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December 11, 2024

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ohio Ecological Services Field Office
4625 Morse Road, Suite 104
Columbus, OH 43230-8355

Re: **Project Name/Code:** NCHP Phase 3B Mainline and Access Road/2025-0030100
Franklin County, OH
Colliers Engineering & Design Project No.: 21004202A

To Whom It May Concern:

The intent of this letter is to initiate informal consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in regard to the potential impacts the above-mentioned project may have on Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species, and fulfill the requirements set forth under 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

NiSource Inc., owns and operates a natural gas distribution system that serves both the city and surrounding Franklin County. The Project Study Area includes the installation of 24-inch high-pressure steel pipelines within a 100-foot-wide survey corridor centered on the proposed pipeline alignment for a combined total of approximately 3.75 miles. The Project Study Area or "Survey Corridor" begins at latitudinal coordinate 40.021989 N and longitudinal coordinate -82.950258 W and ends at latitudinal coordinate 40.018147 N and longitudinal coordinate -82.882347 W. The majority of the pipeline will be installed by trenching. It is anticipated that Alum Creek and its associated wetlands will be horizontally directionally drilled (HDD) and will not be subject to direct disturbance. The other perennial and intermittent streams will likely be subject to temporary disturbance only during open-cutting of these features to install the proposed pipeline. It is presently presumed that the Project will meet the requirements for a Nationwide Permit No. 12, and that a Pre-Construction Notification (PCN) will be required due to the removal of a small number of trees as will be necessitated by construction. A Project Location Map (Figure 1) is enclosed for your reference.

On December 11, 2024, an Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) Project Review was conducted to initiate the informal consultation process. The IPaC identified potential threatened, endangered, and candidate species that may occur within the boundary of the proposed project and/or may be affected by the proposed project. A copy of the IPaC review is enclosed for your reference.

Maser Consulting is now Colliers Engineering & Design

Following are descriptions of the habitat of the species listed in the IPaC review:

Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*): During winter, Indiana bats are restricted to suitable underground hibernacula. Most of these sites are caves located in karst areas of the east-central United States; however, Indiana bats also hibernate in other cave-like locations, especially abandoned mines. In summer, most reproductive females occupy roost sites in forested areas under the exfoliating bark of dead or dying trees that retain large, thick slabs of peeling bark. Primary roosts usually receive direct sunlight for more than half the day. Roost trees are often within canopy gaps in a forest, in a fenceline, or along a wooded edge. Habitats in which maternity roosts occur include riparian zones, bottomland and floodplain habitats, wooded wetlands and upland communities.

The project location has a combination forests, stream crossings, and residential and commercial development. As it pertains to listed bat species and wooded habitat, the proposed 24-inch high-pressure distribution main is proposed to be constructed entirely within the roadway right-of-way where possible, and more specifically, most of this main will be constructed within the limits of the paved road. Near the western end of the project limits, the pipeline is proposed to cross a patch of woods where trees will have to be cleared to install and maintain the pipeline. Within city road rights-of-way, no trees are to be taken down unless it is necessary to do so. Due to construction timeline constraints, NiSource Inc. may not be able to adhere to the seasonal tree clearing restrictions recommended by federal and state agencies (October 1 to March 31). There is the potential for tree clearing outside of the winter tree clearing window due to pending OPSB approval. If OPSB approval is obtained in or prior to March 2025, then winter tree clearing will be utilized. If OPSB is not approved by the end of March 2025, then tree clearing will need to occur outside of the suggested winter tree clearing window. NiSource Inc. has contracted a bat biologist to perform a habitat assessment of this wooded patch for Indiana bat in 2025.

Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*): In the spring and summer, the monarch butterfly's habitat is open fields and meadows with milkweed. In winter it can be found on the coast of southern California and at high altitudes in central Mexico. Adult monarchs feed on the nectar of many flowers during breeding and migration, but they can only lay eggs on milkweed plants.

Regarding Monarch Butterfly, we understand that since the Monarch butterfly is a candidate species, this species is not subject to section 7 consultation, and an effects determination is not necessary.

Rayed Bean (*Villosa fabalis*): The rayed bean generally lives in smaller, headwater creeks, but it is sometimes found in large rivers and wave-washed areas of glacial lakes. It prefers gravel or sand substrates and is often found in and around roots of aquatic vegetation.

