



United States Department of the Interior



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

December 21, 2006

Ms. Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
(ATTN: Alicia Mullins)
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Ms. Franovich:

This responds to your letter dated November 15, 2006, requesting information on fish and wildlife resources within the area affected by the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station located near Berwick, in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. PPL Susquehanna, LLC, is requesting the renewal of its operating license for a period of 20 years beyond the expiration of the current license term. This proposed action includes the continued operation and maintenance of existing plant facilities and transmission lines. 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 federally endangered and threatened species, and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*) to ensure protection of other fish and wildlife resources.

Federally Listed and Proposed Species

The proposed project is located within the range of the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a species that is federally listed as endangered. Due to the proximity of the project area to a known Indiana bat hibernaculum, removal of trees and forested areas within the project area could result in the direct take of roosting Indiana bats, which could be injured or killed when trees are cut. Studies have found that forested areas located within five miles of hibernacula provide important foraging and roosting habitat for Indiana bats, especially during the fall and spring, when bats are building up their fat reserves prior to and after hibernation. Additionally, female maternity colonies and individual male bats may be found in the vicinity of hibernacula throughout the summer months. If any tree-cutting activities are proposed in the future, or the proposed scope of the project changes, further consultation with this office will be necessary.

Aquatic Resources

The National Wetland Inventory maps indicate that wetlands occur within the boundaries of the project. Although NWI maps were prepared using aerial photography, and are therefore not always completely accurate, the Soil Survey for Luzerne County also indicates that wetlands are likely to occur there. Holly silt loam (hydric); Pope and Linden soils (hydric inclusions); Oquaga and Lordstown Channery silt loam (hydric inclusions) and Braceville gravelly loam (hydric inclusions) occur within this area. These soil types are typically found in depressions, pot holes, and bottomlands, and may indicate the presence of wetlands on the site. Any final determination of whether wetlands are present on the proposed project site should include a site visit by a qualified individual trained in wetland identification. Furthermore, the proposed project area includes perennial streams. We recommend that the applicant avoid, and minimize any unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources.

Work in streams and wetlands requires permits from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and/or the Army Corps of Engineers. We suggest that the applicant contact the DEP and the Corps for information on permit requirements should any new construction occur in wetland areas. By copy of this letter, we are informing these agencies of the project. Please be advised that the Service generally recommends that the Corps and DEP not grant permits to destroy streams and wetlands. If any construction is proposed in the future, or the proposed scope of the project changes, further consultation with this office may be necessary.

Other Concerns

We understand that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is in the process of preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement which will analyze environmental issues associated with this project. We recommend that, at a minimum, the document address: the effects of thermal releases, fish impingement and entrainment (including the use of appropriate draw rates and mesh size), transmission line management and routing (including right-of way contaminant and wildlife management, erosion control, forest fragmentation, and right-of-way maintenance), cumulative impacts (to avian, terrestrial, and aquatic resources), avian strikes (on transmission lines and cooling towers, as has been the case in the past), and raptor electrocution.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Jennifer Kagel of my staff at 814-234-4090.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Densmore", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Densmore
Supervisor