

**From:** [Reinisch, Jerry](#)  
**To:** [Andrea Sampson](#)  
**Cc:** [Drew Becker](#)  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Bear Creek NGL Pump Stations  
**Date:** Thursday, January 9, 2020 2:56:01 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Andrea

Thank you for the additional information reference to the proposed Stony Johnny Butte site vegetation. After reviewing the information and attached photographs I would agree with the disturbed agricultural type of vegetation rather than native prairie as referenced after reviewing the recent aerial photography for the parcel. There does not appear to be suitable DASK habitat in this area.

Jerry

Jerry D. Reinisch  
Fish & Wildlife Biologist  
Ecological Services  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
3425 Miriam Drive  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

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On Thu, Jan 9, 2020 at 9:56 AM Andrea Sampson <[andrea.sampson@merjent.com](mailto:andrea.sampson@merjent.com)> wrote:

Hi Jerry –

Thank you very much for your quick response to the Project Notification Letter for the Bear Creek NGL Pump Stations.

In your letter, you noted that the proposed workspace included areas of native prairie. We would like to clarify that surveys conducted on October 16, 2019 found that the entire project study area at the Stony Johnny Butte site in McKenzie County has been disturbed due to agricultural practices. The site was dominated by yellow sweet clover, with other plant species observed including crested wheatgrass, smooth brome, Canada thistle, wheatgrass species and alfalfa, among others; the preferred plant species for the Dakota skipper are not present in the proposed pump station workspace. Photos of the proposed Project area are attached here for your reference.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have. Otherwise, we look

forward to your response based on this clarification.

Thank you –

Andrea

**Andrea Sampson, MS**

**Senior Analyst**

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# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

North Dakota Ecological Services  
3425 Miriam Avenue  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
06E15000-2020-CPA-0067  
Oneok-Bear Creek NGL  
pumping stations

January 8, 2020

Mr. Andrew Hackler  
Environmental Specialist  
Oneok Bakken Pipeline, LLC  
100 West Fifth Street  
Tulsa, OK 74103

Dear Mr. Hackler:

Thank you for your letter of January 6, 2020, requesting comments on the Bear Creek NGL Pipeline pump stations project proposals in Dunn and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota. Oneok is proposing to build two (Stony Johnny Butte and Big Gulch) pump stations to improve transmission to the existing Bear Creek NGL pipeline which originates at the Oneok Bear Creek gas plant in Dunn County and extends northwest to terminate at an interconnect with Oneok's existing Targa Pipeline in McKenzie county, North Dakota.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) offers the following comments under the authority of and in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703 *et seq.*, and the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

### **Dakota skipper**

The Dakota skipper is a small prairie butterfly listed as a threatened species under the ESA. Dakota skippers are obligate residents of high quality prairie ranging from wet-mesic tallgrass prairie to dry-mesic mixed grass prairie. In Northwestern North Dakota, Dakota skippers inhabit dry-mesic hill prairies with abundant purple coneflower (*Echinacea angustifolia*), but also use mesic to wet-mesic tallgrass prairie habitats characterized by wood lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) and mountain death camas (smooth camas; *Zigadenus elegans*). Their dispersal ability is very limited due in part to their short adult life span and single annual flight. Extirpation from a site may be permanent unless it occurs within about 0.6 miles of an inhabited site that generates a sufficient number of emigrants. Avoidance of impacts to native prairie habitat is recommended to reduce the risk of adverse effects to this species. If such areas are unavoidable, surveys for Dakota skippers are advisable. Critical habitat has been designated for this species in North Dakota; for details and locations see the following website:  
<https://www.fws.gov/Midwest/endangered/insects/dask/index.html>.

The proposed pumping stations include areas of native prairie. The disturbance of these lands could further fragment and eliminate existing native prairie habitat. Recent surveys for the Dakota skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*) have identified this species near the proposed Stony Johnny

Butte location. Dakota skippers occupy native prairie habitat, thus suitable habitat/occupancy surveys for this species may be warranted prior construction. In areas of suitable habitat or occupancy, construction may be delayed during the flight season (June 10-July 15).

### **Whooping Crane**

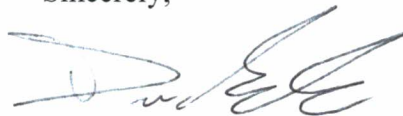
The Aransas Wood Buffalo Population (AWBP) of the endangered whooping crane (*Grus americana*) is the only self-sustaining migratory population of whooping cranes remaining in the wild. Whooping cranes breed in the wetlands of Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta and the Northwest Territories of northern Canada, and overwinter on the Texas coast. Whooping cranes in the AWBP annually migrate through North Dakota during their spring and fall migrations.

The presence of suitable roosting and feeding habitat for whooping cranes indicate the potential for whooping crane presence in the proposed project area. The Service recommends that if a whooping crane is sighted within one mile of the project while it is under construction, that all work cease within one mile of that part of the project and the Service be contacted immediately. In coordination with the Service, work may resume after the bird(s) leave the area. Whooping cranes are unlikely to spend more than a few days in any one spot during migration. The Niemuth et al. whooping crane model indicated a medium quality habitat for migrating whooping cranes with few sightings in the areas of the proposed pumping stations.

With the continued fragmentation and loss of native prairie habitat in North Dakota, the Service recommends Oneok work with willing developers to voluntarily offset any unavoidable loss of native prairie habitat that may compensate for impacts to endangered or migratory species that likely occupy the project area. We look forward to further engagement on this action.

The Service appreciates the opportunity to work with Oneok ensure the conservation of federally-listed species as part of our joint responsibilities under ESA to conserve threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please have your staff contact Jerry Reinisch of my staff at (701) 333-0267, or contact me at (701) 355-8215.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Drew Becker", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Drew Becker  
ND Ecological Services Office Supervisor

cc: Greg Link, Division Chief, North Dakota Game and Fish Department