

WisDOT Guidance for IPaC Bat Determination Key Talus/Rock Crevice Questions

Use the supplemental questions and review process in this guidance document to respond to the following questions from the *FHWA, FRA, FTA Programmatic for Transportation Projects Affecting NLEB, I-Bat or TCB Determination Key* and the *NLEB/TCB Rangewide Determination Key*:

IPaC d-key question: Does the Action Area contain or occur within 0.5 miles of (1) talus or (2) anthropogenic or naturally formed rock crevices in rocky outcrops, rock faces or cliffs?

Subsequent question if user selects “yes”: Have you received written confirmation from the local Ecological Services Field Office that the talus/rock crevices in the action area are not likely to contain winter roosts or hibernation sites for northern long-eared bats or tricolored bats and/or that the proposed action would not affect those habitat types for northern long-eared/tricolored bats that may use them? If so, upload the field office confirmation and continue with the key.

Supplemental questions/review process

- 1) Are talus or anthropogenic/naturally formed rock outcrops/faces/cliffs known to be present within the project limits (action area)?
 - a. **Yes.** Respond Yes to the IPaC question and proceed to Question 5 below.
 - b. **No.** Proceed to Question 2 below.
- 2) Does the project’s WDNR Endangered Resources Review (ERR) letter indicate that the project is within 0.5-mile of any of the following NHI natural communities: *algific talus slope, dry cliff, glaciere talus, moist cliff, and talus forest*?
 - a. **Yes.** Respond Yes to IPaC question and proceed to Question 5 below.
 - b. **No.** Proceed to Question 3 below.
- 3) Review the [WisDOT GeoPortal Talus & Rock Natural Communities Map](#). Does the project have any overlap with one or more of the natural community 5-mile buffers?
 - a. **Yes.** Proceed to Question 4 below.
 - b. **No.** Respond No to IPaC question and proceed through IPaC D-key.
- 4) Review aerial imagery and Google Street View/WisDOT Photolog. Are talus or anthropogenic/naturally formed rock outcrops/faces/cliffs present within the project limits (action area)?
 - a. **Yes.** Respond Yes to IPaC question and proceed to Question 5 below.
 - b. **No.** Respond No to IPaC question and proceed through IPaC D-key.
- 5) Will the project activities avoid direct impacts to talus or anthropogenic/naturally formed rock outcrops/faces/cliffs during the bat overwintering period (Nov. 1 to April 14, inclusive)?
 - a. **Yes. Environmental commitment required*** Proceed to Question 6 below.
 - b. **No.** Respond No to the subsequent IPaC question and consult with USFWS on a project-specific basis outside the IPaC D-key.

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- 6) Will project activities avoid destroying or significantly diminishing the extent/quality of talus or anthropogenic/naturally formed rock outcrops/faces/cliffs that may be suitable as bat overwintering habitat?
- Yes. Environmental commitment required*** Respond Yes to the subsequent IPaC question and upload the written Confirmation Memo from the local Ecological Services Field Office that the talus/rock crevices in the action area are not likely to contain hibernating NLEB or TCB and/or that the proposed action would not affect those habitat types or listed bats that may use them. Proceed through IPaC D-key.
 - No.** Respond No to the subsequent IPaC question and consult with USFWS on a project-specific basis outside the IPaC D-key.

**This response triggers an additional environmental commitment for the project. Refer to details in the section below.*

Environmental Commitments

Insert the applicable avoidance and minimization measures (AMMs) into the environmental document's commitments page. Both of these AMMs require inclusion in the construction contract special provisions.

Talus/Rock AMM 1: *Use this for a "yes" response to Question 5.*

Project activities will avoid direct impacts to talus and anthropogenic/naturally formed rock outcrops/faces/cliffs during the bat overwintering period (Nov. 1 to April 14, inclusive).

Talus/Rock AMM 2: *Use this for a "yes" response to Question 6.*

Project activities will avoid destroying or significantly diminishing the extent/quality of talus and anthropogenic/naturally formed rock outcrops/faces/cliffs that may be suitable as bat overwintering habitat.

WisDOT Geoportal Talus & Rock Natural Communities Map

Direct link: <https://geoportal-a.dot.state.wi.us/portal/apps/experiencebuilder/experience?id=59141a6615824416a543a7b977851a5d>

- This map is only accessible to WisDOT staff and is for internal viewing only.
- You must have a WisDOT Geoportal acceptance login, refer to this link to obtain a login: [GeoPortal](#) (link will only work for WisDOT staff)
- You must be invited to the "Bat Group" Geoportal group. Please contact [Jen Gibson](#) to be invited.
- If working remotely, you must be on the VPN.

Background information

WDNR Coordination/Available Data

WisDOT coordinated with WDNR regarding their knowledge of bats using talus and rock crevices in rocky outcrops/rock faces/cliffs in WI beyond the known hibernacula element occurrences (EOs) already

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conveyed to WisDOT in the Endangered Resources Review (ERR) Process. WDNR Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) bat biologists noted evidence of bat hibernation in some sandstone rock crevices in southwest WI and limestone/dolostone crevices related to the Niagara Escarpment in northeast WI. Additionally, they noted evidence of bat hibernation in quartzite talus at Devil's Lake State Park, Sauk County. They have neither surveyed nor received observations of bat hibernation in crystalline bedrock features in northern/northeastern WI.

The Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) Natural Communities data layer includes several bedrock dependent communities. WDNR bat biologists narrowed these communities down to 5 types that contain talus or naturally formed rock crevices in rocky outcrops, rock faces or cliffs that *may* be utilized by bats for hibernation: *algific talus slope*, *dry cliff*, *glaciere talus*, *moist cliff*, and *talus forest*. They excluded *cave* natural communities, as the ERR process already identifies cave-based hibernacula EOs within a 1-mile buffer of projects and is sufficient from their perspective.

While these NHI records do not encompass all natural features that may exist and do not include anthropogenically formed talus/rock crevice features, it is reasonable to expect that similar anthropogenic/naturally formed features would occur near mapped natural areas. WisDOT proposes using a 5-mile buffer of these select natural communities to account for the potential presence of other unmapped anthropogenic/naturally formed talus/rock crevice features. The 5-mile buffer aligns with the distances used in the [Lake States Forest Management Bat Habitat Conservation Plan \(HCP\)](#) which states bats tend to swarm and stage within 5 miles of hibernacula.

WisDOT requested a GIS data layer containing a 5-mile buffer of the following NHI natural communities: *algific talus slope*, *dry cliff*, *glaciere talus*, *moist cliff*, and *talus forest*. This layer is considered confidential by WDNR and will be utilized by WisDOT environmental staff through an internal ArcGIS Online map to complete the review process described below. The layer is considered valid for 1 year and will be refreshed annually.

Assumptions

- Anthropogenic riprapped surfaces do not qualify as “rock faces” or “rock outcrops” as they do not typically extend below the frostline and are therefore unsuitable overwintering habitat for talus/crevice hibernating bats.
- Impacts to talus or rock outcrops/faces/cliffs that 1) occur outside the overwintering period for listed bats and 2) are not expected to destroy or significantly diminish the quality or extent of potential overwintering habitat are not likely to result in adverse effects to northern long-eared bat or tricolored bat.