

# HILLCREST SOLAR PROJECT

**Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN**

June 22, 2020

Ohio Power Siting Board  
Docketing Division  
180 East Broad Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3793  
Attn: Grant Zeto

RE: **Hillcrest Solar I, LLC**

**Notice of Compliance with Certificate Condition #19 - Unless coordination with ODNR and USFWS allows a different course of action, Hillcrest shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for the removal of trees three inches or greater in diameter to avoid impacts to Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats.**

Dear Mr. Zeto;

Hillcrest Solar I, LLC (“Hillcrest Solar”) is certified to construct a solar-powered electric generation facility in Brown County, Ohio in accordance with the orders issued by the Ohio Power Siting Board (“OPSB”) in the above-referenced cases.

A couple of small patches of trees that were planned to be cleared for construction activities were identified after the seasonal cutting window of October 1 to March 31. Hillcrest Solar consulted with ODNR and USFWS for removal of trees three inches in diameter or greater in two areas and developed a bat survey protocol that was submitted to the agencies on June 14, 2020. Approval of this protocol was received from both USFWS (June 16, 2020) and ODNR (June 18, 2020) and bat surveys will be conducted by qualified environmental professionals to assess the areas for presence of several bat species including Indiana and northern long-eared bats. Once the areas are deemed clear of any bat presence by these surveys, removal of trees will occur.

Attached please find a copy of the bat survey protocol provided by Copperhead Environmental Consulting and the written approvals of the document from USFWS and ODNR regarding compliance with Certificate Condition #19 of the Opinion, Order and Certificate issued on February 15, 2018 in Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN and Amendment 18-1267-EL-BGA.

# HILLCREST SOLAR PROJECT

We are available, at your convenience, to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Julia Mancinelli, Director – Environment

Attachment: Study Plan – Listed bat presence/absence acoustic survey for the Hillcrest Solar project, Mt. Orab, Ohio (Copperhead Environmental Consulting)

Acoustic Survey Study Plan for the Hillcrest Solar Project  
(Communication between USFWS and Copperhead Environmental Consulting), June 16, 2020

Acoustic Survey Study Plan for the Hillcrest Solar Project  
(Communication between ODNR and Copperhead Environmental Consulting), June 18, 2020

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## **Study Plan –Listed bat presence/absence acoustic survey for the Hillcrest Solar project, Mt. Orab, Ohio.**

Submitted To:

Angela Boyer  
USFWS – Ohio Field Office  
4625 Morse Road, Suite 104  
Columbus, OH 43230

Sarah Stankavich  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
2045 Morse Road, Building G  
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Submitted By:  
Steve Samoray  
Copperhead Environmental Consulting, Inc.

14 June 2020

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## INTRODUCTION

Copperhead Environmental Consulting, Inc. (Copperhead) has been contracted by Cardno to conduct a presence/probable absence acoustic survey for listed bat species for the Hillcrest Solar project in Mt. Orab, OH. Tree removal is proposed for 2 areas (Area 1 and Area 4) within the project boundary (Appendix A). Area 1 (39.076831°, -83.906407°) is located 60 meters east of a power substation and Area 4 (39.093421°, -83.916709°) is located approximately 2 kilometers southeast of Fivemile, OH. Listed species include the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), the federally threatened northern long-eared bats (*M. septentrionalis*), the state endangered little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), and the state endangered tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). The following is Copperhead's study plan to complete this survey. Surveys will take place between 15 June and 15 August 2020 and are expected to take four nights.

## METHODS

### Level of Effort/Site Selection

Surveys will be implemented in accordance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 2020 Range-wide Indiana Bat Survey Guidelines. Based on guidelines for the required number of detector nights (dn) for non-linear projects in the Midwest Recovery Unit (8 dn/123 acres of impacted forested habitat) and the estimated amount of impacted forested habitat at each Area [0.08 acres (Area 1) and 0.06 acres (Area 4)], we propose 8 dn at each Area to provide regulatory compliance for the project. A desktop habitat assessment was performed by Copperhead Biologist Steve Samoray to select potential acoustic sites, these sites are shown in Appendix B. However, the actual location of acoustic detectors will be chosen by qualified personnel based on the best available habitat and site-specific conditions once on site. If site locations differ than the proposed sites, we will include the new locations and justification in the final report.

