



Habitat Friendly Solar Site Assessment Form for Established Plantings (after year 3)

For solar companies and local governments to meet Habitat Friendly Standards
5-07-2021

1) % OF SITE DOMINATED BY NATIVE SPECIES COVER (wildflowers, grasses, sedges, shrubs, trees)

- 5-25% +5 points
- 26-50% +15 points
- 51-75% +20 points
- 76+ +25 points

Total points

2) PERCENT OF SITE DOMINATED BY WILDFLOWERS (not grasses and sedges)

- 5- 8 % +10 points
- 9-16 % +15 points
- 17-25 % +20 points
- 26-34 % +25 points
- 35+ +30 points

Total points

3) COVER DIVERSITY (# of plant species with >1% cover)

- 1-9 species +5 points
- 10-19 species +15 points
- 20-25 species +25 points
- 26 or more species +30 points

Total points

Exclude invasive/noxious weeds from species totals.

4) SEASONS WITH AT LEAST 3 BLOOMING SPECIES PRESENT (check/add all that apply)

- Spring (April-May) +10 points
- Summer (June-August) +5 points
- Fall (September-October) +5 points

Total points

See BWSR [Pollinator Toolbox](#) for Information about bloom season.

5) AVAILABLE HABITAT COMPONENTS WITHIN SITE OR WITHIN .25 MILES (check/add all that apply)

- Native bunch grasses for nesting +3 points
- Native flowering shrubs +4 points
- Clean, perennial water sources +3 points

Total points

6) AVAILABLE HABITAT COMPONENTS ON-SITE (check/add all that apply)

- At least 1% milkweed cover +5 points
- Detailed management plan developed (see notes) with funding/contract to implement +15 points
- Signage legible at forty or more feet stating pollinator friendly solar habitat (see notes for sign numbers) +5 points
- Constructed and maintained nesting habitat feature/s (bee blocks, etc.) +5 points

Total points

7) INSECTICIDE RISK

- Planned on-site insecticide use. (excluding buildings/electrical boxes, etc.) -25 points
- Communication with local chemical applicators/neighbors about need to prevent drift from adjacent areas. +10 points

Total points

Grand Total

Gold Standard - Provides Exceptional Habitat 85+
Meets Pollinator Standards 70

Project Name _____

Vegetation Consultant: _____

Project County: _____

Project Size: _____

Evaluation Date: _____

See notes related to the questions on the back side of this form.

Notes:

Estimates of percent “cover” should be based on “absolute cover” (the percent of the ground surface that is covered by a vertical projection of foliage as viewed from above). To measure cover diversity use plots, and/or transects in addition to meander searches. Surveys can be conducted April through October, though the highest diversity will be visible during the summer.

All project plans must include detailed vegetation establishment and management specifications (and detailed long-term management planning is encouraged) to ensure the success of projects (see sample specifications on [BWSR’s Habitat Friendly Solar Webpage](#)).

Question 1 - The [Minnesota DNR List](#) should be used to determine if a species is native. Native species can include wildflowers, graminoids (grasses, sedges, rushes), shrubs and trees.

Question 2- Wildflowers in question 2 refer to “forbs” (flowering plants that are not woody or graminoids such as grasses and sedges) and can include introduced clovers and other non-native species (that are not noxious weeds or invasive species) beneficial to pollinators and located anywhere across the state.

Question 3- Plant diversity adds to wildlife benefits as well as the resiliency of projects. For this question native and non-native species (that are not noxious weeds or invasive species) that establish at the site and have greater than one percent cover can be combined for the total.

Question 4- See BWSR’s [Pollinator Toolbox](#) for a listing of bloom seasons for species. Non-native clovers can be counted as either spring or summer species but not both.

Question 5- The planting of native bunch forming prairie grasses, as well as native flowering shrubs is promoted as part of projects to increase nesting opportunities. It is important that planted bunch grasses are not mowed lower than four inches as part of maintenance activities to prevent damaging them. Any of the habitat components must be within the site or .25 miles of the project for obtaining points.

Question 6- Estimates of milkweed percent cover should be based on milkweed present across the entire site.

To meet requirements for a long-term management plan projects must provide information about:

- Timing of yearly inspections.
- Evidence of funding and a contract for management for at least the first three years.
- A detailed native vegetation establishment plan with detailed instructions for contractors.
- Detailed maintenance schedule for the first three years of the project listing timing of establishment.
- Mowing/trimming, spot herbicide application, prescribed grazing or other management actions.
- Proposed maintenance schedule for years four and beyond.
- List of weed species that may become problematic at the site and how they will be managed if needed.
- Maintenance needs for any constructed nest habitat for the project.

Visible signage can play an important role in communicating the multiple benefits of Habitat Friendly Solar. Signs must be legible at forty or more feet in locations where the public can view the signs and state that the project is a Habitat Friendly Solar project. At least one sign is required every 20 acres. up to a maximum of 5 signs.

Question 7- It is important that seeds treated with insecticides are not used at project sites, or that sites are not sprayed with insecticides. To meet requirements for communication/registration with local landowners/applicators about the need to prevent drift from adjacent areas, information provided can be in the form of email communication or copies of letters. Communication must be provided to all landowners adjacent to the property including municipalities.

Submit completed form and a sufficient number of images to represent the vegetation across the site. At least three images are recommended for projects under 50 acres. Establishing photo reference points is also recommended. Submit the materials to local government staff with decision making authority for the project or BWSR at dan.shaw@state.mn.us. If points are awarded for communication about insecticide risk (see question 7 above) include copies of the communication to pesticide applicators. If points are awarded for a long-term management plan include a copy of the plan that lists the required information (see question 6 above) unless the plan is already on file with the agency reviewing this information.