

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR
BLANDING'S TURTLES & SANDHILL CRANES
AT
TALOMARE, HUNTLEY, MCHENRY COUNTY

Prepared for:

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and
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ENCAP Project No. C-01-0221A

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Introduction and Background

This Conservation Management Plan was developed as part of the Incidental Takings Authorization sought from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) for Blanding's Turtles and Sandhill Cranes. The IDNR closed endangered species consultation for the first development phase (627.17 acres) of the Talomare community on October 15, 2005 as a result of extensive efforts to adhere to IDNR recommendations. It is the intent of the developer to implement and proceed with this conservation plan in order to close IDNR consultation for the final phase of development. Although Talomare has been planned in a manner that will attempt to avoid adverse impacts to listed species and enhance onsite natural features; Incidental Take Authorization is requested for the site due to the proximity of Illinois Natural Area Inventory Sites (INAI) and the possibility of Blanding's Turtles and Sandhill Cranes to occupy or transit the site during and after development activities.

Blanding's Turtles have not been observed onsite during construction of phase I. The nesting of Sandhill Cranes has not been observed onsite and is not expected to occur during construction. However, the Talomare residential community is located approximately ½ mile from the Kloempkin Marsh INAI and adjacent to the H.U.M. Railroad Prairie East INAI. Both the Blanding's Turtle and Sandhill Crane have been observed within the vicinity of the site and measures to potentially benefit both species are proposed in this plan.

A) Location:

Abbreviated legal description:

Illinois, McHenry County, Grafton Township, City of Huntley T43N R7E
Portions of SW ¼ of Section 16, E ½ of Section 17, E ½ of Section 20,
W ½ of Section 21, and N ½ of Section 29.

The property is best accessible via Reed Road west of Route 47. Please refer to location map contained within the attached Routine Wetland Delineation Report.

The development area consists of 806 acres of land located within the Village of Huntley. The northern limits of development are bounded by a tributary of the South Branch Kishwaukee River and agricultural land. The southwestern and southeastern limits of development are bounded by the H.U.M. Railroad Prairie East Illinois Natural Area Site, residential properties, and agricultural land. The eastern and western limits of development are bounded by agricultural land.

B) Biological Data:

Biological Data on Blanding's Turtle and Sandhill Crane is reproduced here from IDNR information provided on August 11, 2005.

The parcel is located east of the **Kloempken Marsh Illinois Natural Area Inventory (INAI) Site** and the Hennig-Kloempken County Conservation Site parcels owned by the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD). The southwestern portion of the proposed action is adjacent to the **H.U.M. Railroad Prairie East Illinois Natural Area Inventory (INAI) Site**, a high quality natural area also owned by MCCD.

Blanding's Turtle

The vicinity of the Talomare community has at least eight documented records of occurrence for the State-listed threatened Blanding's Turtle, *Emydoidea blandingii*. Four of these records are from the Kloempken Marsh INAI site during July 2005. The site also has aquatic connections to Exner Marsh and Pleasant Valley Conservation Area, each with large Blanding's Turtle populations. Agricultural use of this property does not preclude the Blanding's Turtles from using it as a travel corridor or nesting areas. Blanding's Turtles have been known to nest in row crops, use small farm ponds and ditches between fields, and traverse agricultural fields, heavily traveled roads, and neighborhoods.

Sandhill Crane

There is a documented record of the State-listed threatened Sandhill Crane, *Grus canadensis*, at Kloempken Marsh INAI and from other sites several miles north and south of the parcel. Sandhill Cranes prefer to nest in large undisturbed freshwater marshes and prairie ponds in close proximity to terrestrial uplands, since juvenile cranes must be taught to hunt and forage, an activity that begins before they can fly. Intensive agricultural use of this property does not preclude the Sandhill Cranes from using it for foraging. Sandhill Cranes forage in fields for food. The breeding season for Sandhill Cranes is from March to late June.

C) Site Activities:

Development of the Talomare community consists of off-site sanitary sewer improvements, Illinois Route 47 improvements, Reed Road improvements, and the construction of residential lots and access roads. Over 40 acres of the site will be park land dedicated to the Huntley Park District. All onsite wetland area that is not subject to agricultural activities will be preserved. Approximately 93 percent of the existing trees will be protected. The site currently contains approximately 51 acres of existing wetland and is proposed to provide 112.5

acres of wetland habitat post development. An additional 49.5 acres of prairie buffer is proposed to be established around created and preserved wetland areas (See Natural resource Exhibit: Tab 4).

D) Potential Impacts:

Potential impacts expressed by the IDNR include the following:

1. Construction activities may cause turtles to become trapped within the confines of the property and/or be crushed by equipment or vehicles.
2. Once construction is complete, homes, fences, driveways, and roads (curbs) may act as barriers to the turtles as they travel to and from nesting areas.
3. Noise pollution may have a negative affect on the predator - prey relationships of Sandhill Cranes by masking noises made by predators and masking noises made by Crane's prey. Noise, in and of itself, can impose stress.
4. The ability of pets (potential predators) to get in or near the wetlands should be limited.

