

Melissa Schmit

From: Gates, Natalie <natalie_gates@fws.gov>
Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 12:24 PM
To: Melissa Schmit
Subject: Re: Butterfly Survey Guidance

Hi Melissa, that approach relative to the butterflies sounds good. Avoiding impacts to native prairie is recommended as is avoidance of grasslands in general by placing turbines in cropland. We suggest offsets to compensate for all unavoidable grassland impacts (keeping in mind grassland bird impacts - direct and indirect).

Regarding leks, I believe my agency recommends a 5-mile buffer. SDGFP manages the grouse population though so you should also consult with Silka.

End of July for a site visit isn't a good time for me - planning to be out July 25 until August 9.

-Natalie

-Natalie

*Natalie Gates, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services South Dakota Field Office
420 South Garfield Avenue, Suite 400
Pierre, South Dakota 57501
Phone: 605-224-8693, Ext. 227; Fax: 605-224-9974
<http://www.fws.gov/southdakotafldoffice/>*

On Thu, Jun 2, 2016 at 9:41 AM, Melissa Schmit <Melissa@geronimoenergy.com> wrote:

Hi Natalie,

Thank you for the additional Dakota skipper and Poweshiek skipperling information at the proposed [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Our plan for evaluating potential habitat at [REDACTED] and Crocker is to begin with a desktop analysis to evaluate if potential habitat is present through reviewing recent aerials, land cover shapefiles and other publicly available land cover databases such as the recent SDSU-developed potential undisturbed land (virgin sod) data layer.

If potential habitat (non-tilled agricultural land or other potential native grassland) is identified through the desktop analysis and the preliminary layout indicates that impacts from construction could occur, a site visit would be conducted during the 2016 growing season to further evaluate the potential sites for suitability. Suitable habitat will be identified based on habitat descriptions as described by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service. For the two butterflies, two habitat types are considered suitable: moist bluestem prairie and relatively dry upland prairie, both of which are dominated by bluestem grasses and needlegrasses, with nectar flowers also present. So any pasture that has been grazed down to the ground, or in areas where smooth brome or other invasives have taken over as the dominant species, would not be considered suitable. Based on this information, our consultant, WEST will develop recommendations for any further evaluation that may be warranted if impacts cannot be avoided to suitable habitats, such as a skipper survey during the flight season (late June/early July, likely in 2017). If necessary, the survey would be conducted by a permitted biologist. Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns with this approach.