



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

November 28, 2015

Mr. Christopher Bond
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Project: Construction of a Telecommunications Facility (CT777) at 100 Pocono Rd, Brookfield, Connecticut
NDDB Determination No.: 201508541

Dear Christopher,

I have re-reviewed Natural Diversity Data Base maps and files regarding the area delineated on the map you provided for the proposed Construction of a telecommunications facility (CT777) at 100 Pocono Rd, Brookfield, Connecticut. According to our records we have known extant populations of State Special Concern *Terrapene carolina carolina* (box turtle) and *Glyptemys insculpta* (wood turtle) in the vicinity of the project site. We also have historic records for Federal Threatened and State Endangered *Glyptemys muhlenbergii* (bog turtle) from this area of Brookfield. Please be advised that you must contact the USFWS to conduct an Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation for this federally endangered species. I have included recommended protection strategies and best management practices for the two state special concern turtles.

Wood Turtle: Habitat destruction, degradation or alteration and fragmentation all threaten Wood Turtle populations. Turtles are also particularly vulnerable to any activity that consistently reduces adult survivorship. Disturbances to stream and riparian habitats and activities that change the hydrology of the stream, the physical habitat itself and water quality are all potentially detrimental activities for the Wood Turtle. Although Wood Turtles are found within forested areas, they prefer areas that do not have a fully closed canopy cover. The greatest concern during projects occurring in wood turtle habitat are turtles being run over and crushed by mechanized equipment. Reducing the frequency that motorized vehicles enter Wood Turtle habitat would be beneficial in minimizing direct mortality of adults.

Eastern Box Turtle: Eastern box turtles inhabit old fields and deciduous forests, which can include power lines and logged woodlands. They are often found near small streams and ponds. The adults are completely terrestrial but the young may be semiaquatic, and hibernate on land by digging down in the soil from October to April. They have an extremely small home range and can usually be found in the same area year after year. Eastern box turtles have been negatively impacted by the loss of suitable habitat. Some turtles may be killed directly by construction activities, but many more are lost when important habitat areas for shelter, feeding, hibernation,

or nesting are destroyed. As remaining habitat is fragmented into smaller pieces, turtle populations can become small and isolated.

Recommended Protection Strategies for turtles:

If any work will occur when these turtles are active (April 1st to September 30th) I recommend the additional following protection strategies in order to protect these turtles:

- Silt fencing should be installed around the work area prior to construction, please avoid erosion control products that are embedded with netting as these can be fatal to wildlife;
- Where possible, AVOID installing sediment and erosion control materials from late August through September and from March through mid-May. These two time periods are when amphibians and reptiles are most active, moving to and from wetlands to breed;
- After silt fencing is installed and prior to construction, a sweep of the work area should be conducted to look for turtles;
- Workers should be apprised of the possible presence of turtles, and provided a description of the species
(http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=473472&depNav_GID=1655);
- Any turtles that are discovered should be moved, unharmed, to an area immediately outside of the fenced area, and position in the same direction that it was walking;
- No vehicles or heavy machinery should be parked in any turtle habitat;
- Work conducted during early morning and evening hours should occur with special care not to harm basking or foraging individuals; and
- All silt fencing should be removed after work is completed and soils are stable so that reptile and amphibian movement between uplands and wetlands is not restricted.
- Stockpiles of soil should be cordoned off with silt fencing so turtles do not attempt to try and nest in them.
- Use native plantings if possible. Any plantings should be composed of species native to northeastern United States and appropriate for use in riparian habitat.

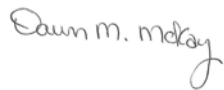
Thank you for including the protection strategies and protocols that will be in place to protect wood turtles and box turtles species from project impacts. If these protection strategies are followed then the proposed activities will lessen the impact on the wood turtle and eastern box

turtle. I have attached fact sheets on these turtles. This determination is good for one year. Please re-submit an NDDDB Request for Review if the scope of work changes or if work has not begun on this project by November 28, 2016.

Natural Diversity Data Base information includes all information regarding critical biological resources available to us at the time of the request. This information is a compilation of data collected over the years by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Natural History Survey and cooperating units of DEEP, private conservation groups and the scientific community. This information is not necessarily the result of comprehensive or site-specific field investigations. Consultations with the Data Base should not be substitutes for on-site surveys required for environmental assessments. Current research projects and new contributors continue to identify additional populations of species and locations of habitats of concern, as well as, enhance existing data. Such new information is incorporated into the Data Base as it becomes available.

Please contact me if you have further questions at (860) 424-3592, or dawn.mckay@ct.gov . Thank you for consulting the Natural Diversity Data Base. Also be advised that this is a preliminary review and not a final determination. A more detailed review may be conducted as part of any subsequent environmental permit applications submitted to DEEP for the proposed site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn M. McKay".

Dawn M. McKay
Environmental Analyst 3

WILDLIFE IN CONNECTICUT

STATE SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Wood Turtle

Glyptemys insculpta

Background

Wood turtles may be found throughout Connecticut, but they have become increasingly rare due to their complex habitat needs. Wood turtles also have become more scarce in Fairfield County due to the fragmentation of suitable habitat by urban development.

Range

Wood turtles can be found across the northeastern United States into parts of Canada. They range from Nova Scotia through New England, south into northern Virginia, and west through the Great Lakes region into Minnesota.

