Green, Steven Mr. and Leoni, Andrew Mr. and Melland, Kathleen Ms.