



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
GOVERNOR

EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

October 15, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jason Dilday, Environmental Specialist

CC: Greg Blakeney, Project Development Engineer

FROM: Melissa Miller, Environmental Biologist

SUBJECT: Section 7 Biological Conclusion for the federally endangered Virginia big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus*) on TIP # B- 5177 in Watauga County

A habitat assessment for Virginia big-eared bats was conducted on August 26, 2009 by NCDOT biologists. The bridge crosses Middle Fork Creek and is constructed of steel and timber that is coated with creosote. The bridge height is approximately ten feet from the water. The creek flows in front of the entrance to Tweetsie Railroad. The surrounding area is 100% commercially developed with any grassy areas very well maintained. Traffic was moderate at the time of our site visit but certainly during peak park hours it is probably nearly constant (the park was closed at the time of our visit). There were no caves or mines located within the project area and there was no evidence of bats using the bridge. A review of North Carolina Natural Heritage Program database (updated July 2009) indicated that the two closest Virginia big-eared bat occurrences are ~ 11.6 miles away (Watauga County) and ~10.4 miles away (Avery County). The bridge height and construction type is not the type preferred by bats for roosting. No roosting habitat was found within the project area.

Based on the above information, this project has a biological conclusion of **NO EFFECT** on federally endangered bats. This biological conclusion does not require confirmation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

If you need any additional information, please contact me at (919) 431-6745.

Investigator Qualifications

Investigator: Melissa Miller
Education: B.S. Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, North Carolina State University
Experience: Environmental Biologist, NCDOT, February 2005-present.
Assistant Wildlife Biologist, Howell Woods Environmental Learning
Center, Four Oaks, NC, January 1999-February 2005.
Expertise: Section 7 field investigations, protected species (terrestrial/aquatic) surveys.

Investigator: Heather Renninger
Education: B.S. Ecology/Environmental Biology, Appalachian State University
Experience: Environmental Specialist, NCDOT, February 2007- present
Environmental Biologist, H.W. Lochner, Inc., 2003-2007
Biologist, Earth Tech, Inc., 2000-2003
Expertise: Section 7 field investigations and documentation, benthic macroinvertebrate
collection, 401/404 permitting, protected species (terrestrial/aquatic) surveys,
NEPA documentation, wetland delineation, stream restoration, invasive
species, avian ecology and behavior.