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environmental consulting + services

An Overview of Envirologic's Ecological Services

By Brad Yocum, Project Biologist at Envirologic

Envirologic utilizes a team of experienced biologists and other scientists to plan and implement projects that are protective of the environment, while avoiding unexpected costs and delays due to natural resource regulations and permitting. With over 30 years of experience in Michigan and the surrounding region, our team understands the uncertainties clients face when unexpected environmental challenges occur on a project. Envirologic has the expertise to help you navigate these hurdles and successfully meet your project goals.

We offer a broad range of ecological services, from wetland delineation and Environmental Inspections to Threatened and Endangered Species Surveys and other biological assessments. The following provides a more in-depth look at some of our ecological services and how Envirologic can bring the necessary resources to your development project.

Wetland Identification, Delineation, and Permitting

Wetlands play an integral role in the surrounding region's ecology; they provide habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife (including many threatened and endangered species), protect and improve water quality, and offer flood protection and erosion control. Federal and state governments have established specific regulations to limit the loss of wetlands throughout the country. Wetland protection is especially important in Michigan as over 40% of the state's original wetlands have been drained or filled, representing millions of acres lost (2014 *Status and Trends of Michigan's Wetlands* report, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy).

Part 303, *Wetlands Protection*, of the state of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) requires that anyone planning to conduct certain activities in regulated wetlands -- such as depositing fill material in a wetland or draining surface water from a wetland -- must first apply for and receive a permit from the state. Some local governments also have restrictions on setback distances from wetlands and limit types of development within these buffer zones.

If a wetland is identified on a project site, it can significantly derail your project timeline. To avoid potential slowdowns, it's important in the early stages of a project to develop an understanding of wetlands on site. Envirologic has experienced biologists on staff that can assist your project team by performing wetland identification and delineation in accordance with the necessary regulatory guidance. When a project requires a wetland permit application, we can also provide that service. To learn more about our wetland services and the types of site activities that may require a permit, read our recent article ["What Happens When Wetlands are Identified on a Project Site?"](#)



30+
years

Threatened and Endangered Species Surveys and Permitting

As of October 2018, Michigan was home to 26 species (14 endangered and 12 threatened) listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). These species are either at risk for extinction in the very near future or are vulnerable to endangerment. The ESA sets strict protections for endangered species that prohibit harassing, harming, hunting, collecting, and killing, as well as for threatened species (which can include some of the same strict prohibitions as those for endangered species). In Michigan, threatened and endangered species are additionally protected under Part 365, *Endangered Species Protection*, of the Natural Resources Environmental Protection Act (NREPA).

When construction or development activities have the potential to impact a threatened or endangered species, a permit is necessary to conduct that work. Additionally, projects that are funded, authorized, permitted, or implemented by a federal agency and may affect a listed species must first have a consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This may include state permits or authorizations that implement federal laws or that are supported by federal funds; relevant projects include transportation projects (new road construction, bridge or culver replacement, and road widening or realignment), renewable energy generation such as wind farms or solar fields, and work on utilities such as pipelines and transmission lines.

Envirologic can help you navigate through the process of determining whether protected species may exist on your site and, if so, how to keep your project moving forward. Our on-staff biologists hold Michigan Endangered Species Permits for all listed species, and each team member has over 15 years of experience in conducting Threatened and Endangered Species Surveys. Envirologic can additionally help you through the permitting application process when relevant. See our article [“What Types of Projects are Required to Address Threatened and Endangered Species?”](#) for more information on this service area.

Environmental Inspections

Envirologic provides Environmental Inspections to clients in energy production and transportation who are conducting pipeline and transmission line placement/replacement or inspection and repair of energy-transportation infrastructure. During these activities, one of Envirologic’s Environmental Inspectors is on site to monitor and document environmental impacts, as well as ensure that the work performed complies with applicable permits and the client’s standard operating procedures. Pre-construction assessments and soil erosion and sedimentation control inspections are also conducted before, during, and after repair or replacement of the utility.

These projects usually incorporate several of our other ecological services including Threatened and Endangered Species Surveys, wetland identification and delineation, and mitigation plans. Envirologic staff is additionally available 24/7 to provide emergency spill response to these clients. For more information on Environmental Inspections, see our article [“Inspecting Environmental Impacts.”](#)

Other Biological/Ecological Assessments and Inventories

Envirologic can additionally perform various other biological assessments and ecological inventories in support of broader project goals. These assessments may be required before conducting work at a project site in order to maintain compliance with federal, state, and local regulations or to abide by client-specific standard operating procedures. Some of these additional assessments include habitat assessments, rare natural community assessments, and avian studies.

A habitat assessment is performed to determine if suitable habitat for a potential threatened or endangered species is present on a property. For many listed species, simply noting the lack of appropriate habitat is sufficient to demonstrate the species is not likely present on the property. In cases where clients don't have enough time in their project schedule for a full Threatened and Endangered Species Survey -- which has to be done at a specific time of year and often includes multiple site visits -- a habitat assessment can be conducted to provide information for project planning purposes to move forward. Similarly, if a client intends to perform certain activities on property that could potentially affect listed species, then a habitat assessment may be utilized to determine the best location to perform those activities to eliminate or limit any potential impact.

A rare natural community assessment is another useful resource that can be utilized to determine the presence of a listed species on a property. In ecology, a natural community is defined as all the plants, animals, and other organisms found within a designated habitat. While rare natural communities don't have any legal protections, they may provide habitat that supports threatened and endangered species.

Avian studies can be performed to ensure activities on a project site will not adversely affect species of birds that are threatened or endangered, as well as other bird species protected in Michigan. For example, Envirologic has performed avian studies in the past for nesting birds that may be impacted by tree and/or vegetation removal; hawks, eagles, and owls have readily identifiable nests and are protected in Michigan (and elsewhere) even if they are not listed as a threatened or endangered species. Many other bird species are also protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act during the nesting and migration seasons.

How Can Envirologic Help?

With over 30 years of experience performing a broad range of ecological services in Michigan and the surrounding region, our team has the expertise to help you successfully meet your project goals. For more information on the [ecological services](#) Envirologic can provide, contact one of our on-staff biologists, [Brad Yocum](#).