

E1-851



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Rock Island Field Office
4469 48th Avenue Court
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
Phone: (309) 793-5800 Fax: (309) 793-5804

IN REPLY REFER
TO:

FWS/RIFO



April 29, 2004

Mr. Troy Brady
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Mr. Brady:

This is in response to the Peoria Heights & Western Railroad - Construction of Connecting Track Exemption - Environmental Assessment, dated March 9, 2004.

We concur with your findings in section 5.5.2 of this report that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the decurrent false aster (*Boltonia decurrens*), the prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) or the eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*) or critical habitat for these species. In reference to the letter dated April 26, 2004 from Hanson Professional Services Inc., we concur that the proposed project is also not likely to adversely affect the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) or its critical habitat. Should project plans change, or if additional information on the distribution of listed or proposed species becomes available, consultation may be needed.

This letter provides comments under the authority of and in accordance with provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.); and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Jody Millar of my staff at (309) 793-5800 ext. 202.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Nelson
Supervisor