

**RYMAK - RI CASINO 10 ACRES  
RYMAK COMMERCIAL/TRAVEL PLAZA  
ROCK ISLAND, ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS**

**SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED TURTLE  
SURVEY REPORT  
PROJECT# JN257152**



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Skelly and Loy, Inc., a *Terracon Company* (Skelly and Loy), has prepared this Turtle Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) Survey Report as part of the environmental studies associated with the proposed Rymak Commercial/Travel Plaza (Illinois Department of Natural Resources EcoCAT Review #2512041). The center of the site is located at approximately 41.4605278°N latitude and 90.6180296°W longitude in the City of Rock Island, Rock Island County, Illinois, as depicted on the Project Location Map (Appendix A).

It was previously determined by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), that two aquatic features (herein, referred to as the Northern Pond and the Southern Slough) adjacent to the proposed project area possessed the appropriate combination of suitable soils, vegetation, and hydrology characteristic of habitat for an SGCN turtle, the Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*). In subsequent conversations, the IDNR indicated that the site may also contain habitat for the Midland Smooth Softshell (*Apalone mutica mutica*).

Following IDNR recommendations, the project team created a detailed study plan that included visual, trapping, and nesting survey techniques to determine the presence/probable absence of SGCN turtle species within and adjacent to (within 300 feet) the proposed project area and any potential adverse effects that could result. Detailed surveys were conducted during the prime turtle active season from May 27 to June 18, 2025, and no SGCN turtles were observed. The attached mapping depicts the project location, approximate study area, and existing conditions (Appendix B and Appendix C).

This report includes information regarding the physical and biological characteristics of the suitable habitats identified within the project site and the findings of the SGCN turtle study.

## II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The land use/land cover features within the proposed project area included wooded areas, post-agricultural/commercial lot meadow, scrub-shrub thickets, gravel roads, and features associated with a multi-lane highway (S.R. 0092/Centennial Expressway). The onsite meadows contained open soil areas, areas dominated by various grasses, dense carpets of crownvetch (*Securigera varia*), and areas of non-native substrates including concrete and asphalt. Portions of the study

area outside of the proposed project boundary (including a 300-foot buffer of the boundary) included sloped woodlands, bottomland/floodplain woodlands, the Northern Pond, and the Southern Slough. The Northern Pond is a large (~39 acres), man-made pond with steep banks and deep water. The Northern Pond is almost entirely outside of the study area, but the southern fringe of the pond (including shallows and edges with basking structures in the form of downed trees, branches, and vegetation hummocks) was within a 300-foot buffer and included within the northern portion of the study area. The Southern Slough is a mixed emergent, scrub-shrub, and forested wetland complex with open water components and embedded within the larger 3,500 Milan Bottoms wetlands landscape. While the Southern Slough is almost entirely outside of the study area a small portion was within the 300-foot buffer and was subsequently included within the southern part of the study area (refer to Appendix B for a Study Area Map). Urbanized portions of the study area to the east and south of the proposed project boundary (within 300 feet) include Big Island Road (a gravel access road) and highly disturbed lands along and including S.R. 0092/Centennial Expressway. Photographs of the study area are included in Appendix D.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The potential for adverse effects to SGCN turtles is typically evaluated within 300 feet of a proposed project through the identification of all areas that will be permanently or temporarily affected by project features, including buildings, roads, staging areas, utility lines, outfall and intake structures, wells, stormwater retention or detention basins, parking lots, driveways, lawns, etc. The hydrological effects of some proposed actions have the potential to extend beyond the direct footprint of a project due to the impact that impervious surfaces or groundwater pumping may have on aquatic systems.

Avoidance of direct and indirect effects refers to no disturbance to or encroachment into wetlands or connecting surface water corridors through filling, ditching, or draining for any project-associated features or activities. Adverse effects may also be anticipated to occur when lot lines include portions of a wetland; when an adequate upland buffer is not retained around a wetland; or when roads, stormwater basins, impervious surfaces, or wells may affect the hydrology of a wetland. As proposed project activities cannot be avoided within 300 feet of potential SGCN turtle habitat, a formal presence/inferred absence study to determine the presence or probable absence SGCN turtle species in the wetland was requested by the IDNR.

Through coordination with the IDNR, it was previously determined that potentially suitable SGCN turtle habitat was present within (nesting habitat) and adjacent (aquatic habitats within 300 feet of the project boundary) to the proposed project area, resulting in an SGCN Turtle Presence/Inferred Absence Survey.

### **SGCN Turtle Presence/Inferred Absence Survey**

As the proposed project may include direct or indirect impacts to potential core SGCN turtle habitat features, a presence/inferred absence study was designed in coordination with the IDNR by Skelly and Loy in April of 2025 with survey permits subsequently issued by that agency to lead surveyors Brandon Ruhe and Ben Hepler (IDNR Permits HSCP 25-16 and HSCP 25-19). This methodology included three types of survey technique: 1) Visual Encounter, 2) Nesting, and 3) Trapping.

