

Dept. of Natural Resources: Incidental take notice for Columbia County

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) proposes to issue a permit for the incidental taking of a rare snake, which may result from the X-52 Hazard Tree Removal project.

Incidental take refers to the unintentional loss of individual endangered or threatened animals or plants that does not put the species' overall population at risk.

The American Transmission Company and its contractors identified 61 hazardous trees that require limb or tree removal to maintain the company's reliability standards along this corridor. The hazardous trees are distributed evenly throughout the 11-span project area. Work on these hazardous trees is scheduled for February 2022.

The total duration of work is expected to take five working days. Workers will complete all tree removal under frozen ground conditions.

Cutting of hazardous trees will be complete using a combination of machines, such as a tracked tree trimmer and handheld chainsaws with additional UTV access for personnel. The heavy equipment used for access and woody vegetation management is considered low ground pressure. The equipment will have tracks that distribute the machine's weight over a large area in a manner that prevents sinking into soft or wet soil.

Debris cut from the trees will be left on-site and scattered along the edges of the

existing rights-of-way to minimize movement of equipment. No temporary or permanent fill is expected in conjunction with this planned scope of work.

Presence of the state endangered and federally threatened Eastern Massasauga snake species is confirmed in the vicinity of the project site. DNR staff determined that the proposed project may result in the incidental taking of snakes. This permit would cover any incidental take for the state listing and would not cover any incidental take for the federal listing.

The DNR concludes that the proposed project is not likely to appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival or recovery of the species within the state, the whole plant-animal community of which it is a part of or the habitat that is critical to its existence.

Conservation measures to minimize the adverse effect on the endangered species will be incorporated into the proposed Incidental Take Permit. Copies of the jeopardy assessment and background information on the Eastern Massasauga are available by visiting the [DNR Incidental Take Public Notices webpage](#) or upon request from DNR Conservation Biologist Stacy Rowe at 608-228-9796 or stacy.rowe@wisconsin.gov.

The public is encouraged to submit written or verbal comments regarding project-related impacts to the Eastern Massasauga by Feb. 10, 2022 to:

Department of Natural Resources
c/o Stacy Rowe, DNR Conservation Biologist
101 S. Webster St. Madison, WI 53707
stacy.rowe@wi.gov or 608-228-9796