Round Hickorynut (*Obovaria subrotunda*): The round hickorynut exhibits a preference for sand and gravel in riffle, run, and pool habitats in streams and rivers, but also may be found in sandy mud. They can be found in shallow habitats with gentle flows at less than one foot with abundant American water-willow, but in larger rivers are commonly found up to depths of 6.5 feet.

Salamander Mussel (*Simpsonaias ambigua*): The salamander mussel is a small, elliptical, thin-shelled mussel that lives in medium to large rivers and lakes with swift currents and areas of shelter. It prefers dark, stable habitats with contact to a solid surface, such as under flat rocks,

ledges, or bedrock crevices. These rock structures often have small amounts of sediment and silt but are usually free of excessive fine sediments.

The project location has a combination forests, stream crossings, and residential and commercial development. The largest stream and wetland crossing at Alum Creek will be made via HDD. The crossings of a number of smaller perennial and intermittent streams are proposed to be trenched, and will cause temporary disturbance. At this time, CED is also initiating consultation with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) about the potential for suitable habitat for rayed bean, round hickorynut, salamander mussel, or other State listed mussel species.

If there are any questions or should you require further information, please feel free to contact me at (609) 618-2042 or via email at jacqueline.mccort@collierseng.com.

Sincerely,

Colliers Engineering & Design, Inc.
(DBA Maser Consulting)

