Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Bureau of Water, Permit Section
(IEPA)

2520 West Iles, Post Office Box 19276, Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276, 217/782-3362

The IEPA has issued a Public Notice of a request for a Clean Water Act Section 401 water quality certification that would allow the issuance of a federal permit for the discharge of pollutants to waters of the State.

Public Notice Beginning Date:	**Public Notice Ending Date:**
Friday, September 5, 2025	Thursday, September 25, 2025

Agency Log No.: C-0117-25

Federal Permit Information: This civil works project is under the jurisdiction of Chicago District, Regulatory Branch U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Name and Address of Discharger: Illinois Department of Transportation, Jose Rios - 201 W. Center Court, Region 1, Schaumberg, IL 60196-1096

Discharge Location: In Section 16 of Township 35-North and Range 10-East of the East 3rd Principal Meridian in Will County. Additional project location information includes the following: I-80 from 205ft west of US 6 to 100ft east of Water Street, Joliet, IL 60436

Name of Receiving Water: Des Plaines River

Project Name/Description: I-80 Des Plaines River Bridges Reconstruction Project - proposed reconstruction of the existing twin truss bridges of I-80 spanning Des Plaines River

Construction Schedule: Immediate (Planned project duration is approximately 606 days)

The Public Notice period will begin and end on the dates indicated in the heading of this Public Notice. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the project to the IEPA at the above address. Commenters must provide their name and address along with comments on the certification request. The IEPA Log number must appear on each comment page. Commenters may include a request for public hearing. Only hearing requests and comments that pertain to Clean Water Act Section 401 authority will be considered. This authority provides consideration of whether the permit or license would be consistent with Sections 301, 302, 303, 306, or 307 of the CWA, as well as "any other appropriate requirement of State [or tribal] law". Requests for additional comment period must provide a demonstration of need. The final day of comment acceptance will be on the Public Notice Ending date shown above, unless the IEPA grants an extended notice period. The attached Fact Sheet provides a detailed description of the project and the findings of the IEPA's antidegradation assessment.

If written comments or requests indicate a significant degree of public interest in the certification application, the IEPA may, at its discretion, hold a public hearing. Public notice will be given 30 days before any public hearing. If a Section 401 water quality certification is issued, response to relevant comments will be provided at the time of the certification. For further information, please see the contact information below.

Name: Oyetunde Tinuoye Email: Oyetunde.Tinuoye@illinois.gov Phone: 217/782-3362

Post Document. No. C-0117-25-09052025-PublicNoticeAndFactSheet.pdf

401 Water Quality Certification Fact Sheet for I-80 Bridge Over Des Plaines River

IEPA Log No. C-0117-25

Contact: Angie Sutton 217-782-9864

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has applied for a 401 Water Quality Certification for impacts associated with the removal and replacement of structures westbound (WB) SN 099-8309 and eastbound (EB) SN 099-8325 carrying I-80 over the Des Plaines River at Joliet. The proposed project will be constructed in Township 35 North, Range 10 East, Section 16, Will County, Illinois. Both the eastbound and westbound trusses of the I-80 bridges have been classified as structurally deficient and are being replaced due to their age and poor condition.

The bridge construction project has been authorized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) using Nationwide Permit (NWP) 15 (U.S. Coast Guard Approved Bridges) to satisfy federal CWA § 404 permitting requirements. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) also regulates this activity under its own authority; therefore, a state water quality certification under CWA § 401 is required for the USCG permit process. Until recent changes to the 401 certification rules pursuant to 40 CFR 121, USCG would satisfy its permitting criteria by using an existing water quality certification issued for a USACE permit, provided the project's permitted activities are identical. Given these procedural changes, it is necessary for the proponent to seek a separate CWA § 401 water quality certification for the pending USCG permit even though this Agency has already evaluated and made a final determination that the activity would meet all applicable water quality requirements.

The existing bridge built in 1965 is a 27-span fixed truss bridge with a total length of approximately 2,363 feet measured from back-to-back abutments and is northwest-southeast oriented with a vertical clearance of 47.7 feet. The existing structures have a total of 26-concrete pier columns with only 2-concrete pier columns located within the waterway. The proposed structures (SN 099-8309 and SN 099-8325) will utilize steel plate girder bridges with a total length of approximately 2173 feet and width of 74.83 feet over the river. They will carry three travel lanes and one auxiliary lane with full shoulders on each side. They will also provide a navigational clearance of 48.6 feet over the normal water elevation (NWE) and a horizontal clearance of 300 feet between piers. The new bridges will be constructed approximately 30 feet north of the existing alignment. Removal of the existing I-80 bridges would occur under a separate contract approximately 3 years after construction facilitation.

The new bridges will require the placement of 4 new waterline foundations within the waterway, 2 on each side of the channel. Each will require placing 8 drilled shafts within the footprint of each waterline foundation (32 total) using coffercells as a construction method. The foundations will place permanent fill into 183 linear feet (LF) or 0.236 Acres (Ac) and the combined amount of temporary fill for both in-water construction areas is 2.283 Ac. Mitigation for the permanent Waters of the US (WOUS) impacts is being proposed as the purchase of stream bank credits.

