

WisDOT Guidance for Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid

Eastern prairie fringed orchid (EPFO) habitat assessments and survey expectations for WisDOT projects generally follow the [USFWS Chicago, IL Field Office Survey Guidelines](#). WisDOT-specific details are noted below and are based on discussion between USFWS, WDNR and WisDOT.

Process

- **Obtain USFWS IPaC Official Species List (OSL) and WDNR Endangered Resources Review (ERR).**
 - If EPFO is not included in WDNR ERR, no further action is required for state compliance.
 - Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance must follow the steps below if EPFO occurs in OSL.
- **Determine if potentially suitable habitat is present** in the project's action area by following USFWS Survey Guidance Document [Steps 1-2](#).
 - WDNR Transportation Liaison may comment the potential for suitable habitat in the ERR.
 - This may require onsite review/wetland delineation and can be combined with the habitat assessment steps below.
- **Determine if suitable habitat is present** by following USFWS Survey Guidelines [Steps 3-5](#) (habitat assessment).
 - WisDOT typically does not include a floristic quality assessment (FQA) for its wetland delineations. EPFO habitat assessment and FQA would need to be an additional request in a work order scope, see contracting considerations section in this document.
 - Coordinate "no suitable habitat" determinations with WDNR Transportation Liaison.
 - If there is no suitable habitat present, an ESA "no effect" determination can be made for EPFO.
- **If suitable habitat exists, either:**
 - Conduct a presence/probable absence (P/A) survey.
 - Follow USFWS Guidance Document [Step 6](#) and see survey details section below.
 - Coordinate survey plan with USFWS and WDNR in advance.
 - Assume EPFO is present in all areas of suitable habitat.
- **If EPFO presence is confirmed/assumed**, the project team must explore design options to avoid/minimize impacts to EPFO and its suitable habitat.
 - Unless full avoidance is possible, state incidental take authorization and ESA consultation procedures must be followed. Each process has its own timeline/requirements. See WisDOT regional environmental coordinator (REC) for details.

Presence/Probable Absence Survey Details

- **Survey Period:** June 28 – July 14
 - It is preferred, but not required, to conduct surveys earlier within the survey window in the southern end of WI and later in the survey window in the northern end of the EFPO range.
 - 3 non-consecutive survey days are [required](#) to demonstrate probable absence due to the sporadic nature of EPFO blooming.
 - Habitat assessment and first P/A survey day may occur on the same date.

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- **Mapping/Report:**

- Follow [WDNR rare plant survey protocol](#).
- Report observations of EPFO to each agency as soon as possible.
- Submit final report to USFWS, WDNR Transportation Liaison and Endangered Resources Liaison within 30 days of last survey date.

Surveyor Qualifications

- Surveyor must be a botanist/experienced in plant identification. WDNR [pre-qualified rare plant surveyor](#) is required unless pre-approved by the WDNR Endangered Resource Transportation Liaison. If you are unsure if the proposed surveyor has the appropriate qualifications, please reach out to WisDOT Ecologist for assistance.

Contracting Considerations

- WisDOT may bundle wetland delineation, habitat assessment and P/A survey into one work order scope if deemed appropriate by the WisDOT REC. Coordinate survey plan with both agencies in advance of field work.

Resources:

USFWS EPFO species page: <https://www.fws.gov/species/eastern-prairie-fringed-orchid-platanthera-leucophaea>

USFWS Chicago, IL field office survey guidelines:

https://ecos.fws.gov/docs/tess/species_survey_guidelines/doc6162.pdf

MN-WI endangered species determination key standing analysis (see page PDF pages 37-40):

https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/MN-WI%20Key%20Standing%20Analysis_1-17-2023.pdf

WDNR EPFO species page: <https://apps.dnr.wi.gov/biodiversity/Home/detail/plants/8997>

WDNR rare plant survey protocol:

https://widnr.widen.net/view/pdf/jziporkpwr/NH_Review_GeneralPlantSurvey.pdf?t.download=true&u=kkadwx

WDNR Pre-qualified plant surveyor list:

https://widnr.widen.net/view/pdf/8fr4hw1wbq/NH_Review_PlantsSurveyors.pdf?t.download=true&u=kkadwx