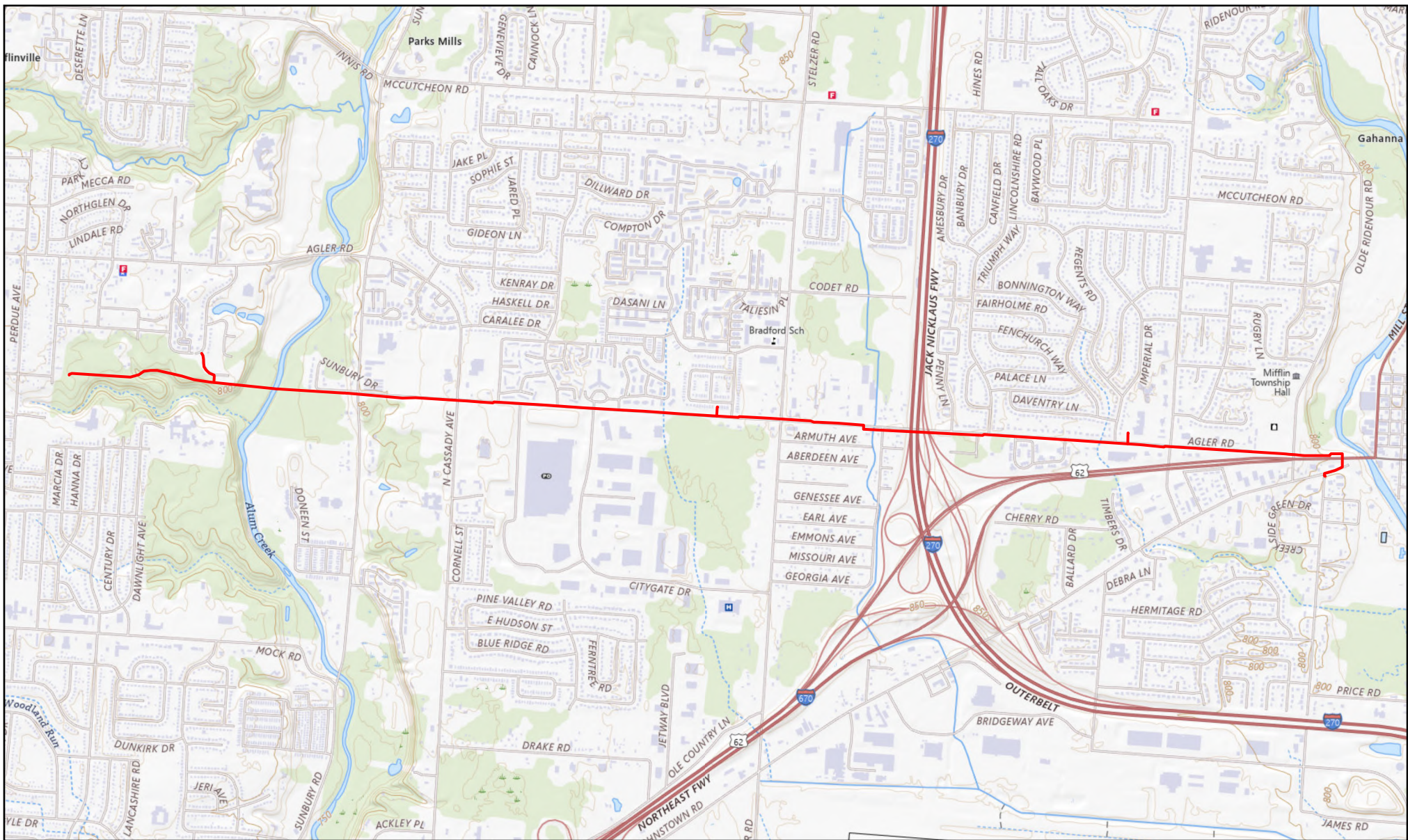


Jacqueline M. McCort
Geographic Discipline Leader, Natural Resources

Enclosures: Figure 1: Project Vicinity Map
USFWS Official Species List

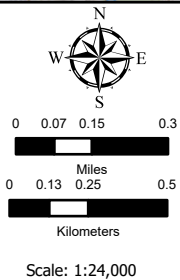
JMM/

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Prepared For:
 NiSource Inc.
 801 E. 86th Avenue
 Merrillville, IN 46410

Prepared By:
Colliers Pittsburgh Office
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— Project Alignment

Vicinity Map

NHCP Phase 3B Project

Franklin County, Ohio

Date Saved: 12/10/2024

CED PN: 21004202A

Revised by: frances.buchanan

Figure 1





United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ohio Ecological Services Field Office

4625 Morse Road, Suite 104

Columbus, OH 43230-8355

Phone: (614) 416-8993 Fax: (614) 416-8994



In Reply Refer To:

12/11/2024 14:02:13 UTC

Project Code: 2025-0030100

Project Name: NCHP Phase 3B mainline and access road

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally as desired. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2) (c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological

evaluation similar to a Biological Assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a Biological Assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found in the "Endangered Species Consultation Handbook" at:

<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/endangered-species-consultation-handbook.pdf>

Migratory Birds: In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity, intentional or unintentional, resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts, see <https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-bird-permit/what-we-do>.

The MBTA has no provision for allowing take of migratory birds that may be unintentionally killed or injured by otherwise lawful activities. It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures, see <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/threats-birds>.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. For information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186, please visit <https://www.fws.gov/partner/council-conservation-migratory-birds>.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

Ohio Ecological Services Field Office

4625 Morse Road, Suite 104

Columbus, OH 43230-8355

(614) 416-8993

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2025-0030100
Project Name: NCHP Phase 3B mainline and access road
Project Type: Natural Gas Distribution
Project Description: NiSource Inc. proposes the upgrade of the existing natural gas distribution system in the City of Columbus through the placement of approximately 3.75 miles of 24-inch pipeline, most of which will be installed within or immediately adjacent to paved roadways within the City. The project limits depicted include proposed access roads.

Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/@40.020540600000004,-82.91613741372973,14z>



Counties: Franklin County, Ohio

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 5 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries¹, as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

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1. [NOAA Fisheries](#), also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

MAMMALS

NAME	STATUS
Indiana Bat <i>Myotis sodalis</i> There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5949	Endangered

CLAMS

NAME	STATUS
Rayed Bean <i>Villosa fabalis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5862	Endangered
Round Hickorynut <i>Obovaria subrotunda</i> There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9879	Threatened
Salamander Mussel <i>Simpsonaias ambigua</i> There is proposed critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6208	Proposed Endangered

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly <i>Danaus plexippus</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Candidate

CRITICAL HABITATS

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA UNDER THIS OFFICE'S JURISDICTION.

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: Private Entity
Name: Jacqueline McCort
Address: 5275 Parkway Plaza Blvd
Address Line 2: Suite 100
City: Charlotte
State: NC
Zip: 28217
Email: jacqueline.mccort@collierseng.com
Phone: 9808903019

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Army Corps of Engineers
Name: Rachel McCarty
Email: Rachel.A.Mccarty@usace.army.mil
Phone: 3048070826

United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services
4625 Morse Road, Suite 104
Columbus, Ohio 43230
(614) 416-8993 / FAX (614) 416-8994



December 16, 2024

Project Code: 2025-0030100

Dear Ms. McCort:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has received your recent correspondence requesting information about the subject proposal. We offer the following comments and recommendations to assist you in minimizing and avoiding adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq), as amended (ESA).