#### **Visual Encounter Surveys**

A Visual Encounter Survey (VES) is an important survey technique that compliments more intensive amphibian and reptile sampling efforts (Hoefler et al. 2024). VES were conducted daily for a 21-day period within and adjacent to the project area. VES surveys were conducted prior to daily trap checks in order to avoid startling nearby basking turtles. All basking habitats in the project area (and dependent upon vantage, an area that extended greater than 300 meters beyond the project boundary due to magnification capabilities of binoculars and ultra-zoom cameras) that were visible from the shoreline were scanned with a high-powered ocular device, such as binoculars or spotting scopes, that allowed the surveyor to differentiate turtle species at distances further than possible by the naked eye. A camera that took clear photographs from afar or through a spotting scope for vouchering observations (we used an ultra-zoom camera, the equivalent of 3000 mm optical zoom) was used during the study. The number and species of turtles identified were recorded, as well as weather conditions. All turtle observation locations (approximately) were recorded. Any SGCN turtle observations were to be reported to IDNR immediately via phone and email.

#### **Nesting Surveys**

Nesting surveys were conducted in upland portions of the project area that contained open-canopy exposure and suitable substrates (e.g., sand, gravel, loose loam). Any potentially suitable nesting habitats were mapped and characterized in the field. The project area

contained approximately 5 acres of potentially suitable turtle nesting habitat. Initially, we planned for a 15-day nesting survey, but extended this effort to 21 days as nesting turtles continued to be found through the study. Nesting surveys occurred opportunistically while walking through the site and in the late morning/early afternoon and evening. Nesting surveys included searches for staging or actively nesting female turtles, recent apparent test excavations, active nests, and depredated nests. While active nests where the individual nesting turtles were not observed and egg fragments from depredated nests were often not identifiable to species, the locations and conditions were recorded in notes, and the nest site photographed. Nest Predator Excluders (if recommended by IDNR) were to be used to cover active SGCN turtle nests, when identified. All SGCN turtles were to be released at the point of capture after appropriate data and photographs were collected. Actively nesting female SGCN turtles were not to be captured until nesting was complete. Any SGCN turtle observations were to be reported to IDNR immediately via phone and email.

### Trapping Surveys

An aquatic turtle trapping study was conducted within portions of the Northern Pond and the Southern Slough, both immediately adjacent to the project area and within 300 feet of the proposed project boundary. While these wetlands are outside of the proposed limit of disturbance (LOD) and no wetlands are anticipated to be directly impacted by the proposed project, the trapping was used to supplement nesting and visual surveys to determine if the project area is utilized by SGCN turtles. Turtle trapping can be conducted throughout the active season, but particularly productive months are May and June (NEBWG 2014, OMNRF 2015). We set ten (10) hoop traps on May 29<sup>th</sup> and continued trapping through June 18<sup>th</sup>, for a duration of 20 trap nights. A Trap Location Map is included as Appendix C and depicts the approximate turtle trap locations. The trap locations were set to capture both foraging turtles and female SGCN turtles staging to nest within the study area. Traps (Memphis net and twine hoop traps) were baited with sardines and checked every 24 hours. Excluders were fastened to the front of the hoop traps in order to keep the largest Common Snapping Turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*) out of the traps. Excluders have been successfully used in a number of turtle studies around the country, specifically for species such as the Blanding's Turtle (PFBC 2018). Large Common Snapping Turtles may injure smaller turtles and other wildlife captured in the traps, can damage hoop traps during extraction from traps, and can injure surveyors during extraction from hoop traps. Hoop traps were set in water approximately 1-2 feet in depth near potentially suitable basking structures and quiet pools near aquatic vegetation and other refugia. Traps were separated by approximately 150 linear feet, though this distance was slightly adjusted for individual traps

based upon actual field conditions (based upon suitable substrates or depth as found in the field). Traps were set near or at the locations of unconfirmed turtle observations as reported by Markezich (2025). All trapped turtles were released unharmed near the point of capture after appropriate data and photographs were collected. Any SGCN turtle captures were to be reported to the IDNR immediately via phone and email.

## IV. RESULTS

### **SGCN Turtle Presence/Inferred Absence Survey**

No SGCN Turtles were encountered through the course of the study despite an intensive survey effort. Table 1 summarizes the daily survey effort, weather conditions, and daily species observations. Refer to Table 2 for a list of amphibians and reptiles encountered through the course of the study.

### **Visual Encounter Surveys**

No SGCN turtle species were encountered via Visual Encounter Surveys. Visual Encounter Surveys resulted in the detection of 15 amphibian and reptile species within the study area, including seven (7) species of turtles. Over 1,100 observations of turtles were made through the course of the Visual Encounter Survey effort. An average of approximately 3 hours was spent per day conducting Visual Encounter Surveys in appropriate habitat areas for 22 days (May 27 – June 17, 2025). The Northern Pond accounted for 369 of these observations (Table 3) while the Southern Slough accounted for 738 turtle observations (Table 4). Daily totals were derived by counting the individually identifiable turtles basking within the study area each day. In some cases, large numbers of common basking turtle were noted via estimation as opposed to individual counts due to high numbers of visual encounters. Individual turtles were potentially re-counted each Visual Encounter Survey day, so this number (>1,100) does not indicate a census value. No Visual Encounter Surveys were conducted on the final day of the study, which was a trap check date only.

