

Attachment C

New Hampshire Fish & Game Letter, dated 2/11/16





New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

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Glenn Normandeau
Executive Director

February 11, 2016

Sherrie Trefry
Director of Energy and Environmental Services
2 Bedford Farms Drive
Suite 200
Bedford, NH 03110-6532

RE: NHB14-4809 – Merrimack Valley Reliability Project (MVRP)

Dear Ms. Trefry:

This letter is a follow-up to NHB14-4809, the Fish and Game Department (NHF&G) review of the Merrimack Valley Reliability Project (MVRP). The MVRP consists of the installation of a new 345kV electric transmission line within an existing right-of-way, extending from a substation in Tewksbury, MA to the Scobie Pond substation in Londonderry, NH. In NH, the project would go through the towns of Pelham, Windham, Hudson, Derry, and Londonderry. Portions of the line will require widening of the existing right-of-way (tree clearing). The project includes installation of new transmission structures, and will require relocation of existing lines in some locations.

NHB14-4809 indicated the presence of several known plant, wildlife, and natural community records located in the vicinity of the project area, including ten rare plant species, two exemplary natural communities, one invertebrate species, and five wildlife species. (Note: this memo only addresses rare wildlife, as plants and natural communities is under the jurisdiction of NHB)

Five species were identified on the NHB Datacheck Results Letter as listed below:

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Listed Status</u>
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Endangered
Grasshopper Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	Threatened
Northern Black Racer	<i>Coluber constrictor constrictor</i>	Threatened
Spotted Turtle	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	Threatened
Wood Turtle	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	Special Concern
Brook Floater	<i>Alasmidonta varicosa</i>	Endangered

After consultation with NHF&G, VHB proposed surveys for Blanding's turtle, spotted turtle, wood turtle, northern black racer, and New England Cottontail. Following the federal listing of the northern long-eared bat (NLEB) *Myotis septentrionalis* as endangered, VHB also proposed acoustic monitoring surveys for the NLEB.

After completion of the surveys for northern black racer, Blanding's turtle, spotted turtle, wood turtle, and NLEB, VHB provided NHF&G with survey results on December 16, 2015. In summary, no black racers were observed, four spotted turtles were observed, and no NLEB were identified. Four bat species of special concern were identified during acoustic surveys. Based on the survey results from 2015, an additional season of northern black racer survey was deemed necessary. However, pre-construction turtle nesting sweeps, exclusion techniques during construction, and environmental oversight are sufficient Best Management Practices (BMPs) to avoid and minimize impacts to turtles during Project construction. NHF&G will work with the Applicants to determine which BMPs are required depending on the timing of Project construction.

NHF&G has reviewed the 2016 wildlife survey protocols developed by VHB for northern black racer and New England cottontail. Survey protocols for 2016 were submitted on November 12, 2015. Comments were sent to VHB on December 10, 2015. VHB revised the protocols based on the NHF&G comments and resubmitted on December 16, 2015. Further coordination occurred on February 1, 2016.

Based on the survey protocols developed by VHB, protocols for New England Cottontail and black racer are adequate for the MVRP project and are approved by the NHF&G. Following 2016 surveys, NHF&G will work with the Applicants to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to any identified rare, threatened, or endangered species.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Marchand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Michael Marchand

Cc:

Heidi Holman, NHFG

Carol Henderson, NHFG