Federally Threatened and Endangered Species: The endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) occur throughout the State of Ohio. The Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat may be found wherever suitable habitat occurs unless a presence/absence survey has been performed to document absence. Suitable summer habitat for Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats consists of a wide variety of forested/wooded habitats where they roost, forage, and breed that may also include adjacent and interspersed non-forested habitats such as emergent wetlands and adjacent edges of agricultural fields, woodlots, fallow fields, and pastures. Roost trees for both species include live and standing dead trees ≥ 3 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) that have any exfoliating bark, cracks, crevices, hollows and/or cavities. These roost trees may be located in forested habitats as well as linear features such as fencerows, riparian forests, and other wooded corridors. Individual trees may be considered suitable habitat when they exhibit the characteristics of a potential roost tree and are located within 1,000 feet of other forested/wooded habitat. Northern long-eared bats have also been observed roosting in human-made structures, such as buildings, barns, bridges, and bat houses; therefore, these structures should also be considered potential summer habitat. In the winter, Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats hibernate in caves, rock crevices and abandoned mines.

Seasonal Tree Clearing for Federally Listed Bat Species: The proposed project is in the vicinity of one or more confirmed records of Indiana bats and/or northern long-eared bats. Should the proposed project site contain trees ≥ 3 inches dbh, we recommend avoiding tree removal wherever possible. If any caves or abandoned mines may be disturbed, further coordination with this office is requested to determine if fall or spring portal surveys are warranted. If no caves or abandoned mines are present and trees ≥ 3 inches dbh cannot be avoided, we recommend removal of any trees ≥ 3 inches dbh only occur between October 1 and March 31. Seasonal clearing is recommended to avoid adverse effects to Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats. Please note that, because Indiana bat and/or northern long-eared bat presence has already been confirmed in the project vicinity, any additional summer surveys would not constitute presence/absence surveys for these species.

Federally Proposed Species: On September 14, 2022, the Service proposed to list the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) as endangered under the ESA. The bat faces extinction due to the impacts of white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease affecting cave-dwelling bats across the continent. During spring, summer, and fall, this species roosts primarily among leaf clusters of live or recently dead trees, emerging at dusk to hunt for insects over waterways and forest edges. While white-nose syndrome is by far the most serious threat to the tricolored bat, other threats now have an increased significance due to the dramatic decline in the species' population. These threats include disturbance to bats in roosting, foraging, commuting, and over-wintering habitats. Mortality due to collision with wind turbines, especially during migration, has also been documented across their range. Conservation measures for the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat will also help to conserve the tricolored bat.

Section 7 Coordination: If there is a federal nexus for the project (e.g., federal funding provided, federal permits required to construct), then no tree clearing should occur on any portion of the project area until consultation under section 7 of the ESA, between the Service and the federal action agency, is completed. We recommend the federal action agency submit a determination of effects to this office, relative to the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat, for our review and concurrence. This letter provides technical assistance only and does not serve as a completed section 7 consultation document.

Stream and Wetland Avoidance: Over 90% of the wetlands in Ohio have been drained, filled, or modified by human activities, thus it is important to conserve the functions and values of the remaining wetlands in Ohio (https://epa.ohio.gov/portals/47/facts/ohio_wetlands.pdf). We recommend avoiding and minimizing project impacts to all wetland habitats (e.g., forests, streams, vernal pools) to the maximum extent possible in order to benefit water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. Additionally, natural buffers around streams and wetlands should be preserved to enhance beneficial functions. If streams or wetlands will be impacted, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should be contacted to determine whether a Clean Water Act section 404 permit is required. Best management practices should be used to minimize erosion, especially on slopes. Disturbed areas should be mulched and revegetated with native plant species. In addition, prevention of non-native, invasive plant establishment is critical in maintaining high quality habitats.

Due to the project type, size, and location, we do not anticipate adverse effects to any other federally endangered, threatened, or proposed species, or proposed or designated critical habitat. Should the project design change, or additional information on listed or proposed species or their critical habitat become available, or if new information reveals effects of the action that were not previously considered, coordination with the Service should be initiated to assess any potential impacts.

Thank you for your efforts to conserve listed species and sensitive habitats in Ohio. We recommend coordinating with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources due to the potential for the proposed project to affect state listed species and/or state lands. Contact Mike Pettegrew, Environmental Services Administrator, at (614) 265-6387 or at mike.pettegrew@dnr.ohio.gov.

If you have questions, or if we can be of further assistance in this matter, please contact our office at (614) 416-8993 or ohio@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erin Knoll".

