

DATE: 3/22/2023

TO: File

FROM: Garry Wright, DEO

SUBJECT: BR-0086 2023 Updated Red-cockaded Woodpecker Updated Survey

Biological Conclusion: **No Effect**

A North Carolina National Heritage Program (NCNHP) data explorer query for the BR-0086 project area was run on March 20, 2023 and indicated no known populations of red-cockaded woodpeckers within 1.0 mile of the study area. Aerial images were reviewed for pine stands within 0.5 mile of the project study area for potential suitable foraging habitat. Potentially suitable foraging habitat was buffered by a 0.5-mile radius and evaluated for potentially suitable nesting habitat (pine stands over 60 years). The identified potentially suitable nesting habitat was targeted for nest surveys.

A field survey of the potentially suitable nesting habitat was conducted on March 15, 2023. Visual inspection of the project area confirmed that a small amount of suitable RCW foraging and nesting habitat exists within the study area. Field investigations of potential nesting habitat within 1.0 mile of the project study area was conducted, no cavity trees were located.

Although some pine stands in the study area and surrounding half-mile radius are old enough to be considered foraging habitat, the understory consists of tall shrubs and hardwood saplings, and lacks the herbaceous components generally associated with quality foraging habitat. No longleaf pine stands occur within or near the study area; all pine stands are comprised of loblolly pine.

Due to the lack of known occurrences within 1 mile of the study area, the marginal quality of foraging and nesting habitat, and the lack of cavity trees observed within a half-mile radius of the study area, we have determined that the biological conclusion for this species is **No Effect**.