



File Code: 2670

Date: May 2, 2024

Dear Interested Party:

This letter is to inform consultants who complete contracted work for botany and wildlife on behalf of the Dakota Prairie Grasslands. Please refer to this [link](#) for the 2024 Biological Survey and Reporting Guidelines, protocols, datasheets, species lists, and GIS data for use concerning new project proposals planned for or located on the Little Missouri National Grasslands. Surveys and reports that do not follow these requirements may be rejected or returned for edits. Please contact the DPG Supervisor's Office for related procedures on the Sheyenne and Grand River Districts. As an additional resource, you can refer to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) (<https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac>) website which is a digital project planning tool that provides information to project proponents to help determine whether a project will have effects on federally listed species or designated critical habitat, as well as other sensitive resources (including candidate and proposed species) managed by the USFWS.

A mandatory requirement is to coordinate with the appropriate district project lead and district botanists/biologists prior to conducting surveys as well as to communicate timely reporting of new Threatened and Endangered and Sensitive Species locations found on or near a proposed project. General project and reporting questions should also be coordinated through district staff. Reporting specifications and contact information can be found in the Biological Survey and Reporting Guidelines. Field surveys may not be required for proposed projects falling entirely within areas that have been previously surveyed within the last 3-5 years; however, some level of BE documentation is always required and any waivers of additional plant and wildlife surveys or completion of full BEs based on that criteria must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate District Ranger.

Changes to the Biological Survey and Reporting Guidelines for the 2024 field season include final updates to the Regional Forester's Sensitive Species (RFSS) list for both plants and wildlife (in effect as of 11/2023), minor tweaks to monarch butterfly habitat assessment, updated staff contacts, clarifications on when a separate Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation is needed for a specific project and updated language regarding absence of occurrence records or lack of observations during surveys which should not be interpreted as absence of the species at or near a given site.

Please reach out to Greg Schonert, Biology Program Manager (gregory.schonert@usda.gov – 701-300-0341) for any specific questions on the biological survey and reporting guidelines or sensitive species lists.

We appreciate your efforts to aid us in better managing the biological resources on the LMNG.

Sincerely,

BETH IHLE
Grasslands Supervisor

