



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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APR 12 2006

Rini Ghosh
Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Washington, D.C. 20423

Received
4/24/06

Dear Ms. Ghosh:

FD 34284

Consultation # 2-15-03-I-0276

This responds to your March 13, 2006, Notice of Intent to prepare a supplemental draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed 7-mile (11-kilometer) rail line connecting the proposed Vulcan Quarry to an existing Union Pacific rail line in Medina County, Texas (Surface Transportation Board (STB) Finance Docket No. 34284). We previously commented on the draft EIS regarding potential impacts to the endangered golden-cheeked warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) and Edwards Aquifer species.

We understand the supplemental EIS is being prepared to address three new alternatives. It appears from our review of 2004 aerial photos that two of the new alternatives (the Medina County Environmental Action Association [MCEAA] Medina Dam alternative and the Southwestern Gulf Railroad (SGR) Modified Medina Dam Route) cross a vegetated area which could support habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler or the endangered black-capped vireo (*Vireo atricapilla*). To our knowledge, these areas (except that area surrounding the rock loading loop for the proposed alternative) have not been surveyed or otherwise assessed for the presence of these two species.

In addition, the new alternatives should be assessed for potential impacts to the Edwards Aquifer. Deterioration of water quality and/or depletion of water quantity from Medina County may affect the following eight species¹ dependent upon the Aquifer and associated springs:

Comal Springs dryopid beetle	<i>Stygoparnus comalensis</i>
Comal Springs riffle beetle	<i>Heterelmis comalensis</i>
Fountain darter	<i>Etheostoma fonticola</i>
Peck's cave amphipod	<i>Stygobromus pecki</i>
San Marcos gambusia	<i>Gambusia georgei</i>
San Marcos salamander	<i>Eurycea nana</i>
Texas blind salamander	<i>Typhlomolge rathbuni</i>
Texas wild-rice	<i>Zizania texana</i>

¹ All species are listed as endangered, except the San Marcos salamander, which is threatened.

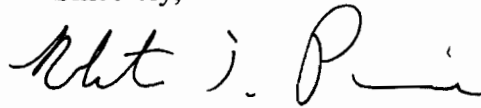
Activities that may negatively affect water quality in the recharge zone include:

- human activities
- alteration of recharge features (destruction, plugging, etc.)
- land-based oil and chemical spills
- leaking underground storage tanks
- reduction in the water level of the Aquifer.

To our knowledge, this area has not been surveyed for the presence of recharge features.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the project. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Dawn Whitehead at 512-490-0057, extension 222.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. T. Pine", written in a cursive style.

Robert T. Pine
Supervisor

cc: USFWS, Division of Habitat Resource Conservation, Arlington, VA
DOI, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance, Washington, DC
USFWS, Region 2, Environmental Contaminants, Albuquerque, NM
USFWS, Texas State Administrator