2) Minimization of Potential Impacts:

Huntley Venture LLC will take measures to prevent the taking of turtles and cranes during and after construction and does not anticipate a negative impact on the local population. However, for reasons outlined above, the development could potentially result in a negative indirect impact to turtle and crane individuals.

A) Minimization of Affected Area

A fundamental aspect of the site plan is to preserve and enhance existing onsite resources. The Village of Huntley has been working with the developer under a Revised Development Agreement to achieve a fair compromise between property rights granted as part of the original annexation agreement and the need to protect the environment. This compromise has resulted in naturalized stormwater managment practices to protect existing wetlands and drainageways, complete avoidance of all Waters of the United States and strict compliance with the Kane County Stormwater Managment Ordinance as adopted by the Village.

In addition to the preservation of existing wetlands and drainageways that are not currently farmed, 66.5 acres of a wetland/prairie complex (North Natural Area GRWA plans) is proposed to be graded and seeded prior to completing Phase II

work. This area is directly linked to the preserved corridor provided by the tributary to Kishwaukee Creek and should assist in turtle movement. This area will also provide habitat for resting and foraging Sandhill Cranes that is away from primary construction areas. Areas like this will increase biological diversity of available habitat, may assist in the cranes' ability to forage and may support other (threatened and endangered) species. Trails are not proposed within the natural areas to limit human encroachment and disturbance. As stated in their September 12, letter, the Village of Huntley will continue to strictly enforce leash laws so that pets do not become potential predators.

B) Management of Affected Area

The onsite natural areas will be managed and maintained for a period of five years by the developer. Once the areas meet performance standards as required by the Village, the areas will be turned over to the Talomare Homeowner's Association. Details of long term Management of the Areas are contained within the Covenant Guidance for Natural Areas as part of the Homeowner's Association covenants and restrictions documentation (See attached).

C) Description of Measures to be Implemented

1. Upland Habitat Areas: Over 49 acres of upland prairie will be established along naturalized stormwater management areas, preserved wetlands, and the tributary to the Kishwaukee River. An upland prairie area approximately 400' by 1200' is proposed to be located north of a naturalized detention facility and south of a created riparian wetland, will provide secluded upland habitat that should improve foraging and nesting opportunities for Sandhill Cranes and Blanding's Turtles. A 100' upland buffer will also be established along the 25' wide H.U.M. Railroad Prairie East INAI site located adjacent to the southwestern property boundary.
2. Wetland Preservation: 42 acres of existing isolated wetlands and waters of the U.S. will be preserved. Only wetlands that are currently farmed are proposed to be impacted by development.
3. Wetland Creation: 13 acres of riparian wetland creation is proposed within the northern portion of the property. This will enhance the functional value of the fringe riparian environment currently associated with the existing tributary.
4. Naturalized Storm Water Management: 57 acres of wetland habitat will be provided within the naturalized stormwater management areas.
5. Overland Wildlife Movement: Bridges consisting of modular concrete will be utilized at both tributary crossings to preserve the natural stream bottom and allow for fish and wildlife movement. Naturalized stormwater management facilities have been located adjacent to preserved wetland areas in order to increase foraging habitat for wildlife. The northern natural area is designed specifically with the Sandhill Crane in mind, providing wet meadow, emergent, and shallow open water areas adjacent to a large upland plant community.
6. Mountable Molded Curbs: Mountable curbs will be installed within all single family neighborhoods to specifically allow turtle movement and prevent the turtle from being trapped away from habitat areas. Barrier curb will be installed on collector streets (Founder's Field Blvd. & Talomare Blvd.) and in townhome neighborhoods to keep the turtle out of high traffic areas.
7. Fencing: Silt fence will be installed and strictly monitored to keep Blanding's turtles out of the construction zone. Permanent fencing will be constructed along the 100' upland buffer area proposed to be established

along the 25' wide H.U.M. Railroad Prairie East INAI site located adjacent to the southwestern property boundary.

8. Lighting: To minimize the possible effects of outdoor lighting attracting insects and thereby disrupting the food chain, the Talomare community will be lit with high pressure sodium lights. This type of lighting has an orange glow which falls within the pink to red hues preferred by the IDNR. Red hues tend to minimize the attraction of insects as opposed to blue hues which tend to attract insects.
9. Signage: Interpretive signage will be installed at overlooks to inform residents and visitors of the potential presence of Blanding's Turtles and Sandhill Cranes. The signs will instruct residents to contact the MCCD if a Blanding's Turtle is sited. The signs will be developed to raise awareness of the value of threatened and endangered species and their habitat. (Please see overlook locations on Natural Resource Exhibit: Tab 4)
10. Education: Potential Homeowners will be issued a flier entitled "The Care of Wetlands and Natural Areas at Talomare" (See Tab 6). Prior to purchase of a home; the homeowner will be aware of their responsibilities to the natural areas at Talomare.