**TABLE 1**  
**SGCN TURTLE SPECIES SURVEY DETAILS**  
**RYMAK COMMERCIAL/TRAVEL PLAZA**  
**MAY 27 THROUGH JUNE 17, 2025**

DATE OF SURVEY	SURVEYOR(S)	SURVEY CONDITIONS	NESTING SURVEY EFFORT	HERPETOFAUNA ENCOUNTERED
5/27/2025 Survey No. 1	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 1815 Air Temperature: 72 F Cloudy, Calm <b>Finish:</b> 2100 Air Temperature: 70 F Cloudy, Calm	1915 - 2100 1700 - 1730  1.75 total person-hours of effort  0.35 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Common Map Turtle, False Map Turtle, Ouchita Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Western Painted Turtle, Northern Watersnake
5/28/2025 Survey No. 2	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 1130 Air Temperature: 62 F Cloudy, Calm <b>Finish:</b> 1830 Air Temperature: 65 F Cloudy, Breezy	1245 - 1615  3.5 total person-hours of effort  0.7 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
5/29/2025 Survey No. 3	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 1100 Air Temperature: 78 F Cloudy, Slight Breeze <b>Finish:</b> 1755 Air Temperature: 83 F Cloudy, Slight Breeze	1100 - 1145 1625 - 1755  2.2 total person-hours of effort  0.4 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Common Map Turtle, Ouchita Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Western Painted Turtle, Northern Watersnake
5/30/2025 Survey No. 4	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0830 Air Temperature: 66 F Clear, Calm <b>Finish:</b> 1600 Air Temperature: 85 F Partly Cloudy, Calm	0830 - 0930 1400 - 1600  3.0 total person-hours of effort  0.6 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
5/31/2025 Survey No. 5	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0700 Air Temperature: 66 F Clear, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 2115 Air Temperature: 67 F partly cloudy, Breezy	1830 - 2115  2.75 total person-hours of effort  0.55 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, False Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake

DATE OF SURVEY	SURVEYOR(S)	SURVEY CONDITIONS	NESTING SURVEY EFFORT	HERPETOFAUNA ENCOUNTERED
6/1/2025 Survey No. 6	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0700 Air Temperature: 67 F Clear, Calm <b>Finish:</b> 2100 Air Temperature: 66 F Cloudy, Calm	1400 - 1600 1930 - 2100  3.5 total person-hours of effort  0.7 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Ouchita Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
6/2/2025 Survey No. 7	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0915 Air Temperature: 70 F Clear, Calm <b>Finish:</b> 2015 Air Temperature: 81 F Clear, Breezy	1230 - 1500 1830-2015  4.0 total person-hours of effort  0.8 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
6/3/2025 Survey No. 8	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0810 Air Temperature: 73 F Partly Cloudy, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1700 Air Temperature: 80 F Overcast, Windy	1200 - 1330 1500 - 1700  3.5 total person-hours of effort  0.7 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, False Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake, Eastern Gartersnake
6/4/2025 Survey No. 9	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0800 Air Temperature: 64 F Cloudy, Slight Breeze <b>Finish:</b> 1830 Air Temperature: 71 F Hazy, Slight Breeze	1100 - 1230 1630 -1830  3.5 total person-hours of effort  0.7 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake, Eastern Gartersnake
6/5/2025 Survey No. 10	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0900 Air Temperature: 65 F Partly Cloudy, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1700 Air Temperature: 78 F Cloudy, Breezy	1300 - 1600  3.0 total person-hours of effort  0.6 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Ouchita Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
6/6/2025 Survey No. 11	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0800 Air Temperature: 76 F Cloudy, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1600 Air Temperature: 80 F Cloudy, Breezy	1330 - 1600  2.5 total person-hours of effort  0.5 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake

DATE OF SURVEY	SURVEYOR(S)	SURVEY CONDITIONS	NESTING SURVEY EFFORT	HERPETOFAUNA ENCOUNTERED
6/7/2025 Survey No. 12	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 1100 Air Temperature: 70 F Partly Cloudy, Breeze <b>Finish:</b> 1900 Air Temperature: 70 F Cloudy, Slight Breeze	1200 - 1400 1700 - 1900 4.0 total person-hours of effort 0.8 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, False Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
6/8/2025 Survey No. 13	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 0900 Air Temperature: 72 F Cloudy, Calm <b>Finish:</b> 1915 Air Temperature: 63 F Cloudy, Windy	1230 - 1430 1715 - 1915 4.0 total person-hours of effort 0.8 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
6/9/2025 Survey No. 14	B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 1100 Air Temperature: 66 F Cloudy, Windy <b>Finish:</b> 1900 Air Temperature: 68 F Cloudy, Calm	1230 - 1430 1630 - 1830 4.0 total person-hours of effort 0.8 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
6/10/2025 Survey No. 15	B. Hepler B. Ruhe	<b>Start:</b> 1020 Air Temperature: 71 F Clear, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1815 Air Temperature: 78 F Clear, Breezy	1150 - 1320 1525 - 1815 5.8 total person-hours of effort 1.1 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Common Map Turtle, Red-eared Slider, Spiny Softshell, Northern Watersnake
6/11/2025 Survey No. 16	B. Hepler	<b>Start:</b> 1245 Air Temperature: 87 F Clear, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1600 Air Temperature: 90 F Clear, Breezy	1245 - 1600 3.2 total person-hours of effort 0.64 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Northern Leopard Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Eastern Gartersnake, Northern Watersnake
6/12/2025 Survey No. 17	B. Hepler	<b>Start:</b> 1015 Air Temperature: 79 F Clear, Slight Breeze <b>Finish:</b> 1745 Air Temperature: 83 F Clear, Slight Breeze	1015 - 1215 1615 - 1745 3.5 total person-hours of effort 0.7 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Dekay's Brownsnake, Northern Watersnake

