



Formal Natural Heritage Review - Cover Page

See next page for results of review. A draft watermark means the project details have not been finalized and the results are not official.

Project Name: Coneflower Solar

Project Proposer: Coneflower Energy, LLC

Project Type: Power, Solar

Project Type Activities: Tree Removal

TRS: T109 R41 S15, T109 R41 S16, T109 R41 S17, T109 R41 S18, T109 R41 S19, T109 R41 S20, T109 R41 S21, T109 R41 S22, T109 R41 S27, T109 R41 S28, T109 R41 S29, T109 R41 S7 +

County(s): Lyon

DNR Admin Region(s): South

Reason Requested: PUC Site or Route Application

Project Description: Proposed commercial scale solar project up to 235MW capacity on approximately 2,305-acres. Construction activities will include installation of solar panels ...

Existing Land Uses: The majority of land use at the site is agriculturally developed with corn fields.

Landcover / Habitat Impacted: Habitat is dominated by cultivated crops (81.5%), developed/open space (7.2%), herbaceous (6.1%), and hay/pasture (3.8%) within the Project area.

Waterbodies Affected: We have conducted an aquatic resources delineation for the Project and plan to avoid aquatic resources to the extent practicable.

Groundwater Resources Affected: The Project is not anticipated to impact groundwater resources.

Previous Natural Heritage Review: No

Previous Habitat Assessments / Surveys: No

SUMMARY OF AUTOMATED RESULTS

Category	Results	Response By Category
Project Details	Comments	Tree Removal - Recommendations
Ecologically Significant Area	Comments	MBS Sites - Recommendations Local Conservation Value - Comment Potential RNC - Will Require Consultation
State-Listed Endangered or Threatened Species	No Comments	No Further Review Required
State-Listed Species of Special Concern	Comments	Recommendations
Federally Listed Species	No Records	Visit IPaC For Federal Review



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

May 3, 2024

Project ID: MCE #2024-00422

Sarah Cromie
Apex Clean Energy
120 Garrett Street, Suite 700
Charlottesville, VA 22902

RE: Automated Natural Heritage Review of the proposed Coneflower Solar
See Cover Page for location and project details.

Dear Sarah Cromie,

As requested, the above project has been reviewed for potential effects to rare features. Based on this review, the following rare features may be adversely affected by the proposed project:

Project Type and/or Project Type Activity Comments

- The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) tracks bat roost trees and hibernacula plus some acoustic data, but this information is not exhaustive. Even if there are no bat records listed below, all of Minnesota's bats, including the federally endangered northern long-eared bat ([*Myotis septentrionalis*](#)), can be found throughout Minnesota. During the active season (approximately April-November) bats roost underneath bark, in cavities, or in crevices of both live and dead trees. Tree removal can negatively impact bats by destroying roosting habitat, especially during the pup rearing season when females are forming maternity roosting colonies and the pups cannot yet fly. To minimize these impacts, the DNR recommends that tree removal be avoided from June 1 through August 15.

Ecologically Significant Area

- The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) has identified one or more Sites of Biodiversity Significance within or adjacent to the project boundary. Sites of Biodiversity Significance have varying levels of native biodiversity and are ranked based on the relative significance of this biodiversity at a statewide level. Factors taken into account during the ranking process include the number of rare species documented within the site, the quality of the native plant communities in the site, the size of the site, and the context of the site within the landscape.

High or Moderate MBS Site - One or more MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance ranked High or Moderate may be impacted by the proposed project. Sites ranked as High contain very good quality occurrences of the rarest species, high quality examples of the rare native plant communities, and/or important functional landscapes. Sites ranked as Moderate contain occurrences of rare species

and/or moderately disturbed native plant communities, and/or landscapes that have a strong potential for recovery. The DNR recommends that the project be designed to avoid impacts to these ecologically significant areas. Actions to avoid or minimize disturbance include, but are not limited to, the following recommendations:

- Retain a buffer between proposed activities and the MBS Site,
- Minimize project footprint within the MBS Site,
- Operate within already-disturbed areas,
- Minimize vehicular disturbance within the MBS Site,
- Do not park equipment or stockpile supplies within the MBS Site,
- Do not place spoil within the MBS Site,
- Inspect and clean equipment prior to operating within the MBS Site, and follow other recommendations to [prevent the spread of invasive species](#),
- Conduct the work under frozen ground conditions,
- Use effective erosion prevention and sediment control measures,
- Revegetate disturbed soil with native [seed mixes](#) suitable to the local habitat as soon after construction as possible,
- Use only weed-free mulches, topsoils, and seed mixes.