### Survey Methodology

#### *Acoustic Survey*

Copperhead biologists will deploy 2 AnaBat Swift acoustic detectors (Titley Electronics Pty Ltd, Ballina, NSW Australia) fitted with an omnidirectional microphone at each Area for 4 nights for a total of 8 dn at both Areas. Detectors will be placed in habitats where bats are likely to be foraging/traveling and in areas that increase the likelihood of recording high-quality calls (e.g., forest canopy openings, road or stream corridors with open canopies, ponds, wetlands) and will be placed a minimum of 200 meters apart. Detector microphones will be placed on 12' poles to increase the sample area and reduce distortion from the ground or vegetation. Sampling will begin at sunset and continue until sunrise. Sampling will be repeated if weather conditions become unsuitable for sampling during the first five hours of the survey period (i.e., temperatures below 50°F, strong winds, and/or precipitation, or fog). Finger rubs in front of



microphones will be used prior to deployment and after pickup at each site to ensure proper functionality. Acoustic data will be downloaded in the field to confirm that each detector recorded the entire survey period.

### *Data Analysis/Reporting*

The presence of Indiana bats, northern long-eared bats, little brown bats, and tricolored bats will be determined using the manufacture recommended settings in Kaleidoscope Pro version 5.1.9g using the 5.1.0 Classifier (or most recent USFWS approved version) (Wildlife Acoustics, Inc. Maynard, MA). Based on species distribution maps and Copperhead experience, the species listed in Table 1 will be selected in the Kaleidoscope Pro classifier. If presence of any listed species is considered unlikely (i.e., Maximum Likelihood Estimation [MLE]) has a p-value >0.05) analysis will be complete. If presence of any listed species is considered likely (i.e., MLE has a p-value ≤0.05), all files from that site/night will be visually examined by Copperhead biologists Steve Samoray or Gregg Janos to confirm or reject this determination.

**Table 1: Species Considered Potentially Present by Kaleidoscope Pro Classifier at Mt. Orab, OH.**

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Kpro Identifier</b>
Big brown bat	<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>	EPTFUS
Eastern red bat	<i>Lasiurus borealis</i>	LASBOR
Hoary bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	LASCIN
Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>	LASNOC
Eastern small-footed bat	<i>Myotis leibii</i>	MYOLEI
Little brown bat	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	MYOLUC
Northern long-eared bat	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	MYOSEP
Indiana bat	<i>Myotis sodalis</i>	MYOSOD
Evening Bat	<i>Nycticeius humeralis</i>	NYCHUM
Tri-colored bat	<i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>	PERSUB

## **REPORTING**

After completion of the acoustic survey, a final report will be submitted to Cardno. The report will provide a summary of all survey activities, including acoustic results, data interpretation, maps showing acoustic detector locations, and photographs of acoustic detectors.

## **APPENDIX A**

### Survey Area Locations





**COPPERHEAD**  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

Prepared for:

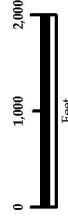
**USFWS**

Hillcrest Solar Bat Survey Areas

## Legend



Survey Areas



Scale: 1 in = 2,000 ft

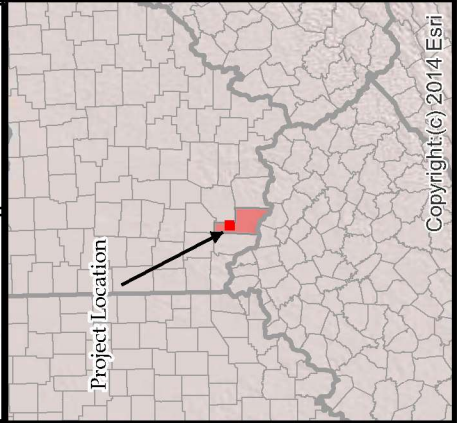
Prepared by :

Copperhead Environmental Consulting, Inc.  
3908 Gallatin Pike  
Nashville, TN 37216