DATE OF SURVEY	SURVEYOR(S)	SURVEY CONDITIONS	NESTING SURVEY EFFORT	HERPETOFAUNA ENCOUNTERED
6/13/2025 Survey No. 18	B. Hepler	<b>Start:</b> 1230 Air Temperature: 77 F Cloudy, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1730 Air Temperature: 78 F Cloudy, Breezy	1230 - 1430 1700 - 1730  2.5 total person-hours of effort  0.5 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Eastern Gartersnake, Northern Watersnake
6/14/2025 Survey No. 19	B. Hepler	<b>Start:</b> 1245 Air Temperature: 76 F Cloudy, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1615 Air Temperature: 80 F Cloudy, Breezy	1245 - 1615  3.5 total person-hours of effort  0.7 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog
6/15/2025 Survey No. 21	B. Hepler	<b>Start:</b> 1100 Air Temperature: 78 F Cloudy, Slight Breeze <b>Finish:</b> 1755 Air Temperature: 83 F Cloudy, Slight Breeze	1100 - 1145 1625 - 1755  2.2 total person-hours of effort  0.4 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Bullfrog, Northern Map Turtle, Eastern Gartersnake, Northern Watersnake
6/16/2025 Survey No. 22	B. Hepler	<b>Start:</b> 0835 Air Temperature: 75 F Party Cloudy, Calm <b>Finish:</b> 1650 Air Temperature: 85 F Party Cloudy, Calm	0835 - 0950 1520 - 1650  2.7 total person-hours of effort  0.5 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Northern Map Turtle, Northern Watersnake
6/17/2025 Survey No. 23	B. Hepler	<b>Start:</b> 0830 Air Temperature: 79 F Clear, Breezy <b>Finish:</b> 1625 Air Temperature: 89 F Clear, Breezy	0830 - 0930 1525 - 1625  2.0 total person-hours of effort  0.4 hours/acre of survey effort	Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Green Frog

**TABLE 2**  
**HERPETOFAUNA OBSERVED**  
**COMMON AND SCIENTIFIC NAMES**  
**RYMAK COMMERCIAL/TRAVEL PLAZA**  
**SGCN TURTLE SURVEY**

<b>COMMON NAME</b>	<b>SCIENTIFIC NAME</b>
Blanchard's Cricket Frog	<i>Acris blanchardi</i>
Gray Treefrog	<i>Hyla versicolor</i>
Bullfrog	<i>Lithobates catesbeianus</i>
Northern Green Frog	<i>Lithobates clamitans melanota</i>
Northern Leopard Frog	<i>Lithobates pipiens</i>
Eastern Spiny Softshell	<i>Apalone s. spinifera</i>
Common Snapping Turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>
Western Painted Turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta bellii</i>
Northern Map Turtle	<i>Graptemys geographica</i>
Ouchita Map Turtle	<i>Graptemys ouachitensis</i>
False Map Turtle	<i>G. p. pseudogeographica</i>
Red-eared Slider	<i>Trachemys scripta elegans</i>
Northern Watersnake	<i>Nerodia s. sipedon</i>
Dekay's Brownsnake	<i>Storeria dekayi</i>
Eastern Gartersnake	<i>Thamnophis s. sirtalis</i>

**TABLE 3  
VISUAL ENCOUNTER SURVEY RESULTS  
NORTHERN POND  
RYMAK COMMERCIAL/TRAVEL PLAZA  
MAY 27 THROUGH JUNE 17, 2025**

Date	Species						
	Aspi	Cser	Cpic	Ggeo	Gouc	Gpse	Tscr
05/28/25			2	1			
05/29/25			9	10	1	1	7
05/30/25	2	4	13	13			17
05/31/25	1	1	12	8		1	4
06/01/25			10	11			9
06/02/25			9	7	3	2	
06/03/25			3	3		2	
06/04/25			5	2			
06/05/25		1	11	15	1		
06/06/25			10	10			
06/07/25			8	9		1	
06/08/25			6	5			
06/09/25			5	5			
06/10/25	2		6	7			5
06/11/25			4	3			1
06/12/25	1		5	10			
06/13/25			5	5			1
06/14/25			>10	>10			1
06/15/25			5	7			2
06/16/25	1		2	3			1
06/17/25			2	8			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>&gt;142</b>	<b>&gt;152</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>50</b>
* Aspi = Eastern Spiny Softshell, Cser = Common Snapping Turtle, Cpic = Western Painted Turtle, Ggeo = Northern Map Turtle, Gouc = Ouchita Map Turtle, Gpse = False Map Turtle, Tscr = Red-eared Slider							

**TABLE 4  
VISUAL ENCOUNTER SURVEY RESULTS  
SOUTHERN SLOUGH  
RYMAK COMMERCIAL/TRAVEL PLAZA  
MAY 27 THROUGH JUNE 17, 2025**

