



File Code: 1950

Date: February 22, 2012

Mr. Daniel Belin
Environment and Ecology, Inc.
1501 Lee Highway, Suite 306
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Mr. Belin,

Thank you for your letter of January 30, 2012 explaining the role Ecology and Environment, Inc. (E&E) will have in the analysis for the Northern Pass Transmission Line as a subcontractor for the Department of Energy, and requesting our input on field surveys for this project. As you are aware, the U.S. Forest Service is a cooperating agency on this project because several miles of the proposed route would cross lands managed by the White Mountain National Forest. We appreciate your effort to involve us early and ensure that your surveys will address the resources of concern to the Forest Service.

On January 30, 2012, there was a conference call hosted by E&E to discuss resource surveys in the sections of the existing powerline corridor that are part of the proposed route for this project and cross national forest lands. On that call Leighlan Prout, Forest Wildlife Biologist, and Chris Mattrick, Forest Botanist, discussed existing information, survey protocols, and available data with Angela Gardner, Blythe Mackey, and yourself from E&E, and Travis Beck from SE Group. This letter is to summarize our input on that call and subsequent to the call.

Both Leighlan and Chris are comfortable with the survey protocols E&E proposes to use. The only concern is that this winter has had unusually low snowfall and moderate amounts of rain, ice, and warmth, which has likely affected animal movements and use of habitats. If this is the only year with winter tracking surveys, assuming conditions allow surveys, the results may not be indicative of use in an average year.

On January 30, I sent our list of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species to Blythe Mackey. Those are the species of greatest concern to the Forest Service and the ones that need to be addressed in the environmental analysis and biological evaluation. As agreed on the call, wood turtles are unlikely to occur along the proposed route on national forest lands and surveys for invertebrate species are not necessary as best management practices can be applied to protect them once habitat and project impacts are identified. Bicknell's thrush would be identified by standard breeding bird surveys.

To help with winter tracking surveys, Leighlan posted shapefiles of lynx habitat (including currently suitable and unsuitable habitat), known and potential deer yards, and our forest vegetation data within five miles of the existing powerline right-of-way to an FTP site established by Blythe Mackey to facilitate data transfer between our organizations. She did not post known lynx or marten occurrences, which were discussed on the call, because none were located within five miles of the existing powerline. If tracks are found that might be lynx but



identification is not certain, we ask that you make a reasonable effort to backtrack to try to locate scat or hair that could confirm track identification through DNA analysis. If any samples are collected, provide them to Leighlan Prout in our Campton office so she can send them to the lab for analysis.

As agreed on the call, Leighlan also provided high elevation and permaplot breeding bird transect locations and survey data and our survey forms for vernal pools and deeryards. You do not have to use our forms, but they identify the type of information we usually want for these resources. She did not provide any bat transect or location data, which was discussed on the call, because none were within five miles of the existing powerline. If you would like more information on how the Forest Service has placed acoustic bat detectors to capture data over multiple nights, you can contact Leighlan directly.

As discussed on the call, Chris posted our list of non-native invasive species to your FTP site. The potential for spread of these species will need to be addressed in the environmental analysis for this project. If you find populations of any of these species, please record the species, location, and extent of the population and share that with me so we can include it in our Forest-wide dataset. Chris also posted a form we use to document occurrences, but you can report the information in whatever format works for you.

We will provide stream data in and near the existing right of way. I will inform Blythe when that data is posted on the FTP site. As we discussed, this is the best information we have, but occasionally the data is not complete or accurate so it needs to be field verified. If you find errors or streams that are not on the layer, please share that information with us so we can update our corporate data layer.

Let me know if you intend to conduct heritage resource surveys on national forest lands. I will need to put your specialist in contact with our Forest archeologist to ensure they have any pertinent information from our files.

As summarized here, you should have all the information you need for winter tracking surveys and will soon have the last pieces of information from us related to other resource surveys. We understand that some surveys may not happen this year at the request of the project proponent, Northern Pass LLC. As you are aware, surveys on the WMNF may not occur until you have received a special use permit authorizing the survey work.

If you require any additional information or have questions, please contact me at slemieux@fs.fed.us or 603-536-6222.

Sincerely,



STACY LEMIEUX
Forest NEPA CoordinatorPlanner

cc: Travis Beck, SE Group