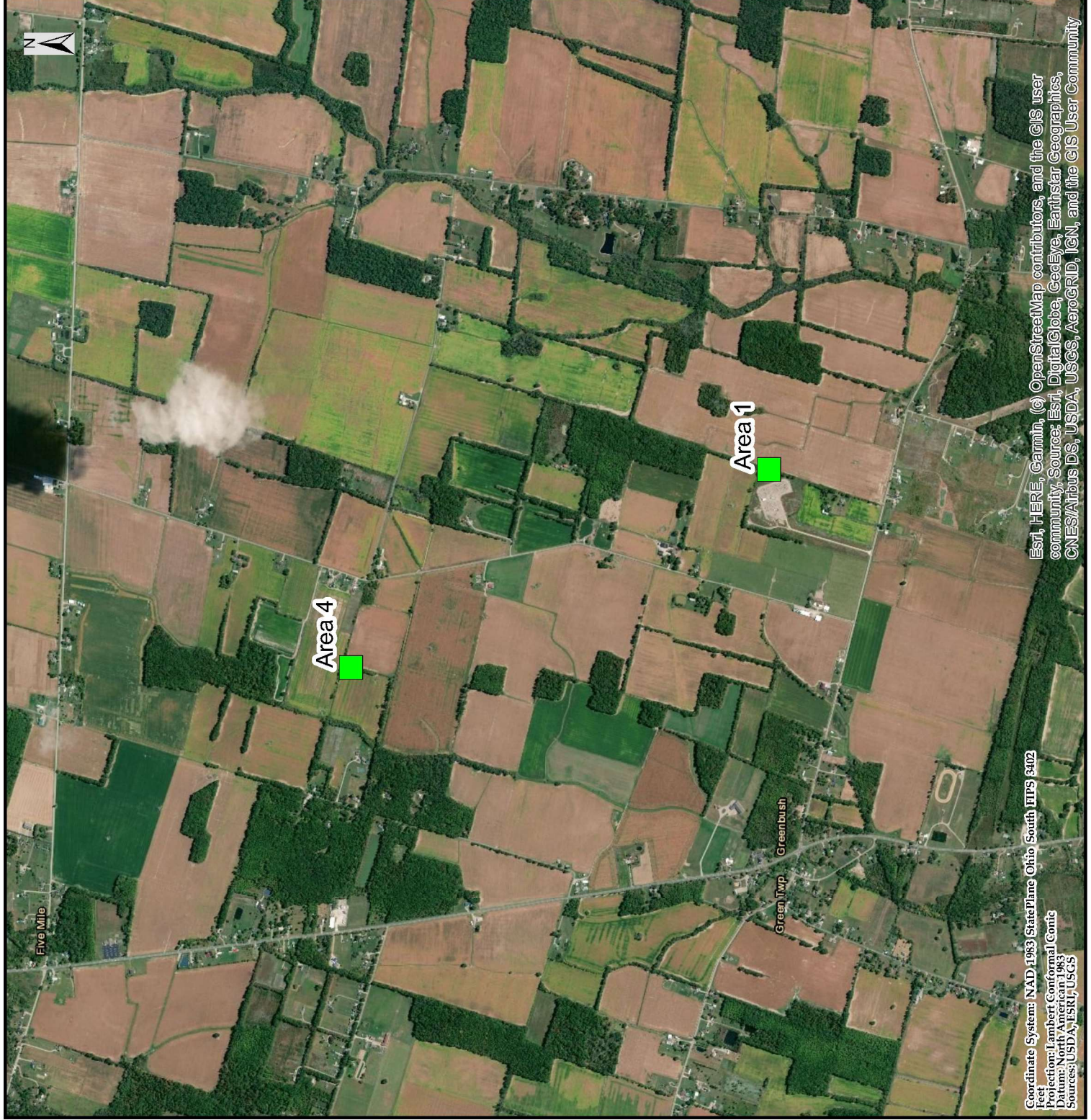
Drawn by: STS Date: 6/14/2020

Checked by: Revision:

Project Location



Copyright (c) 2014 Esri



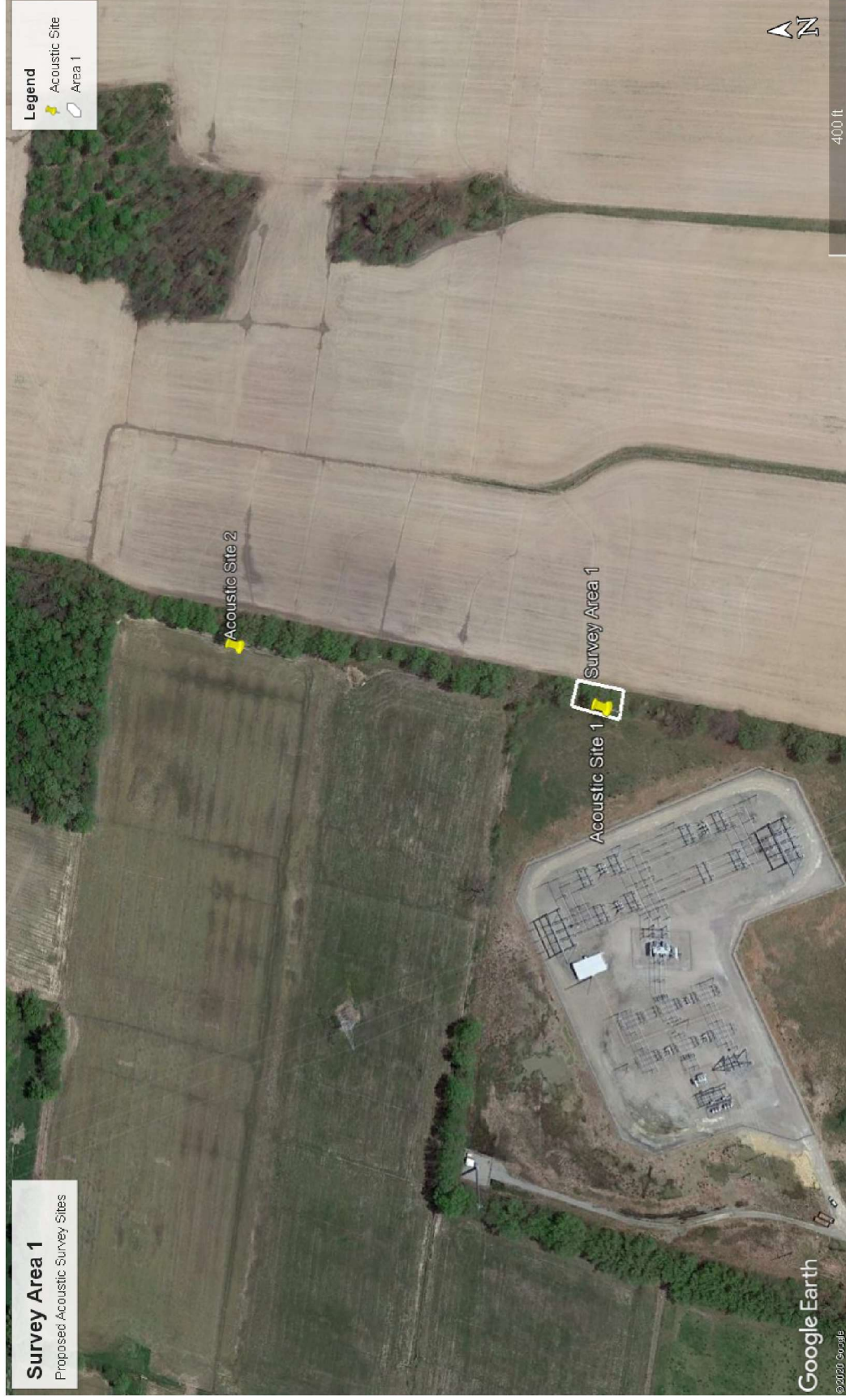
Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community. Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

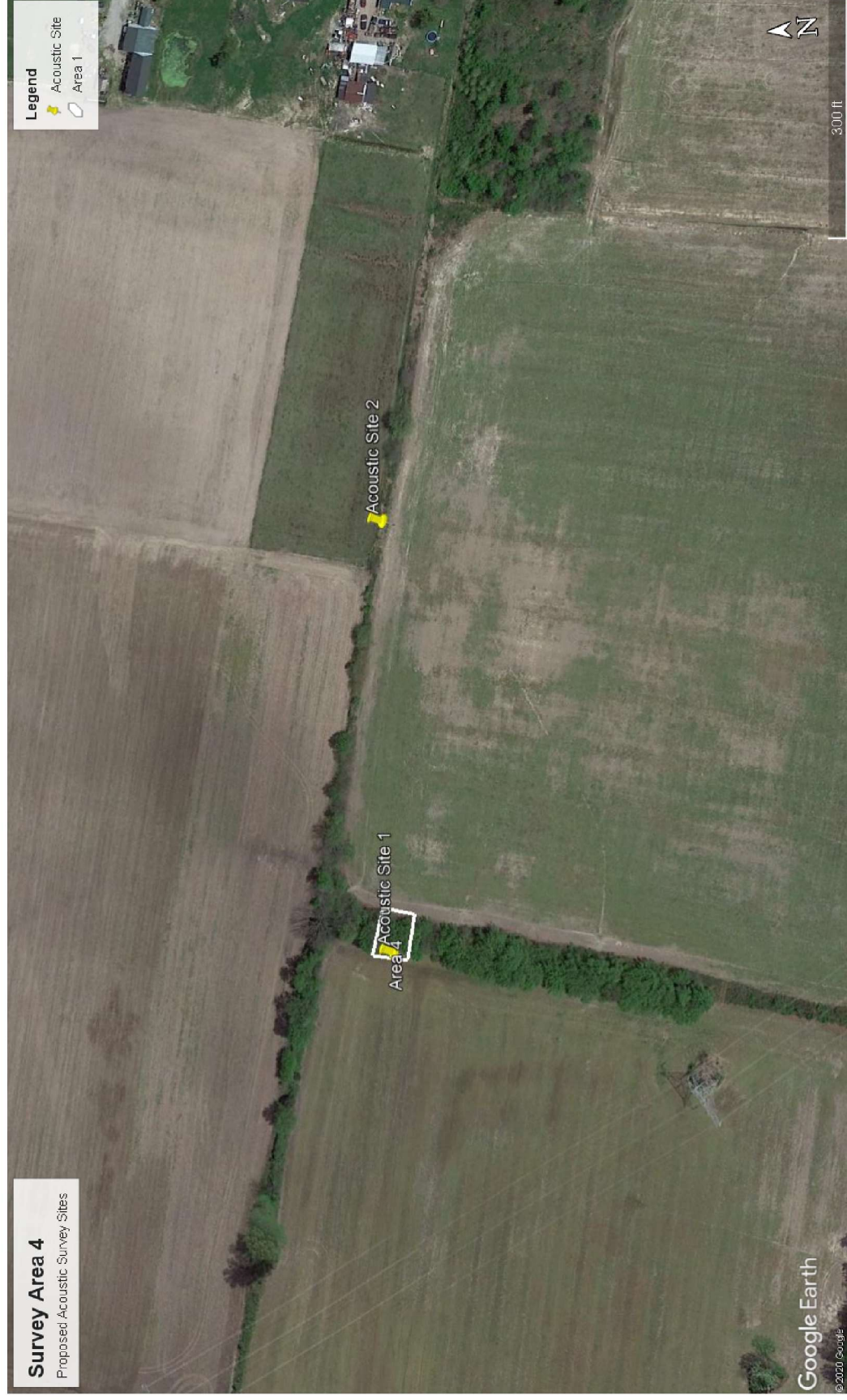
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Ohio South FIPS 8402  
Foot  
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic  
Datum: North American 1983  
Sources: USDA, ESRI, USGS