Date	Species						
	Aspi	Cser	Cpic	Ggeo	Gouc	Gpse	Tscr
05/28/25			1				1
05/29/25		2	>50	6			10
05/30/25	1	1	>20	4			5
05/31/25		1	>50	9			
06/01/25			>50	2			4
06/02/25	1		>30	7			3
06/03/25		2	>20	1			1
06/04/25			>10	2			1
06/05/25	1	4	>50	10			11
06/06/25			>40	5			
06/07/25		1	>30				
06/08/25		1	>20				
06/09/25		1	>20	2			2
06/10/25			>10				
06/11/25			>20	2			
06/12/25			>15	2			
06/13/25	1		>40				
06/14/25			>20				3
06/15/25			>50				
06/16/25			>40				1
06/17/25			>40				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>&gt;626</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>
* Aspi = Eastern Spiny Softshell, Cser = Common Snapping Turtle, Cpic = Western Painted Turtle, Ggeo = Northern Map Turtle, Gouc = Ouchita Map Turtle, Gpse = False Map Turtle, Tscr = Red-eared Slider							

Nesting Surveys

No SGCN turtle species were encountered via 75.9 person hours of daily Nesting Surveys over 21 days (average of 3.45 survey hours per date through the course of the study). Potential nesting habitats were relatively open and easy to survey, even at a distance with binoculars and ultra-zoom cameras. Eighty-two (82) depredated turtle nests were encountered within the study area. Primary nesting areas included the onsite meadow and gravel road as well as offsite (within 300-foot buffer study area) open edges along the Northern Pond and Southern Slough. Study area nest predation was substantial from meso-predators, with Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) and Coyote (*Canis latrans*) observed on several occasions waiting for nesting female turtles to finish. Only two active nests (both Western Painted Turtles) observed by the surveyors were not depredated through the course of the study. A total of 35 turtles (five species all considered “common”) were observed actively nesting through the course of the study (Table 5). Twenty-two (22) female turtles of the same five species observed actively nesting in the study area were also observed walking through the study area but not actively engaged in nesting. No Nesting Surveys were conducted on the final day of the study, which was a trap check date only.

**TABLE 5  
NESTING TURTLE SURVEY SUMMARY  
RYMAK COMMERCIAL/TRAVEL PLAZA  
MAY 27 THROUGH JUNE 17 2025**

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NUMBER OF OBSERVED NESTING FEMALES	NESTING HABITAT LOCATION(S)
Eastern Spiny Softshell	<i>Apalone s. spinifera</i>	1	Open Edge of Southern Slough
Common Snapping Turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	4	Open Edge of Northern Pond, Open Edge of Southern Slough, Onsite Meadow
Western Painted Turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta bellii</i>	14	Open Edge of Southern Slough, Onsite Meadow
Northern Map Turtle	<i>Graptemys geographica</i>	14	Open Edge of Southern Slough, Onsite Meadow
Red-eared Slider	<i>Trachemys scripta elegans</i>	2	Open Edge of Northern Pond, Open Edge of Southern Slough

### Trapping Surveys

No SGCN turtles were found during the trapping study. Ten (10) baited traps were active for a total of 4,800 trap hours (May 29 – June 18, 2025; 20 trap nights). Five (5) species of turtles were captured totaling 175 captures (Table 6). All species captured are considered common/stable. The ten traps resulted in an average of 8.75 turtles captured per day (range: 1-20). All trapped turtles were released unharmed near the point of capture after appropriate data and representative photographs were collected (note, not all individuals were photographed). No turtles appeared sickly or had recent injuries and no in-trap mortality was observed during the trapping study.

**TABLE 6  
TURTLE TRAPPING SURVEY SUMMARY  
RYMAK COMMERCIAL/TRAVEL PLAZA  
MAY 29 THROUGH JUNE 18, 2025**

DATE	SPECIES*				
	Aspi	Cser	Cpic	Ggeo	Tscr
05/29/25		1	2	1	1
05/30/25		1	1		1
05/31/25	1	1	5		2
06/01/25		1	3	1	
06/02/25		3	2		1
06/03/25		2	3	1	1
06/04/25	2	3	5		1
06/05/25	3	2	5	1	
06/06/25	1	1	6	1	1
06/07/25	1	1	4		
06/08/25		2	2		
06/09/25	1	12	5	1	1
06/10/25	1		14		
06/11/25	1	5	6		
06/12/25		3	3		
06/13/25		1			
06/14/25		4	1		
06/15/25	1	3	3		2
06/16/25		6	7		
06/17/25	1	1	8		
06/18/25			6		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>
* Aspi = Eastern Spiny Softshell, Cser = Common Snapping Turtle, Cpic = Western Painted Turtle, Ggeo = Northern Map Turtle, Tscr = Red-eared Slider					

## V. SUMMARY OPINION

Qualified Herpetologists from Skelly and Loy conducted a detailed study for SGCN Turtles at the proposed Rymak Commercial/Travel Plaza from May 27 to June 18, 2025. Despite the intensive survey effort that included Visual Encounter, Nesting, and Trapping Survey techniques, no species of SGCN Turtles were encountered; thus, it is reasonable to assume the probable absence of the Blanding's Turtle and Midland Smooth Softshell from the proposed project area. Due to the determination of probable absence, it is anticipated that no additional avoidance and minimization measures or additional coordination relating to SGCN turtles will be required for this project.

