

Version Date: August 5, 2024

Directions: Language in red is meant as directions for the Field Office and should be deleted in the final draft of the TAL. The language highlighted in blue should be replaced with pertinent project-specific information

Please insert letterhead for FO

[Insert Date]

[First and Last Name]

[Title, Agency]

[Street Address]

[City, State Zip]

Subject: [Name of Project, County, State]

Technical Assistance Letter for Operational Avoidance for Northern Long-eared Bats (NLEB) (Effective for [enter year(s)])

Dear [Title and Last Name]:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been coordinating with [company name] on behalf of the [specific wind project company name (i.e., normally an LLC)] (Project Company) regarding their development of the [project name](Project), an approximately [size of facility in MW] wind energy facility in [location county(ies), state]. On [insert date] the Project Company requested the Service provide them with a technical assistance letter (TAL) documenting their compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended) for northern long-eared bats (*Myotis septentrionalis*) following the Service's Land-based Wind Energy Voluntary Avoidance Guidance for the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) (dated [insert guidance date]) using the blanket curtailment approach.

Section 9(a)(1)(B) of the ESA, 16 U.S.C. § 1538 (a)(1)(B), makes it unlawful for any person to "take" an endangered species. "Take" is defined by the ESA as to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct" 16 U.S.C. § 1532(19).

Note: Pre-construction surveys or post-construction bat summer surveys are optional in the following cases:

- 1) projects that fall outside the current range of NLEB found on the [Species Profile for Northern Long-Eared Bat \(*Myotis septentrionalis*\) \(fws.gov\)](#). These projects do not need to complete summer surveys and we assume that NLEB are not on the landscape during the summer. The Service does assume migratory risk for these projects if they fall within the wind range of NLEB found here: [Land-based Wind Energy Voluntary Avoidance Guidance for the Northern Long-eared Bat | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](#),
- 2) Projects within a known summer occurrence record buffer and want to assume presence for the project, or

3) Projects that want to assume presence without any current occurrence records.

Use for projects with no summer risk because outside of the current range AOI.

No pre-construction surveys were completed of the project area because [insert project name] falls outside the current range of northern long-eared bat as found on the [Species Profile for Northern Long-Eared Bat \(Myotis septentrionalis\) \(fws.gov\)](#). We therefore assume that northern long-eared bats are not on the landscape during the summer at this facility. In addition, the Service is not aware of any northern long-eared bat maternity colonies within 3-miles of the project area outlined in the Guidance and can operate during the summer risk periods [insert summer risk dates e.g., May 15- July 14]) feathered below the Project's turbine(s) manufacturer's cut-in speeds.

Use for projects that assume summer risk without completing summer surveys:

No pre-construction surveys were completed of the project area because [insert project name] is within a known summer occurrence record buffer for northern long-eared bat. We therefore assume summer presence of northern long-eared bat and will implement the summer risk curtailment strategies in the Guidance. **OR**

No pre-construction surveys were completed of the project area because [insert project name] assumes that the facility has summer risk to northern long-eared bat and therefore will implement the summer risk curtailment strategies in the Guidance.

Use for projects with possible summer risk and that conducted pre-construction surveys. Survey results showed NLEB presence:

The [insert project name] wind facility has summer risk to northern long-eared bat and therefore will implement the summer risk curtailment strategies in the Guidance (feather turbines below 11.2 mph (5.0 m/s) from [insert correct dates based on location]).

Use for projects with possible summer risk and that conducted pre-construction surveys. Survey results showed NLEB probable absence (negative survey results):

Pre-construction surveys¹ of the [insert project name] wind facility [insert year(s)] indicated no summer presence of the northern long-eared bat. In addition, the Service is not aware of any northern long-eared bat maternity colonies within 3 miles of the project area outlined in the Guidance. The [insert project name] can operate project turbines during the summer risk periods [insert summer risk dates (e.g., May 15- July 14)] feathered below the Project's turbine(s) manufacturer's cut-in speeds.

To ensure that take of the federally listed northern long-eared bat is not reasonably certain to occur, the [insert company name] commits to the following operating procedures (Table 1), monitoring, and reporting procedures for their [insert project name] project.

Table 1. Operational Measures (cut-in speed) displayed in miles per hour (mph) and meters per second (m/s) by date, for NLEB at the by Season, for Northern Long-eared bats at the [Insert project name] wind facility in [insert County, State]. At

minimum, turbines should be feathered below the curtailment wind speeds starting 30 minutes before sunset to 30 minutes after sunrise when temperatures are above 40°F¹.

Season	Dates	Feathering ¹ Below Cut-in Speed (m/s)	When
Spring staging	[insert dates for FO]	[insert the manufacturer's cut-in speed for the Company's turbine model]	From ½ hour before sunset to ½ hour after sunrise
Pup season	[insert dates for FO]	11.2 mph (5.0 m/s)	From ½ hour before sunset to ½ hour after sunrise
Fall migratory (Fall swarming)	[insert dates for FO]	11.2 mph (5.0 m/s)	From ½ hour before sunset to ½ hour after sunrise

¹ Project should feather turbines below these cut-in speeds. Feathering occurs when turbine blades are pitched parallel with the prevailing wind direction to slow rotation speeds (generally less than 1 rotation per minute).