Areas with Potential Local Conservation Value - The proposed project may impact one or more areas that have local conservation value. These areas are ranked as Below in the MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance layer, and are retained in the layer as negative data. These areas do not meet the minimum biodiversity threshold for statewide significance but may have conservation value at the local level as habitat for native plants and animals, corridors for animal movements, buffers surrounding higher quality natural areas, or as areas with high potential for restoration of native habitat.

- One or more DNR Native Plant Communities have been identified within or adjacent to the proposed project (for a list of all the native plant community types, please run a Conservation Planning Report; spatial data can be viewed on the Explore Page). DNR Native Plant Community types and subtypes are given a [Conservation Status Rank](#) that reflects the relative rarity and endangerment of the community type in Minnesota. Conservation Status Ranks range from S1 (critically imperiled) to S5 (secure, common, widespread, and abundant).

Rare Native Plant Communities - One or more rare native plant communities may be impacted by the proposed project. Native plant communities with a Conservation Status Rank of S1 to S3 are considered rare in the state, and the DNR recommends avoidance of these ecologically significant areas. In addition, please note that native plant communities with a conservation status rank of S1 to S3 may qualify as Rare Natural Communities under the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). If the proposed project includes a wetland replacement plan under WCA, please contact your [DNR Regional Ecologist](#) for further evaluation. For technical guidance on Rare Natural Communities, please visit [WCA Program Guidance and Information](#).

State-Listed Endangered or Threatened Species

No state-listed endangered or threatened species have been documented in the vicinity of the project.

State-Listed Species of Special Concern

Taxonomic Group	Common Name	Scientific Name	Water Regime	Habitat	Federal Status
Vascular Plant	Prairie Mimosa	Desmanthus illinoensis	terrestrial	Lake Shore, Upland Prairie	
Vascular Plant	Snow Trillium	Trillium nivale	terrestrial	Floodplain Forest, Mesic Hardwood Forest	

- The above table identifies state-listed species of special concern that have been documented in the vicinity of your project. If suitable habitat for any of these species occurs within your project footprint or activity impact area, the project may negatively impact those species. To avoid impacting state-listed species of special concern, the DNR recommends modifying the location of project activities to avoid suitable habitat or modifying the timing of project activities to avoid the presence of the species. Please visit the [DNR Rare Species Guide](#) for more information on the habitat use of these species and recommended measures to avoid or minimize impacts. Species-specific comments, if any, appear below.

Federally Listed Species

The Natural Heritage Information System does not contain any records for federally listed species within one mile of the proposed project. Please note, however, that not all federally listed species are tracked within the NHIS. To ensure compliance with federal law, please conduct a federal regulatory review using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's online [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPaC\) tool](#).

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 rare or otherwise significant species, native plant communities, and other natural features. However, the NHIS is not an exhaustive inventory and thus does not represent all of the occurrences of rare features within 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 the project description provided on the cover page. If project details change or construction has not occurred within one year, please resubmit the project for review before initiating project activities.

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. For information on the environmental review process or other natural resource concerns, you may 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.