Information used in this review was obtained from the application documents dated September 26, 2022, May 14, 2024, June 13, 2025, and June 16, 2025.

Identification and Characterization of the Affected Water Body.

Wetland and waterway surveys were conducted by the Illinois natural History Survey (INHS) in 2010 and 2018, and Huff and Huff, Inc conducted surveys for the proposed project in June and July of 2021. Thirty-six wetlands and twenty-one waterways (W1 through W21) were identified within the survey limits. No wetlands are proposed to be impacted by the project. Of the waterways, only the Des Plaines River (W17) will be impacted by the proposed project.

The Des Plaines River has 1889 cfs of flow during critical 7Q10 low-flow conditions. The Des Plaines River is classified as General Use Water. The Des Plaines River is not listed as a biologically significant stream in the 2008 Illinois Department of Natural Resources Publication *Integrating Multiple Taxa in a Biological Stream Rating System*, nor is it given an integrity rating in that document. The Des Plaines River, Waterbody Segment IL_G-23, is listed on the 2024 Illinois Integrated Water Quality Report and Section 303(d) List as impaired for fish consumption use with potential causes given as mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Aesthetic quality and indigenous aquatic life uses are fully supported. This segment of the Des Plaines River is not subject to enhanced dissolved oxygen standards.

The Des Plaines River is a Traditional Navigable Water (TNW), which flows southwest between the Raynor Avenue and US 52/IL 53 interchange within the project limits. It provides the functions of conveyance and wildlife habitat, and receives surface water from adjacent uplands, wetlands, and impervious surfaces. Site W17 does not appear to meet the definition of a (High-Quality Aquatic Resource (HQAR). Within the survey area, the Des Plaines River consists of 2.359 Acres (Ac). Site W17 is perennial stream with a defined bed and banks, and extended inundation. It is approximately 700 feet wide and greater than 2 feet deep. Bank vegetation consists of Green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), tall goldenrod *(Solidago altissimum)*, Canada goldenrod *(Solidago canadensis)*, riverbank grape (*Vitis riparia*), and box elder (*Acer negundo*).

Within the Des Plaines River, impacts are expected in 183 LF (0.236 Ac). Impact would be the result of construction of 4 new permanent waterline foundations with a total of 32 drilled shafts. The 4 foundations will require 1142 CY of fill, and the 32 drilled shafts will require 1302 CY of fill built by the coffercell method for a total fill amount of 2444 CY. Mitigation is proposed at a 1:1 ration by the purchase of stream bank credits.

Identification of Proposed Pollutant Load Increases or Potential Impacts on Uses.

The pollutant load increases that would occur from this project include some possible increases in suspended solids. These increases may occur as a result of installation of the proposed waterline foundations. The permanent impacts will result from the 2444 CY of fill in the 0.236 Ac of streambed for addition of the 4 new foundations. Chloride loading may increase with the addition of lanes to the roadway.

The proposed temporary construction method would consist of two temporary causeways placed on either side of the Des Plaines River within the work zone inside the project area. Each causeway would be composed of clean Stone Class A5 Riprap. The causeways would remain outside of the navigational channel and would be setback from the floodwalls resulting in a total temporary impact of 2.283 acres. To provide a connection from the land side to the causeways, two temporary wood and steel bridges

would be constructed on both sides of the river with clearance above the floodwalls. The temporary bridges will not impact the WOUS. After construction, all portions of the coffercell temporary works surrounding the permanent waterline foundation footprint on both the east and west sides of the navigation channel and within each in-water construction area will be removed.

Fate and Effect of Parameters Proposed for Increased Loading.

To minimize the surface water impacts during construction appropriate erosion and sediment control Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented. The Contractor shall adhere to the IDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction, adopted January 1, 2022. IDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction will guide erosion and sediment control efforts at the Des Plaines River (WOUS, Site 17) to help minimize degradation of water quality. All erosion and sediment control measures will be maintained and will remain in place until construction is complete, and site conditions stabilize.

Although it is anticipated that chloride loading will increase by 23.5%, the new design of the I-80 Des Plaines River Twin Bridges will promote water quality. The existing I-80 Des Plaines River Twin Bridges have an open deck drainage allowing for water to flow through spout/scuppers directly into the Des Plaines River below, whereas the proposed I-80 Des Plaines River Twin Bridges will be built with a closed drainage system that diverts the flow of water away from the Des Plaines River and redirects the flow into detention ponds with wet bottoms to be constructed as part of the project. Salt storing and handling BMPs will also be observed.

Winter Operations BMPs include the following:

- Annual snowplow operator training to improve deicing application efficiency and to reduce de-icing chemical loss.
- Utilization of calibrated spreaders equipped with ground sensors that can accurately control the spreading rate.
- Utilization of the practice of prewetting solid deicing chemicals and mixtures for better adhesion to the pavement surface and for ice and snow melting
- Adjusting application rates of deicing chemicals according to pavement temperature and weather conditions.

