



Fact Sheet

Ecological Impacts

What Ecological Features are Present?

The project area contains aquatic and terrestrial features that provide habitat for numerous plant and animal species. The Ohio River is located in the Study Area, as are several smaller streams and several wetlands. Terrestrial features include forested areas, ravines, bluffs, floodplains, cliffs, glade-like areas and more. Thirty federally and state listed threatened, endangered, and special concern species such as the Indiana bat, running buffalo clover, and numerous mussel species have potential to occur in the Study Area.

Why is it important?

It is important to identify habitat and/or the presence of federally and state listed threatened, endangered, and special concern species to avoid impacting them. There are a number of laws and regulations designed to protect these species. Throughout the project development process, consultation will continue to occur between the project team and state and federal agencies to ensure that the project complies with all applicable regulations.

Where is it found?

Habitat for threatened, endangered, and special concern species is present throughout the Study Area. Roosting and foraging habitat for the federally listed Indiana bat is present in the forested areas around the Ohio River and other streams. The Ohio River contains habitat for threatened and endangered mussel species, and the sand/gravel bars of the river and other streams may provide habitat for the federally listed plant running buffalo clover. Additionally, Peregrine falcons are known to nest beneath the current Milton-Madison Bridge and could nest elsewhere in the Study Area.

How does it affect the project?

Identifying potential areas of ecological concern provides information to assist the project team in developing alternatives that will minimize impacts to threatened, endangered, and special concern species. As alternatives are developed for the project, surveys will be conducted to determine whether or not these species are actually present in the Study Area. Surveying for many species can only be done seasonally. If these species are determined to be present, measures will be taken to minimize/mitigate impacts. For example, Peregrine falcons are known to use the existing bridge, so demolition of the bridge will be scheduled to occur outside of the species' nesting season, and the new bridge should be fitted with a nesting box.

For additional information on ecological features within the study area, please refer to the 2009 *Ecology White Paper*.