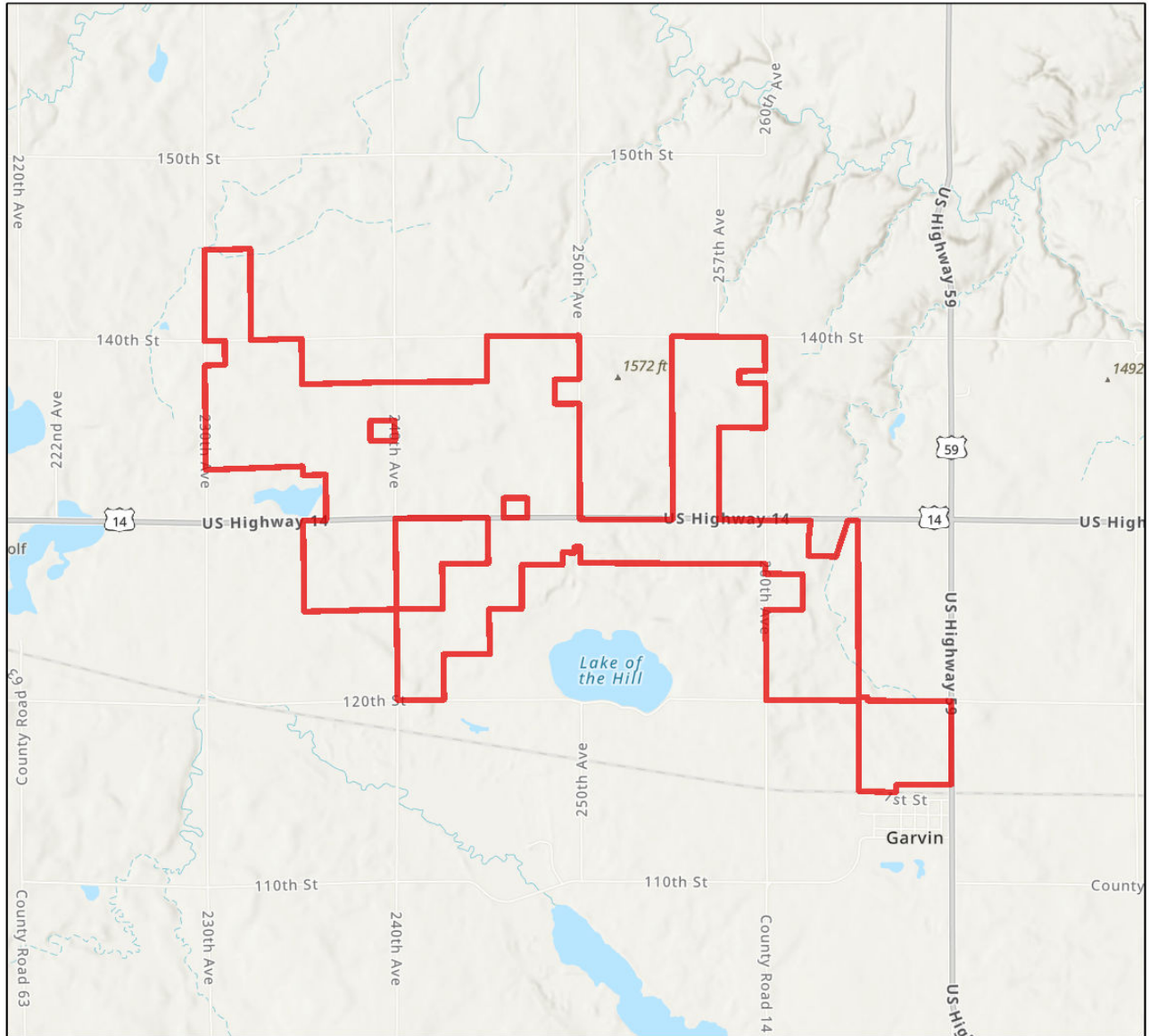
Sincerely,

Jim Drake Jim Drake
Natural Heritage Review Specialist
James.F.Drake@state.mn.us

Links: USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool
[Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPaC\) tool](#)
DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist Contact Info
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/ereview/erp_regioncontacts.html

Coneflower Solar

USA Topo Basemap With Locator Map



0 0.330.65 1.3 1.95 2.6 Miles

Project_Boundary

Project Type: Power, Solar

Project Size (acres): 2,305.35

County(s): Lyon

TRS: T109 R41 S15, T109 R41 S16, T109 R41 S17, T109 R41 S18, T109 R41 S19 +

Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, USFWS
Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS
Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS,

