

EI-17918

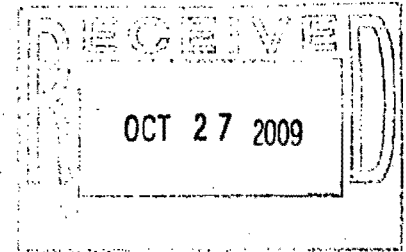


United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Pennsylvania Field Office
315 South Allen Street, Suite 322
State College, Pennsylvania 16801-4850

October 26, 2009



Kevin Starnier
Skelly and Loy, Inc.
449 Eisenhower Boulevard
Suite 300
Harrisburg, PA 17111

RE: USFWS Project #2010-0012

Dear Mr. Starnier:

This is in response to your letter of September 30, 2009, requesting information about federally listed and proposed, endangered and threatened species within the area affected by the proposed railroad reactivation of the Beech Creek Branch line, or the local road system upgrade alternative should the railroad reactivation be denied, located in Wallacetown/Phillipsburg and Winburne in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania. The following comments are provided pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) to ensure the protection of endangered and threatened species.

The project is within the range of the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a species that is federally listed as endangered. Indiana bats hibernate in caves and abandoned mines during the winter months (November through March), and use a variety of upland, wetland and riparian habitats during the spring, summer and fall. Indiana bats usually roost in dead or living trees with exfoliating bark, crevices or cavities. Female Indiana bats form nursery colonies under the exfoliating bark of dead or living trees, such as shagbark hickory, black birch, red oak, white oak, and sugar maple, in upland or riparian areas.

Land-clearing, especially of forested areas, may adversely affect Indiana bats by killing, injuring or harassing roosting bats, and by removing or reducing the quality of foraging and roosting habitat. Therefore, to determine whether the proposed project will affect Indiana bats, we will need additional project information, including site plans and a detailed project description, that describe how much forest disturbance will occur (area, tree species, and size classes).

This response relates only to endangered or threatened species under our jurisdiction, based on an office review of the proposed project's location. No field inspection of the project area has been conducted by this office. Consequently, this letter is not to be construed as addressing potential Service concerns under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act or other authorities.

To avoid potential delays in reviewing your project, please use the above-referenced USFWS project tracking number in any future correspondence regarding this project.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Pamela Shellenberger of my staff at 814-234-4090.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy Tibbott".

Cindy Tibbott
Acting Supervisor