## VI. REFERENCES

Ernst, C. H., M. F. Hershey, and R. W. Barbour. 1974. A new coding system for hard-shelled turtles. *Trans. Kentucky Acad. Sci.* 35:27–28.

Hoefler, S., D.T. McKnight, S. Allen-Ankins, E.J. Nordberg, L. Schwarzkopf. 2024. Diverse Methods for Diverse Systems: A Large-Scale Comparison of Reptile Sampling Methods. *Herpetologica* 80 (1), 40-50.

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## Appendix A: Project Location Map



**Project Study Area**

**Legend**

 Project Study Area



DATA SOURCE(S):  
USGS Quadrangle - Davenport East, Illinois

Project No.:	JN257152
Date:	July 2025
Drawn By:	DRB
Reviewed By:	BR

**SKELLY AND LOY**  
A Terracon Company

449 Eisenhower Blvd #300      Harrisburg, PA 17111  
PH. (717) 232-0593      terracon.com

Project Location
Milan Bottoms / Bally West Development ± 10 Acres of Land Rock Island, Rock Island County, Illinois

Exhibit
1

## Appendix B: Study Area Map



**Legend**

-  Study Area
-  300-Foot Buffer



DATA SOURCE(S):  
Google Earth Image

Project No.:	JN257152
Date:	July 2025
Drawn By:	DRB
Reviewed By:	BR

**SKELLY AND LOY**  
A **terracon** Company

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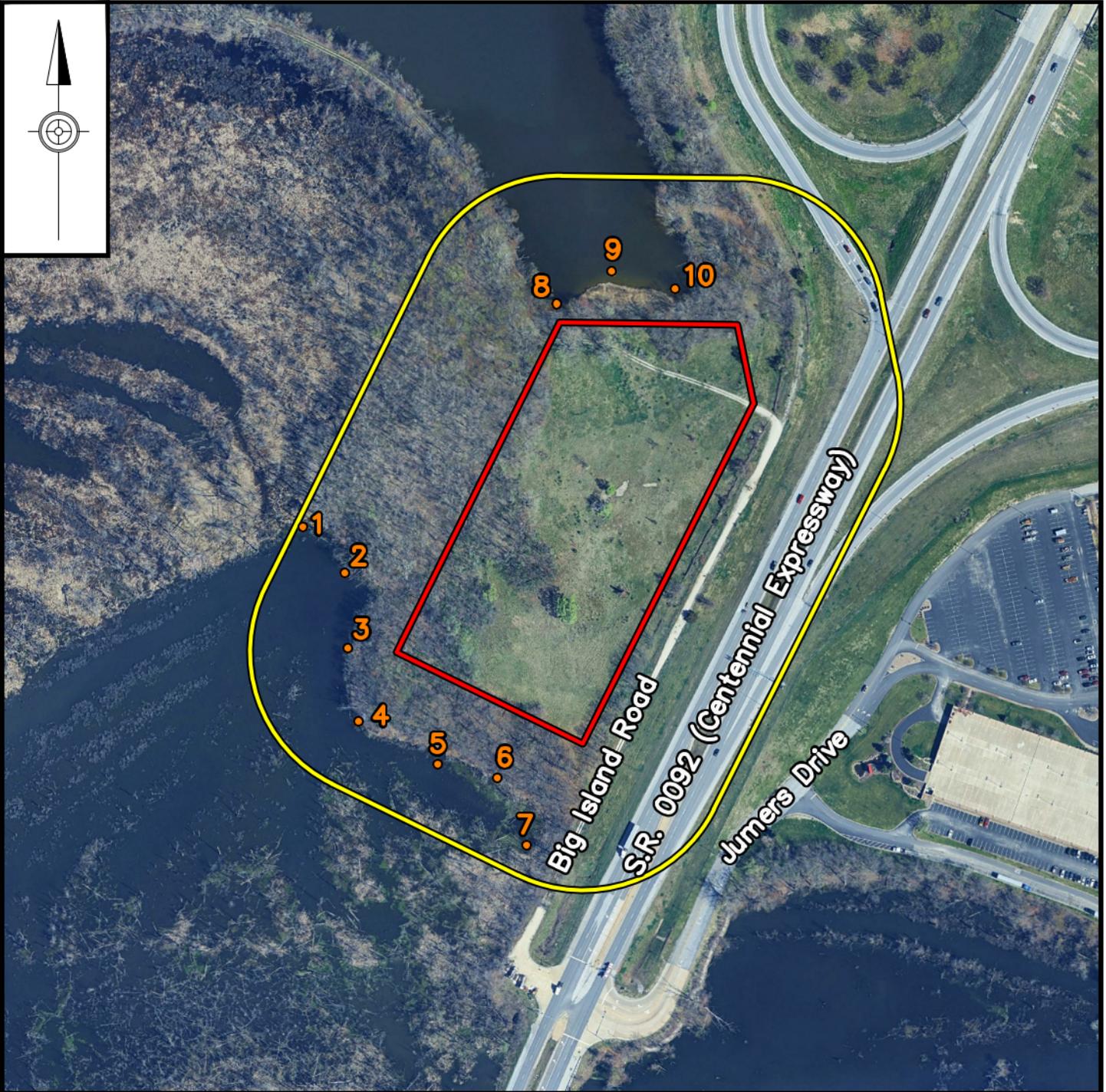
**300 Foot Study Area Map**