In addition to utilizing the Winter Operation BMPs, IDOT is a member and participates in the following relevant watershed groups to work to improve water quality in the watershed, including developing and implementing TMDLs: Upper Des Plaines Watershed Workgroup, the Lower Des Plaines Watershed Workgroup and the Chicago Area Waterways Chloride Workgroup.

Mitigation is still to be determined; however, the applicant is proposing to mitigate the impacts within the Des Plaines River watershed by purchasing stream bank credits.

Purpose and Social & Economic Benefits of the Proposed Activity.

The purpose of the construction of new I-80 Des Plaines River Bridges) is to provide additional travel lanes, improve the structural condition and bridge design, and improve traffic safety need with wider shoulders.

An improved transportation system is needed along I-80 from Ridge Road to U.S. Route 30. The project needs are to improve regional and local travel, improve the facility condition and design, and improve the environment and economics of the I-80 corridor through Will County. Work will include reconstruction of existing pavement, which is in poor condition, along with lane additions to accommodate rising traffic volumes.

Assessments of Alternatives for Less Increase in Loading or Minimal Environmental Degradation.

Alternatives considered address the advanced age of the existing structure, poor condition of the structural elements and narrow shoulders. The existing structure would not allow for widening the existing trusses and any construction alternative must maintain three lanes to continue the flow of traffic. There were three alternatives developed to address replacement of the bridges north or south of the existing location so that traffic could be maintained on the existing bridges during construction. The alternatives would correct the substandard horizontal and vertical layout of the approach roadways, restore the bridge condition, and provide standard shoulders. These features would also improve traffic flow and safety by providing a consistent design speed throughout the corridor. Furthermore, the new bridges would be wide enough to accommodate any future widening of the I-80 mainline.

Below are the alternatives considered.

Alternative 1 - North – This alternative involves removal of the existing bridges and builds two wider bridges about 125 feet north of the current location. However, the eastern portion of the bridges are located on a curve, which requires a more complex design and construction process.

Alternative 2 -South - This alternative involves removal of the existing bridges and builds two wider bridges about 70 feet south of the current location. However, the eastern portion of the bridges are located on a curve, which requires a more complex design and construction process.

Alternative 3 – Refined North (Preferred Alternative) – The preferred alternative removes the bridges and builds two wider bridges about 300 feet north of the current location. For this alternative, the entire bridge for the river crossing is located on a straight section of I-80, which allows for noncomplex design and construction. However, this results in longer, more expensive bridges. The location of the bridge also requires a greater amount of rock excavation when compared to Alternatives 1 and 2. Despite this, Alterative 3 would provide the most straight-forward design and constructability and the greatest improvements to traffic flow and safety both during and after construction. The extent of the safety and mobility improvements was found to outweigh the greater number of relocations. For these reasons, the refined north alternative was determined to be the preferred alternative.

Summary Comments of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Regional Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards or Other Entities.

An EcoCAT endangered species consultation (Project Number 2509492) was submitted on February 13, 2025. The natural resource review provided by EcoCAT identified protected resources that may be in the vicinity of the proposed action. The Department has evaluated this information and concluded that adverse effects are unlikely. Therefore, consultation under 17 Ill. Adm. Code Part 1075 is terminated.

However, the commitments outlined in the IDOT Natural Resource Review (NRR) dated 12-23-2024 be strictly adhered to. The NRR summarizes all affected T&E species and addresses the recommended conservation measures. All required elements will be included as the effect to both federal and state-listed species will be similar.

A Federal Highway Administration (FHA) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) dated September 26, 2022, has been included with the application.

A USFWS Section 7 review dated December 20, 2024, included the following species on the official species list: Indian bat, northern long-eared bat, tricolored bat, whooping crane, Hine's emerald dragonfly, monarch butterfly, rusty patched bumble bee, western regal fritillary, eastern prairie fringed orchid, lakeside daisy, and leafy prairie-clover. Since the FONSI was signed, the tricolored bat, and western regal fritillary were proposed as endangered, the monarch butterfly was changed from a candidate to proposed as threatened, and the whooping crane was added as experimental population non-essential. Additionally, the eastern massasauga, scaleshell mussel and sheepnose mussel were removed from the official species list for the project.

Agency Conclusion.

This preliminary assessment was conducted pursuant to the Illinois Pollution Control Board regulation for Antidegradation found at 35 Ill. Adm. Code 302.105 (antidegradation standard) and was based on the information available to the Agency at the time this assessment was written. We tentatively find that the proposed activity would result in the attainment of water quality standards; that all technically and economically reasonable measures to avoid or minimize the extent of the proposed increase in pollutant loading have been incorporated into the proposed activity; and that this activity would benefit the area by providing a new river crossing and an improved transportation system along I-80 from Ridge Road to US Route 30 that will improve regional and local travel, improve the facility condition and design, and improve safety of the I-80 corridor through Will County. Comments received during the 401 Water Quality Certification public notice period will be evaluated before a final decision is made by the Agency.

cc: Des Plaines Regional Office