In addition to implementing the operational measures specified in Table 1, [insert company name] will develop and implement a detailed post-construction mortality monitoring plan (PCMM) in coordination with the Service's [insert field office name] that will include specifics on the numbers of turbines searched, size of plots, frequency of searches, details on bias correction trials, and statistical analyses. By January 31 of each year that this Technical Assistance Letter (TAL) is implemented, [insert project company name] will provide an annual report to the Service's [insert field office name] that describes the operational measures implemented that year, along with the methods and results of the monitoring as prescribed in the detailed PCMM plan created in coordination with the Service. The framework for the monitoring program is as follows:

- The Project will develop and implement a detailed monitoring plan in consultation with the Service and will use [insert either: "EoA to design a post-construction mortality monitoring plan" or describe the alternative sampling design method] to achieve [insert either "a minimum cumulative detection probability of g=0.2" or an alternative approach to achieve similar detection certainty]. The plan will specify data to be collected, searcher efficiency trials, carcass persistence trials, area correction, and other appropriate measures. The Project may periodically consult with the Service regarding cost-effective and logistically feasible changes to the monitoring approach and implementation of applicable new methods or regulatory changes.

¹ Temperatures should be measured at the nacelle and can be specific to individual turbines on a project.

- Efficacy monitoring protocol will consist of two components² while this TAL is in effect: (1) post-construction fatality monitoring for one year designed to achieve [“a minimum detection probability (g) of 0.2” or the agreed upon alternative approach] during the entire active season for bats [insert dates for your FO]; and (2) post-construction fatality monitoring every 7 years afterward designed to achieve [insert either “a g of 0.08” or the agreed upon alternative approach] during the entire active season for bats [insert dates for FO].
- If any northern long-eared bat carcasses are found during PCMM, [insert company name] will report the fatality within 24 hours of discovery to the [insert local Field Office and contact information] and the Service’s Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) [insert local OLE information]. If bat identification of a found carcass is not possible, genetic testing will occur, while waiting for results the project will continue to operate under the TAL. In addition, the Project will immediately work with the Field Office to determine and implement avoidance measures for northern long-eared bats (e.g., cut-in speeds).

Annual reports will be sent to the Field Office by January 31st. Annual reports will reaffirm that operational commitments were implemented (i.e., operating at cut-in wind speeds and if post-construction mortality monitoring was implemented as designed³). Annual reports with post-construction mortality monitoring will include compiled bat fatality data for all bat species using this reporting form [([Region 3 Wind Post-Construction Monitoring Bat Reporting Form FWS.gov](#)) or insert another reporting form that your FO would like to use]. Once the report is submitted, the Project should continue to operate under the TAL and the Service will provide email confirmation that the TAL is still valid within 90 days after a report is received.

As of the date of this letter, the [insert field office name] concludes that the Project is not reasonably certain to result in the take of northern long-eared bats. The Service reached this conclusion through coordination and ongoing discussions with [insert project company name], including [insert project company name]’s commitment, in writing to the USFWS, that the above measures will be implemented as long as the TAL is in effect. If applicable, we recommend that [insert project company name] further coordinate these plans with the [insert state agency name], as the northern long-eared bat is a [insert either: state-listed species, species of conservation concern, or the language used by the state agency]. Please contact [insert state name and contact information].

This office is not authorized to provide guidance in regard to the Service’s Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) investigative priorities involving federally listed species. However, we understand that OLE carries out its mission to protect ESA-listed species through investigation

² The Service is currently developing a monitoring framework for wind facilities with low risk of taking listed bat species. We intend to use the new framework in place of these monitoring requirements when completed.

³ The Service will accept the monitoring results if the report demonstrates that post-construction mortality monitoring was implemented as designed (i.e., resulting g-value may fall short of 0.2 as long as monitoring was implemented as designed).

and enforcement, as well as by fostering relationships with individuals, companies, and industries that have taken effective steps to minimize the likelihood of take such that it is not reasonably certain to occur for northern long-eared bats. It is not possible to absolve individuals or companies from liability for unpermitted take of listed species, even if such take occurs despite the implementation of appropriate minimization strategies to which the likelihood of take is not reasonably certain to occur, as described in this guidance. However, the OLE focuses its enforcement resources on individuals and companies that take listed species without identifying and implementing all reasonable, prudent, and effective measures to minimize the likelihood of take such that take is not reasonably certain to occur. To be in compliance with the take prohibitions of the ESA, the facility must work with the Field Office to implement avoidance measures (e.g., not operating at night during the period of risk, etc.) and consider applying for an incidental take permit under 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA. This office concludes that, if [insert project company name] follows the measures above, the [insert project name] project is not reasonably certain to take ESA listed species.

Thank you for your continuing coordination on project development. Should you have questions regarding this TAL, please contact [Insert FO contact name and contact information], of our office.

Sincerely,

[insert Field Supervisor name]
Field Supervisor

cc: [insert state agency contact for bats and wind projects, if applicable]