Milan Bottoms / Bally West Development  
± 10 Acres of Land  
Rock Island, Rock Island County, Illinois

**Exhibit**

**2**

## Appendix C: Trap Location Map



**Legend**

-  Study Area
-  300-Foot Buffer
-  Trap Location



DATA SOURCE(S):  
Google Earth Image

Project No.:	JN257152
Date:	July 2025
Drawn By:	DRB
Reviewed By:	BR

**SKELLY AND LOY**  
A  Company

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**Trap Location Map**

Milan Bottoms / Bally West Development  
± 10 Acres of Land  
Rock Island, Rock Island County, Illinois

Exhibit

**3**

## Appendix D: Photograph Log

Photo  
1



Photo  
2



**Photograph 1:** Northern Pond SGCN Turtle Study Area within 300-ft Buffer Of Proposed Project Area  
**Direction:** North

**Photograph 2:** Northern Pond SGCN Turtle Study Area within 300-ft Buffer Of Proposed Project Area  
**Direction:** South

Photo  
3



Photo  
4



**Photograph 3:** Representative Land Cover / Land Use Conditions Within The Proposed Project Area

**Direction:** East

**Photograph 4:** Representative Land Cover / Land Use Conditions Within The Proposed Project Area

**Direction:** East

Photo  
5



Photo  
6



**Photograph 5:** Example Of Bottomland Woodland Found Within The Study Area

**Direction:** North

**Photograph 6:** Example Of Turtle Nesting Habitat Along Southern Slough Bank

**Direction:** West

Photo  
7



Photo  
8



**Photograph 7:** Northern Map Turtle Basking In Southern Slough - May 29, 2025  
**Direction:** West

**Photograph 8:** Red-eared Sliders And A Western Painted Turtle Basking In the Northern Pond - May 29, 2025  
**Direction:** North

Photo  
9



Photo  
10



**Photograph 9:** Northern Map Turtle and Western Painted Turtle Basking In Northern Pond - May 28, 2025  
**Direction:** North

**Photograph 10:** Northern Map Turtle Nesting In Onsite Meadow - May 28, 2025

Photo  
11



Photo  
12



**Photograph 11:** Female Spiny Softshell Attempting To Nest On Bank Of Southern Slough - June 4, 2025

**Photograph 12:** Common Snapping Turtle Attempting Nesting On Bank Of Southern Slough - June 4, 2025

Photo  
13



Photo  
14



**Photograph 13:** Nesting Western Painted Turtle In Onsite Meadow - June 1, 2025

**Photograph 14:** Small, Red-eared Slider On Bank Of Northern Pond - June 1, 2025

Photo  
15



Photo  
16



**Photograph 15:** Depredated Apparent Western Painted Turtle Nest – June 2, 2026

**Photograph 16:** Depredated Spheroid Turtle Nest On Bank Of Northern Pond – June 3, 2025

Photo  
17



Photo  
18



**Photograph 17:** Common Snapping Turtle Nest In Southern Slough – June 2, 2025

**Photograph 18:** Eastern Gartersnake Found In Onsite Meadow – June 3, 2025

Photo  
19



Photo  
20



**Photograph 19:** Northern Leopard Frog Found Within Onsite Meadow - June 11, 2025

**Photograph 20:** DeKay's Brownsnake Found Within Onsite Meadow - June 12, 2025

Photo  
21



Photo  
22



**Photograph 21:** Southern Slough Trap #1

**Direction:** West

**Photograph 22:** Southern Slough Trap #6

**Direction:** South

Photo  
23



Photo  
24



**Photograph 23:** Example Of Adult Western Painted Turtle Caught In Northern Pond Trap #9  
**Direction:** West

**Photograph 24:** Example of Common Snapping Turtle As Found In Northern Pond Trap #10

## Appendix E: EcoCAT Correspondence



April 22, 2025

Helene Roberts  
Office Manager, Townsend Engineering  
2224 East 12th Street,  
Davenport, IA52803

**RE: RI Casino 10 Acres  
Consultation Program  
EcoCAT Review #2512041  
Rock Island County**

Dear Mrs. Roberts:

The Department has received your submission for this project for the purposes of consultation pursuant to the *Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act* [520 ILCS 10/11], the *Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act* [525 ILCS 30/17], and Title 17 *Illinois Administrative Code Part 1075*.

The proposed action consists of the construction of a a gas station and commercial developments with associated utilities, paving, and pedestrian access-ways (41.461°, -90.618).

The Illinois Natural Heritage Database shows the following protected resources may be in the vicinity of the project location:

**Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI)**  
**Mississippi River - Andalusia Slough**

**State Threatened or Endangered Species**  
**Higgins Eye (*Lampsilis higginsii*)**  
**Butterfly (*Ellipsaria lineolata*)**  
**Blanding's Turtle<sup>1</sup> (*Emydoidea blandingii*)**

Due to the project scope and proximity to protected resources the Department offers the following comments and recommends the following actions be taken to avoid adversely impacting listed species and natural areas in the vicinity of the project:

---

<sup>1</sup> This species was not indicated to be in the vicinity of the project by the Illinois Natural Heritage Database, however, it was added to the list of species being reviewed for this project based on historic records in the project area, potential suitable habitat in the project area, and new information provided to the Department.