Erin Knoll
Field Office Supervisor

cc: Matthew.Stooksbury@dnr.ohio.gov
Eileen.Wyza@dnr.ohio.gov



Ohio Department of Natural Resources

MIKE DeWINE, GOVERNOR

MARY MERTZ, DIRECTOR

Office of Real Estate

Tara Paciorek, Chief
2045 Morse Road – Bldg. E-2
Columbus, OH 43229
Phone: (614) 265-6661
Fax: (614) 267-4764

June 28, 2023

Jacqueline McCort
Colliers Engineering & Design
5275 Parkway Plaza Boulevard, Suite 100
Charlotte, North Carolina 28217

Re: 23-0631; East Columbus Project

Project: The proposed project involves the installation of 24-inch and 20-inch-high pressure steel pipelines.

Location: The proposed project is located in Mifflin Township, Franklin County, Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has completed a review of the above referenced project. These comments were generated by an inter-disciplinary review within the Department. These comments have been prepared under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), the National Environmental Policy Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, Ohio Revised Code and other applicable laws and regulations. These comments are also based on ODNR's experience as the state natural resource management agency and do not supersede or replace the regulatory authority of any local, state, or federal agency nor relieve the applicant of the obligation to comply with any local, state or federal laws or regulations.

Natural Heritage Database: The Natural Heritage Database has the following data at or within one mile of the project area:

Cypress-knee Sedge (*Carex decomposita*), E
Tippecanoe Darter (*Etheostoma tippecanoe*), SC
Smooth Greensnake (*Opheodrys vernalis*), E
Elktoe (*Alasmidonta marginata*), SC
Snuffbox (*Epioblasma triquetra*), E, FE
Wavy-rayed Lampmussel (*Lampsilis fasciola*), SC
Round Hickorynut (*Obovaria subrotunda*), T
Kidneyshell (*Ptychobranhus fasciolaris*), SC
Rainbow (*Villosa iris*), SC
Breeding Amphibian Site
Stream gorge
Beech-sugar maple forest plant community

The review was performed on the specified project area as well as an additional one-mile radius. Records searched date from 1980. Conservation status abbreviations are as follows: E = state endangered; T = state threatened; P = state potentially threatened; SC = state species of concern;

SI = state special interest; U = state status under review; X = presumed extirpated in Ohio; FE = federally endangered, and FT = federally threatened.

Please note that Ohio has not been completely surveyed and we rely on receiving information from many sources. Therefore, a lack of records for an area is not a statement that rare species or unique features are absent from that area. Although all types of plant communities have been surveyed, we only maintain records on the highest quality areas.

Fish and Wildlife: The Division of Wildlife (DOW) has the following comments.

The DOW recommends that impacts to streams, wetlands and other water resources be avoided and minimized to the fullest extent possible, and that Best Management Practices be utilized to minimize erosion and sedimentation.

The westernmost 7,500 feet of the project route is within the vicinity of records for the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), a state endangered species. Because presence of state endangered bat species has been established in this area, summer tree cutting is not recommended, and additional summer surveys would not constitute presence/absence in the area. However, limited summer tree cutting inside this buffer may be acceptable after further consultation with DOW (contact Eileen Wyza at Eileen.Wyza@dnr.ohio.gov).

In addition, the entire state of Ohio is within the range of the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a state endangered and federally endangered species, the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), a state endangered and federally endangered species, the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), a state endangered species, and the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), a state endangered species. During the spring and summer (April 1 through September 30), these bat species predominately roost in trees behind loose, exfoliating bark, in crevices and cavities, or in the leaves. The DOW recommends tree cutting only occur from October 1 through March 31, conserving trees with loose, shaggy bark and/or crevices, holes, or cavities, as well as trees with DBH ≥ 20 if possible. However, if trees are present within this area, (outside of the area delineated above) and trees must be cut during the summer months, the DOW recommends a mist net survey or acoustic survey be conducted from June 1 through August 15, prior to any cutting. Mist net and acoustic surveys should be conducted in accordance with the most recent version of the "[OHIO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE GUIDANCE FOR BAT SURVEYS AND TREE CLEARING](#)". If state listed bats are documented, DOW recommends cutting only occur from October 1 through March 31. However, limited summer tree cutting may be acceptable after consultation with the DOW.