D) Monitoring Measures

Although there have been no recent sightings of Blanding's Turtle or Sandhill Cranes, the Village of Huntley and the developer have committed to track and monitor any sightings of these species before, during, and after construction. The created and enhanced natural areas will be monitored as required by the Village to ensure that habitat enhancement measures meet performance standards.

Post Development Monitoring Protocol and Standards are outlined below:

The wetland creation area will be monitored and managed bi-annually for a five year period as required by Kane County Department of Environmental Management. The purpose of this monitoring will be to measure and assess the effectiveness of the mitigation wetland plantings. Vegetation monitoring will occur along permanently marked transects. Data collection will involve the placement of transect-centered quadrates over the plants and recording species present, abundance, and coverage for each quadrat. In addition, a meander survey will be conducted to encounter plant species not represented along transects and within the prairie buffer. Success of the mitigation area will be evaluated based on the following performance criteria.

1. By the end of the fifth year, all vegetated zones within the wetland mitigation facility shall achieve 85% cover.
2. By the end of the fifth year, the emergent community shall achieve 60% aerial coverage.
3. Open water shall have 0% vegetative coverage.
4. By the end of the fifth year, the Floristic Quality Index (FQI) shall be equal to or greater than 5 points above that of the FQI of the impacted wetlands.
5. By the end of the fifth year, the wetland mitigation facility shall not be dominated or contain cumulatively with more than 25% cover of the following species: Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* or *frangula*), Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), or Giant Reed Grass (*Phragmites australis*).

Reporting

An annual monitoring report shall be prepared and submitted to the client and the Village of Huntley by January 31st of each year. The monitoring report shall be utilized to determine if the mitigation and enhancement areas are meeting design goals. If design goals are not being met (based on annual reports) appropriate measures must be implemented.

E) Adaptive Management Practices

If it is determined that the measures taken to minimize takings of turtles and cranes are not effective, modifications to this Conservation Plan will be developed and implemented. Management measures will be adapted to address issues of concern, as necessary.

F) Verification of Funding

During the site development, and continuing through the proposed five year vegetation monitoring and maintenance period, Huntley Ventures, LLC will provide the necessary funding for the implementation of the taking minimization measures. Following the completion of the five year period, the homeowner's Association will be responsible for funding and implementing the long term maintenance of the natural areas.

3) No Take Alternative

There are no practicable no take alternatives. While the likelihood of direct injury to turtles or cranes is low, temporary harassment of endangered species in transit

would be impossible to control and monitor. The only alternative to this authorization would be to cease development of the site. Since ceasing development is not economically practical or feasible, the proposed development including the associated naturalized open space areas and taking minimization measures offers the least detrimental alternative. The proposed development offers a balance between an expanding suburbia and the preservation/enhancement of wildlife habitat.

4) Species Existence in Illinois

The development of the Talomare community will not likely threaten the existence of Sandhill Crane and Blanding's Turtle in Illinois. The majority of the proposed development occurs within areas utilized for the production of agricultural row crops. While agricultural fields do provide some foraging opportunities, the onsite crops do not constitute habitat essential to species existence. While the project may negatively impact individual turtles and cranes, the proposed enhancements may improve overall habitat benefits. Both species have been documented to inhabit several areas within the vicinity of the site and the proposed natural area improvements may help establish habitat nodes and corridors that could link nearby Illinois Natural Area Sites.

5) Implementing Agreement

A) Parties Responsible for Implementation of the Management Plan

Huntley Ventures LLC and the Talomare Homeowner's Association will be responsible for the implementation of this plan.

B) Obligations and Responsibilities of Management Plan Participants

Huntley Venture LLC will be responsible for the installation and initial maintenance of the measures listed in the plan. The Talomare Homeowner's Association will be responsible for the long term management of the plan,

C) Legal authority to Carry out Obligations and Responsibilities

As property owner Huntley Venture LLC has the legal authority to carry out the obligations and responsibilities set forth in the plan. Once performance standards have been met to Village expectations, the natural areas will be legally deeded to the Homeowner's Association which will then be legally authorized to implement the conservation plan.

D) Compliance with Federal, State and local regulations

Since the Talomare community has been planned to avoid natural wetlands and waters of the U.S. that are not subject to farming practices, Federal permitting is not required to Carry out this conservation plan nor develop the site. No state regulations conflict with the implementation of this plan nor with the construction of the Talomare community. Compliance with all local regulations implemented by the Village of Huntley and the adopted Kane County Stormwater Ordinance are in effect.

Every effort will be made to avoid adverse impacts to listed species and enhance onsite natural features as outlined in this plan and the attached documentation.