



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological & Water Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

March 11, 2026

Mike Greisiger
Westwood Professional Services

RE: Natural Heritage Review of the proposed Cottage Grove BESS: Clone of 2025-00811,
T27N R21W Section 27; Washington County

Dear Mike Greisiger,

For all correspondence regarding the Natural Heritage Review of this project please include the project ID **MCE-2025-00811-02** in the email subject line.

As requested, the [Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System](#) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed project has the potential to impact any rare species or other significant natural features. Based on the project details provided with the request, the following rare features may be impacted by the proposed project:

State-listed Species

- [Blanding's turtles](#) (*Emydoidea blandingii*), a state-listed threatened species, have been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project. Blanding's turtles use upland areas up to and over a mile distant from wetlands, waterbodies, and watercourses. Uplands are used for nesting, basking, periods of dormancy, and traveling between wetlands. Factors believed to contribute to the decline of this species include collisions with vehicles, wetland drainage and degradation, and the development of upland habitat. Any added mortality can be detrimental to populations of Blanding's turtles, as these turtles have a low reproduction rate that depends upon a high survival rate to maintain population levels.

This project has the potential to impact this rare turtle through direct fatalities and habitat disturbance/destruction due to activities associated with the proposed project. Minnesota's Endangered Species Statute (Minnesota Statutes, section 84.0895) and associated Rules (Minnesota Rules, part 6212.1800 to 6212.2300 and 6134) prohibit the take of threatened or endangered species without a permit. **As such, please contact Review.NHIS@state.mn.us to confirm that the following measures will be implemented:**

- Avoid wetland and aquatic impacts during overwintering season, between September 15 and April 15, if the area is suitable for overwintering.
 - Wetlands and aquatic habitats that freeze solid to the bed (no liquid water) are not suitable overwintering habitat. However, Blanding's turtles will overwinter in wetlands and aquatic habitat where ice has closed over the water's surface.
- Limit erosion and sediment control to [wildlife friendly erosion control](#).

- Check bare ground within construction areas for turtles before the use of heavy equipment or any ground disturbance.
- The [Blanding's turtle flyer](#) must be given to all contractors working in the area.
- Report any sightings using the [DNR Plant and Animal Observation Form](#).
- If turtles are in imminent danger, move them by hand out of harm's way; otherwise, they are to be left undisturbed. Directions on how to move turtles safely can be found at [Helping Turtles Across the Road](#).

If the above measures are not feasible, please contact Review.NHIS@state.mn.us as a project-specific avoidance plan will likely be needed to demonstrate avoidance.

Additional Blanding's turtle avoidance measures may include, but are not limited to, the following recommendations:

- Recommendations from List 1 of the [Blanding's turtle fact sheet](#). If greater protection for turtles is desired, implement recommendations from List 2.
- [Loggerhead shrikes](#) (*Lanius ludovicianus*), a state-listed endangered bird, have been documented historically in the vicinity of the project site. Loggerhead shrikes use grasslands that contain short grass and scattered perching sites such as hedgerows, shrubs, or small trees. They can be found in native prairie, pastures, shelterbelts, old fields or orchards, cemeteries, grassy roadsides, and farmyards. The presence of this bird is unlikely; therefore, we do not anticipate any impacts. In the unlikely event of a sighting, please report using the [DNR Plant and Animal Observation Form](#).
- Please visit the [DNR Rare Species Guide](#) for more information on the habitat use of state-listed species and recommended measures to avoid or minimize impacts.

Federally Protected Species

- To ensure compliance with federal law, conduct a federal regulatory review using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) online [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPaC\) tool](#).

Environmental Review and Permitting

- Please include a copy of this letter and the MCE-generated Final Project Report in any state or local license or permit application. Please note that measures to avoid or minimize disturbance to the above rare features may be included as restrictions or conditions in any required permits or licenses.

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a collection of databases that contains information about Minnesota's rare natural features, is maintained by the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources. The NHIS is continually updated as new information becomes available and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's native plant communities, rare species, and other rare features. However, the NHIS is not an exhaustive inventory and does not contain the locations of all rare features in the state. Therefore, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist within the project area. If additional information becomes available regarding rare features in the vicinity of the project, further review may be necessary.

For environmental review purposes, the results of this Natural Heritage Review are valid for one year; the results are only valid for the project location and project description provided with the request. **If project details change or the project has not occurred within one year, please resubmit the project for review within one year of initiating project activities.** Resubmit by selecting *Clone Project as Draft* on the project page in MCE.

The Natural Heritage Review does not constitute project approval by the Department of Natural Resources. Instead, it identifies issues regarding known occurrences of rare features and potential impacts to these rare features. Visit [Natural Heritage Review](#) for additional information regarding this process, survey guidance, and other related information. For information on the environmental review process or other natural resource concerns, please contact your [DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist](#).

Thank you for consulting us on this matter and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources.

Sincerely,

James Drake

Digitally signed by James Drake
Date: 2026.03.11 13:55:34 -05'00'

Natural Heritage Review Specialist

james.f.drake@state.mn.us

Cc: Melissa Collins

For more project details, see the MCE-generated Final Project Report, available on the MCE project page.

Cottage Grove BESS: Clone Of 2025-00811

USA Topo Basemap With Locator Map

