

# TOPICS



## Comprehensive Permitting Matrices: Strategic Road Maps for Wind Project Approvals

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Maybe it's happened to you. The project is progressing smoothly. Then the phone rings. A permitting fire drill erupts. The project triggered one more unforeseen permit requirement. Quick! Call the agency. Call a team meeting. Revise the design. Curse the bureaucracy.

Permitting of wind energy projects is often complex. The complexity arises from expansive infrastructure networks, projects that cross political boundaries, revisions in state and federal regulations, inconsistent local requirements, and idiosyncrasies of agency staff. A Comprehensive Permitting Matrix prepared prior to project design can minimize unpleasant surprises. A permitting matrix used in conjunction with the other key analyses and processes of due diligence, such as the wind resource, interconnections, and land acquisition, provides wind developers with a strategic road map for timely approvals and efficient coordination.

A Comprehensive Permitting Matrix summarizes essential details in a quick-read format, putting the requirements of relevant agencies and permitting processes at your fingertips. Key permitting risks that influence project viability or timing are presented, including federal involvement, wetland permits, federal farm mortgages, conservation easements, endangered species, or protected habitats. The matrix, which can be tailored to suit the needs of specific clients and projects, typically identifies the following:

- Federal, state, and local agencies, including appropriate contact(s);
- Permits or approvals required, along with expiration date(s);
- Permit thresholds and triggers, which can influence project size, footprint, or siting;
- Procuring parties, for assigning and tracking accountability for each permit;
- Time required for permit preparation and approval processes;
- Comments on requirements, risks, and affected land, resources, or infrastructure; and
- Future actions or technical studies needed.

Agency	Permitting Contacts	Type of Application	Status	Expiration Date(s)	Lead in Application	Procuring Party	Time Required	Comments	Future Action
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Tara E. Berman, Project Manager 12100 Hwy 101, Suite 100 Cedar Rapids, IA 52401 Phone: 319.281.1234 Fax: 319.281.1235 Email: tara.berman@usfws.gov	Predefined/Standard Approval	On file	Substantive (2 weeks)	Finalized/Reviewed/Approved/Not Approved/Withdrawn/Resubmitted	Westwood	2 weeks to 2 months	No comments at this time.	Stay alert and address wetlands with appropriate level of detail, including potential riparian habitat.
		Individual Determination	On file	Substantive (2 weeks)	Finalized/Reviewed/Approved/Not Approved/Withdrawn/Resubmitted	Westwood	2 months	Minor revisions to the project area on wetlands and the riparian habitat. Finalized/Reviewed/Approved/Not Approved/Withdrawn/Resubmitted.	After substantial completion of the project, conduct a final site inspection to ensure compliance with all USFWS and other requirements.
		Predefined/Standard Approval	On file	Substantive (2 weeks)	Finalized/Reviewed/Approved/Not Approved/Withdrawn/Resubmitted	Westwood	2 to 3 months	Comments on requirements. Application of the project to a set of wetlands and riparian habitat. Finalized/Reviewed/Approved/Not Approved/Withdrawn/Resubmitted.	Finalize wetlands and riparian habitat requirements.
Ill. State and Wildlife Services (ISWS)	Mike Roberts, Endangered Species Officer 12121 Midway Avenue Mundelein, IL 60050 Phone: 815.339.4441 Fax: 815.339.4442 Email: Mike_Roberts@isws.gov	Request for Letter of No Adverse Effect Determination	On file	Substantive (2 weeks)	Finalized/Reviewed/Approved/Not Approved/Withdrawn/Resubmitted	Westwood	1 to 3 months	Comments on requirements. Review of project area for potential impacts on endangered species. Finalized/Reviewed/Approved/Not Approved/Withdrawn/Resubmitted.	Review project area for potential impacts on endangered species and riparian habitat. Finalize requirements and submit application.

The permitting analysis outlines subsequent steps by addressing the timing and sequence of permit applications and the need for additional related tasks. For example, the matrix may trigger initiation of title searches, or it may uncover crucial items for agency coordination. It may recommend that you contact counties, townships, or agricultural or natural resource agencies to obtain, verify, and update certain information. Ultimately, the matrix

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confirms or rules out potential permitting risks, so that you know how and when to proceed down a particular approval path, or whether design strategies can be used to avoid certain hurdles.

A permitting matrix and its accompanying analysis provide a foundation for strategic decisions, efficient designs, and expedited project development. When accompanied by GIS mapping focused on critical issues, regulated features, and key habitats, a permitting analysis provides the basis for wind facility siting, compliance, and local constituency coordination.

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