## **APPENDIX B**

### Proposed Acoustic Survey Sites







**From:** [Boyer, Angela](#)  
**To:** [Steve Samoray](#)  
**Cc:** [sarah.stankavich@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:sarah.stankavich@dnr.state.oh.us)  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Acoustic Survey Study Plan for the Hillcrest Solar Project  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 16, 2020 8:02:27 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)

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Steve,

This response provides U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval of your proposed acoustic survey for the Hillcrest Solar Project in Brown County, Ohio. Please note that plans must also be reviewed and approved by the Ohio Division of Wildlife before any surveys take place. This survey has been assigned the reference number **20-019**. Please include this project reference number in all correspondence to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Ohio Division of Wildlife. These survey will serve as a summer presence/absence survey for the Indiana bat.

By January 31, 2021, we request that you submit an annual report of your Ohio acoustic survey work to this office using the Midwestern U.S. Spreadsheet in electronic format. Be sure to include data for the site even if no bats were detected. The 2020 Midwestern U.S. Spreadsheet and instructions are found here: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/inba/inbasummersurveyguidance.html>.

Please notify me if any surveys are cancelled or otherwise not completed this field season. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,  
Angela Boyer  
Endangered Species Coordinator for Ohio  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
4625 Morse Road, Suite 104  
Columbus, Ohio 43230  
(614) 416-8993, ext. 122  
(614) 416-8994 FAX

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**From:** [Sarah.Stankavich@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:Sarah.Stankavich@dnr.state.oh.us)  
**To:** [Boyer, Angela](#); [Steve Samoray](#)  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Acoustic Survey Study Plan for the Hillcrest Solar Project  
**Date:** Thursday, June 18, 2020 2:19:19 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)

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Steve –

This response provides ODNR - Division of Wildlife approval of your proposed acoustic survey for the Hillcrest Solar Project in Brown County, Ohio. Please use the project number assigned by USFWS, 20-019, in future correspondence regarding this project. This survey will serve as a summer presence/absence survey for the little brown bat, tricolored bat, northern long-eared bat, and Indiana bat.

By March 15, 2021, we request that you submit an annual report of your Ohio acoustic survey work to this office using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Midwestern U.S. Spreadsheet in electronic format. Be sure to include data for the site even if no bats were detected. The 2020 Midwestern U.S. Spreadsheet and instructions are found here:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/inba/inbasummersurveyguidance.html>.

Please notify me if any surveys are cancelled or otherwise not completed this field season. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sarah

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

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**6/22/2020 4:30:52 PM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 17-1152-EL-BGN**

Summary: Notice Notice of Compliance with Condition 19 - Bat Survey Protocol electronically filed by Ms. Julia M Mancinelli on behalf of Hillcrest Solar I, LLC