



February 1, 2024

IN REPLY REFER TO

SIR# 57515

Jacobs
Jack Harper
2134 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

**RE: Species Impact Review (SIR) – Rare, Candidate, Threatened and Endangered Species
PNDI Search No. 776177_3
Schuylkill River HDD Project
East Pikeland Township, Spring City Borough: CHESTER County - Upper Providence Township:
MONTGOMERY County**

Dear Jack Harper:

This responds to your updated inquiry about a Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) Internet Database search “potential conflict” or a threatened and endangered species impact review. These projects are screened for potential conflicts with rare, candidate, threatened or endangered species under Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission jurisdiction (fish, reptiles, amphibians, aquatic invertebrates only) using the PNDI database and our own files. These species of special concern are listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Wild Resource Conservation Act, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Code (Chapter 75), or the Wildlife Code.

On January 12, 2024, Sara Hayes, submitted additional information for the proposed project. In the update, Line-1-Removal methodology has changed and will involve the installation of a cofferdam and associated dewatering. This letter reflects our review based on the changes to the Line-1-Removal. Impacts to potential nesting habitat identified in our previous consultation letter, June 21, 2023, remain unchanged, but are reiterated below.

Northern Red-bellied Cooter (*Pseudemys rubriventris*, PA threatened)

Potential Nesting Habitat Impacts Uplands:

Previous consultation from this office requested a Habitat Assessment and a report was submitted, completed by Michael E. Torocco, Herpetological Associates, Inc. Based on our review of this report, the project site contains accessible potential nesting habitat for the Northern Red-bellied Cooter. Therefore, the following measures will be necessary in order to avoid impacts to Northern Red-bellied Cooters during the construction of this project:

1) A silt fence barrier should be placed at the edge of the proposed area of disturbance, in between the waterway and the work area, to prevent turtles from accessing active work zones in the segments that were determined to be potential habitat (See Figure 3.). This fence should be installed during the inactive period of the turtle (October 15-April 15) so that active turtles or their nests do not

get trapped in the work zone. Please note that silt socks do not provide a sufficient barrier to turtle movements; a fence must be used and buried into the substrate to prevent access by turtles.

2) A herpetologist that is qualified/recognized to survey for the Northern Red-bellied Cooter should be on-site to clear the area of turtles prior to fence installation and to insure that the fence is placed in appropriate habitat. All areas to be permanently or temporarily impacted, including staging areas, should be investigated/cleared before any work activities are to commence. After the clearance surveys, the silt fencing should be placed around all work/staging areas so that any transient turtles or herpetofauna do not re-enter the project area. If any species of concern are found during the clearance survey, the herpetologist is to move the animal no farther than necessary out of the immediate project area into the nearest aquatic habitat. Upon completion of the survey work, the herpetologist is to forward a report showing the surveyor's results to this office for our review and comment. Reports should include photographs and maps of appropriate suitable habitat. Threatened and endangered species observed in the survey should be photographed, aged, sexed, measured as to their size, and areas they were observed/captured should be mapped accordingly. Additionally, the PFBC must be contacted within 48 hours of the find. The surveyor should also report other herpetofauna seen while conducting the surveys.

Line 1 Removal Aquatic Impacts:

Previous submissions detailed the removal of Line 1 occur with an amphibious excavator, however now the proposed method is installation of a cofferdam. Based on this, **all instream work shall be performed during the active season (April 15 to October 15) to avoid impacts to dormant species. Additionally, all dewatering activities of the Schuylkill River shall be conducted under the supervision of a Northern Red-bellied Cooter qualified biologist.** The biologist will be responsible to move any individuals trapped within the cofferdam. Native turtle species shall be moved to the appropriate habitat while non-native turtle species shall not be returned. Furthermore, should any Northern Red-bellied Cooter be found dead or harmed as a result of the project, work shall immediately stop and consultation be re-initiated.

Based on the potential to encounter a Threatened species, prior to Line 1 Removal construction, please reach out to Gregory Lech, glech@pa.gov, and provide the contact information for on-site personnel in order to schedule a site visit during construction.

This response represents the most up-to-date summary of the PNDI data and our files and is valid for two (2) years from the date of this letter. An absence of recorded species information does not necessarily imply species absence. Our data files and the PNDI system are continuously being updated with species occurrence information. Should project plans change or additional information on listed or proposed species become available, this determination may be reconsidered, and consultation shall be re-initiated.

If you have any questions regarding this review, please contact Gregory Lech at 814-470-6776 or glech@pa.gov and refer to the SIR # 57515. Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this important matter of species conservation and habitat protection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Lech". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gregory" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Lech".

Gregory Lech
Resource Extraction Section

/GPL/dn