



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

April 14, 2017

Tom Chapman
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New England Field Office
70 Commercial Street, Suite 300
Concord, NH 03301-5087

SUBJECT: Northern Pass Transmission Line Project Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation

Dear Mr. Chapman:

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is requesting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to initiate formal consultation for the proposed Northern Pass Transmission Line Project (NPT Project) in the state of New Hampshire. This consultation also will meet the Section 7 requirements associated with this project for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), White Mountain National Forest.

Through the analyses conducted for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the DOE has determined that the NPT Project would result in a likely to adversely affect ESA determination for the Karner blue butterfly (*Lycæides melissa samuelis*). The NEPA analyses also determined that the NPT Project is not likely to adversely affect the dwarf wedgemussel (*Alasmidonta heterodon*), small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeloides*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), or the Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*).

The DOE has prepared the enclosed Biological Assessment (BA) in support of the NEPA review of potential environmental impacts related to the proposed NPT Project. The BA has been prepared in accordance with the legal requirements set forth under regulations implementing Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act (50 CFR 402; 16 U.S.C. 1536(c)).

The U. S. Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) is a cooperating agency in the DOE NEPA process, and is considering impacts of the issuance of a Special Use Permit, for NP to cross through portions of the WMNF. This consultation will meet the Section 7 requirements associated with this project for the U.S. Forest Service.

The BA has been formatted into 8 chapters; chapter 1 provides a brief introduction, chapter 2 a description of the project, chapter 3 a review of the species, chapter 4 presents the environmental baseline conditions, chapter 5 provides an assessment of the effects, chapter 6 is the cumulative impact assessment, chapter 7 presents the conclusions, and chapter 8 provides the literature cited.

The BA includes Applicant-Proposed Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures (APMs) that Northern Pass Transmission, LLC agreed to implement to reduce or avoid environmental impacts during construction and operation of the NPT Project (see Appendix C).

With the application of the APMs, DOE concludes **that any effects on the dwarf wedgemussel, small whorled pogonia, Canada lynx, Indiana bat, and Northern long-eared bat, would be insignificant or discountable, and the proposed NPT Project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect these species.**

As the construction of the Project is expected to result in a direct take of individuals and a disturbance to occupied habitats, DOE concludes **that the NPT Project is likely to adversely affect the Karner blue butterfly.**

NP is in continued consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department regarding compensatory mitigation for the expected take of Karner blue butterfly.

Northern Pass has reached a purchasing agreement for an approximate 7-acre site located at 60 Regional Drive, Concord, New Hampshire, for the purposes of providing compensatory mitigation for the NPT Project effects on the Karner blue butterfly.

Please feel free to contact me directly at any time at Brian.Mills@hq.DOE.gov, or by phone at (202) 586-8267.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Mills". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "Mills".

Mr. Brian Mills
NEPA Document Manager
DOE Office of Electricity Delivery and
Energy Reliability
U.S. Department of Energy

Attch: Enclosure 1