**Mississippi River - Andalusia Slough INAI Site**

EcoCAT indicates this project is in the vicinity of Mississippi River - Andalusia Slough INAI Site. The Department recommends impacts to Mississippi River - Andalusia Slough INAI Site be avoided, however, if impacts cannot be avoided, the Department recommends the following to minimize impacts to this site:

- Any required night lighting should follow International Dark-Sky Association's (IDA) Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting to minimize the effect of light pollution on wildlife: [Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting | DarkSky International](#)
- Soil erosion and sediment control BMPs should be implemented and properly maintained. If erosion control blanket is to be used, wildlife-friendly plastic-free blanket should be used to prevent the entanglement of native wildlife. If wildlife-friendly plastic-free blanket cannot be used, then the plastic erosion control blanket should be removed once vegetation is established.
- Oil-water separators be installed on all parking lot drains and regularly maintained.
- Naturalized permeable basins and swales should be included in the design.
- Good housekeeping practices should be implemented and maintained during and after construction to prevent trash and other debris from inadvertently blowing or washing into nearby natural areas.
- Exclusionary silt fence should be installed around the project site before work begins to prevent wildlife from entering the construction area.
- Permanent exclusionary barrier should be installed to avoid impacts to wildlife from day-to-day operations on-site.
- All equipment, including but not limited to boots, tools, equipment, tires, and treads, should be cleaned of all debris prior to entry of the project area in order to avoid spreading of exotic or invasive plant seeds into the INAI site.
- A long-term invasive species management program should be considered to minimize the spread of invasive species.
- The project proponent should consider native plantings in the landscape design, when feasible.

**Higgins Eye and Butterfly Mussels**

The Department has determined that adverse impacts to these species are unlikely.

Please note that due to the federal status of the Higgins Eye, and its potential occurrence in the project area, coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be necessary and is separate from this consultation and Illinois State regulations.

**Blanding's Turtle**

Based on historic records, suitable habitat in the project area, new information provided to the Department, and the lack of recent survey data the Department recommends the following:

- The Department recommends that a survey for Blanding's Turtle be conducted to determine if the turtle is present within the project area. The principal investigator should obtain a Herptile and T&E Permit from the Department to conduct such work. A survey

proposal should be sent to this office for concurrence on methods, along with the results for final comment.

- Upon completion of the survey, if no Blanding's Turtles were identified in the project vicinity, the Department would still recommend all on-site personnel should be educated about this species and be instructed to contact the Department immediately if they are encountered in the project area (618-694-3398). Fliers with photos of adult and juvenile Blanding's Turtles, and life-history information, should be provided to personnel.
- Subsequently, if the Blanding's Turtle is identified during the survey, further coordination with the Department is required as additional avoidance BMPs may be recommended or the Department may recommend the project proponent seek an Incidental Take Authorization (ITA) pursuant to Part 1080 and Section 5.5 of the *Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act* for the Blanding's Turtle. All questions pertaining to ITA should be directed to the ITA coordinator, Heather Osborn (Heather.Osborn@Illinois.gov). Visit the link below for information on the ITA process: [Incidental Take Authorizations - Species Conservation \(illinois.gov\)](#)
- Alternatively, the applicant may assume the presence and potential adverse effects to the Blanding's Turtle and seek an Incidental Take Authorization (ITA) pursuant to Part 1080 and Section 5.5 of the *Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act* to avoid potential liability.

Please note that that protections for Bald Eagles and migratory birds fall to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) through authorities granted under the *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* and *Migratory Bird Treaty Act*. Coordination with the USFWS may be required.

Given the above recommendations are adopted, the Department has determined that impacts to these protected resources are unlikely. The Department has determined impacts to other protected resources in the vicinity of the project location are also unlikely.

*In accordance with 17 Ill. Adm. Code 1075.40(h), please notify the Department of your decision regarding these recommendations.*

Consultation on the part of the Department is closed, unless the applicant desires additional information or advice related to this proposal. Consultation for Part 1075 is valid for two years unless new information becomes available which was not previously considered; the proposed action is modified; or additional species, essential habitat, or Natural Areas are identified in the vicinity. If the action has not been implemented within two years of the date of this letter, or any of the above listed conditions develop, a new consultation is necessary.

The natural resource review reflects the information existing in the Illinois Natural Heritage Database at the time of the project submittal and should not be regarded as a final statement on the project being considered, nor should it be a substitute for detailed site surveys or field surveys required for environmental assessments. If additional protected resources are unexpectedly encountered during the project's implementation, the applicant must comply with the applicable statutes and regulations.

This letter does not serve as permission to take any listed or endangered species. As a reminder, no take of an endangered species is permitted without an Incidental Take Authorization or the

required permits. Anyone who takes a listed or endangered species without an Incidental Take Authorization or required permit may be subject to criminal and/or civil penalties pursuant to the *Illinois Endangered Species Act*, the *Fish and Aquatic Life Act*, the *Wildlife Code* and other applicable authority.

Please contact me with any questions about this review.

Sincerely,



Bradley Hayes

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Division of Real Estate Services and Consultation  
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