The DOW also recommends that a desktop habitat assessment is conducted, followed by a field assessment if needed, to determine if a potential hibernaculum is present within the project area. Direction on how to conduct habitat assessments can be found in the current USFWS "[RANGE-WIDE INDIANA BAT & NORTHERN LONG-EARED BAT SURVEY GUIDELINES](#)." If a habitat assessment finds that a potential hibernaculum is present within 0.25 miles of the project area, please send this information to Eileen Wyza, for project recommendations. If a potential or known hibernaculum is found, the DOW recommends a 0.25-mile tree cutting and subsurface disturbance buffer around the hibernaculum entrance, however, limited summer or winter tree cutting may be acceptable after consultation with the DOW. If no tree cutting or subsurface impacts to a hibernaculum are proposed, this project is not likely to impact these species.

The project is within the range of the following listed mussel species.

Federally Endangered

clubshell (*Pleurobema clava*)
rayed bean (*Villosa fabalis*)
northern riffleshell (*Epioblasma torulosa rangiana*)
snuffbox (*Epioblasma triquetra*)
purple cat's paw (*Epioblasma o. obliquata*)

Federally Threatened

rabbitsfoot (*Quadrula cylindrica cylindrica*)

State Endangered

elephant-ear (*Elliptio crassidens crassidens*)
pocketbook (*Lampsilis ovata*)
long solid (*Fusconaia maculata maculate*)
washboard (*Megaloniaias nervosa*)
Ohio pigtoe (*Pleurobema cordatum*)

State Threatened

pondhorn (*Unio merus tetralasmus*)
Salamander Mussel (*Simpsoniaias ambigua*)

This project must not have an impact on native mussels. This applies to both listed and non-listed species, as all species of mussel are protected in Ohio. Per the Ohio Mussel Survey Protocol (2022), all Group 2, 3, and 4 streams (Appendix A) require a mussel survey. Per the Ohio Mussel Survey Protocol, Group 1 streams (Appendix A) and unlisted streams with a watershed of 5 square miles or larger above the point of impact should be assessed using the Reconnaissance Survey for Unionid Mussels (Appendix B) to determine if mussels are present. Mussel surveys may be recommended for these streams as well. Therefore, if in-water work is planned in any stream that meets any of the above criteria, the DOW recommends the applicant provide information to indicate no mussel impacts will occur. If this is not possible, the DOW recommends a professional malacologist conduct a mussel survey in the project area. If mussels that cannot be avoided are found in the project area, the DOW recommends a professional malacologist collect and relocate the mussels to suitable and similar habitat upstream of the project site. Mussel surveys and any subsequent mussel relocation should be done in accordance with the [Ohio Mussel Survey Protocol](#). If there is no in-water work proposed, impacts to mussels are not likely.

The project is within the range of the following listed fish species.

State Endangered

goldeye (*Hiodon alosoides*)
shortnose gar (*Lepisosteus platostomus*)
Iowa darter (*Etheostoma exile*)
spotted darter (*Etheostoma maculatum*)
northern brook lamprey (*Ichthyomyzon fossor*)
tonguetied minnow (*Exoglossum laurae*)
popeye shiner (*Notropis ariommus*)

State Threatened

lake chubsucker (*Erimyzon sucetta*)
paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*)

The DOW recommends no in-water work in perennial streams from March 15 through June 30 to reduce impacts to indigenous aquatic species and their habitat. If no in-water work is proposed in a perennial stream, this project is not likely to impact these or other aquatic species.

Due to the potential of impacts to federally listed species, as well as to state listed species, we recommend that this project be coordinated with the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Natural Areas and Preserves: The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves has the following state nature preserve comments.

The ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves staff have reviewed the proposed East Columbus pipeline project. The project appears to fall along the boundary of the dedicated Gahanna Woods State Nature Preserve. To continue the high level of protection and conservation of the preserve, the Division asks for a meeting between Colliers Engineering and Design, ODNR and the City of Gahanna, the manager of the property. New crossings on state dedicated nature preserve must undergo a thorough evaluation and if permitted, a real estate agreement and stringent best management practices must be in place before work commences. Please contact the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves Chief Botanist, Rick Gardner, at Richard.Gardner@dnr.ohio.gov or 614/265-6419 for meeting coordination.

Water Resources: The Division of Water Resources has the following comment.

The [local floodplain administrator](#) should be contacted concerning the possible need for any floodplain permits or approvals for this project.

ODNR appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments. Please contact Mike Pettegrew at mike.pettegrew@dnr.ohio.gov if you have questions about these comments or need additional information.

Mike Pettegrew
Environmental Services Administrator