Description

The scientific name of the wood turtle, *Glyptemys insculpta*, refers to the deeply sculptured or chiseled pattern found on the carapace (top shell). This part of the shell is dark brown or black and may have an array of faint yellow lines radiating from the center of each chiseled, pyramid-like segment due to tannins and minerals accumulating between ridges. These segments of the carapace, as well as those of the plastron (bottom shell), are called scutes. The carapace also is keeled, with a noticeable ridge running from front to back. The plastron is yellow with large dark blotches in the outer corners of each scute. The black or dark brown head and upper limbs are contrasted by brighter pigments ranging from red and orange to a pale yellow on the throat and limb undersides. Orange hues are most typical for New England's wood turtles. The hind feet are only slightly webbed, and the tail is long and thick at the base. Adults weigh approximately 1.5 to 2.5 pounds and reach a length of 5 to 9 inches.



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Habitat and Diet

Wood turtles use aquatic and terrestrial habitats at different times of the year. Their habitats include rivers and large streams, riparian forests (adjacent to rivers), wetlands, hayfields, and other early successional habitats. Terrestrial habitat that is usually within 1,000 feet of a suitable stream or river is most likely used. Preferred stream conditions include moderate flow, sandy or gravelly bottoms, and muddy banks.

Wood turtles are omnivorous and opportunistic. They are not picky eaters and will readily consume slugs, worms, tadpoles, insects, algae, wild fruits, leaves, grass, moss, and carrion.

Life History

From late spring to early fall, wood turtles can be found roaming their aquatic or terrestrial habitats. However, once temperatures drop in autumn, the turtles retreat to rivers and large streams for hibernation. The winter

is spent underwater, often tucked away below undercut riverbanks within exposed tree roots. Dissolved oxygen is extracted from the water, allowing the turtle to remain submerged entirely until the arrival of spring. Once warmer weather sets in, the turtles will become increasingly more active, eventually leaving the water to begin foraging for food and searching for mates. Travel up or down stream is most likely, as turtles seldom stray very far from their riparian habitats.

Females nest in spring to early summer, depositing anywhere from 4 to 12 eggs into a nest dug out of soft soil, typically in sandy deposits along stream banks or other areas of loose soil. The eggs hatch in late summer or fall and the young turtles may either emerge or remain in the nest for winter hibernation. As soon as the young turtles hatch, they are on their own and receive no care from the adults.

Turtle eggs and hatchlings are heavily preyed upon by a wide variety of predators, ranging from raccoons to birds and snakes. High rates of nest predation and hatchling mortality, paired with the lengthy amount of time it takes for wood turtles to reach sexual maturity, present a challenge to maintaining sustainable populations. Wood turtles live upwards of 40 to 60 years, possibly more.

Conservation Concerns

Loss and fragmentation of habitat are the greatest threats to wood turtles. Many remaining populations in Connecticut are low in numbers and isolated from one another by human-dominated landscapes. Turtles forced to venture farther and farther from appropriate habitat

to find mates and nesting sites are more likely to be run over by cars, attacked by predators, or collected by people as pets.

Other sources of mortality include entanglements in litter and debris left behind by people, as well as strikes from mowing equipment used to maintain hayfields and other early successional habitats.

The wood turtle is imperiled throughout a large portion of its range and was placed under international trade regulatory protection through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in 1992. Wood turtles also have been included on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List as a vulnerable species since 1996. They are listed as a species of special concern in Connecticut and protected by the Connecticut Endangered Species Act.

How You Can Help

- *Conserve riparian habitat. Maintaining a buffer strip of natural vegetation (minimum of 100 feet) along the banks of streams and rivers will protect wood turtle habitat and also help improve the water quality of the stream system. Stream banks that are manicured (cleared of natural shrubby and herbaceous vegetation) or armored by rip rap or stone walls will not be used by wood turtles or most other wildlife species.*
- *Do not litter. Wood turtles and other wildlife may accidentally ingest or become entangled in garbage and die.*
- *Leave turtles in the wild. They should never be kept as pets. Whether collected singly or for the pet trade, turtles that are removed from the wild are no longer able to be a reproducing member of a population. Every turtle removed reduces the ability of the population to maintain itself.*
- *Never release a captive turtle into the wild. It probably would not survive, may not be native to the area, and could introduce diseases to wild populations.*
- *As you drive, watch out for turtles crossing the road. Turtles found crossing roads in June and July are often pregnant females. They should **not** be collected but can be helped on their way. Without creating a traffic hazard or compromising safety, drivers are encouraged to avoid running over turtles that are crossing roads. Also, still keeping safety precautions in mind, you may elect to pick up turtles from the road and move them onto the side in the direction they are headed. Never relocate a turtle to another area that is far from where you found it.*
- *Learn more about turtles and their conservation concerns, and educate others.*
- *If you see a wood turtle, leave it in the wild, take a photograph, record the location where it was seen, and contact the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Wildlife Division at dep.wildlife@ct.gov, or call 860-424-3011 to report your observation.*



WILDLIFE IN CONNECTICUT

STATE SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Eastern Box Turtle

Terrapene carolina carolina

Description

The eastern box turtle is probably the most familiar of the 8 species of turtles found in Connecticut's landscape. It is known for its high-domed carapace (top shell). The carapace has irregular yellow or orange blotches on a brown to black background that mimic sunlight dappling on the forest floor. The plastron (under shell) may be brown or black and may have an irregular pattern of cream or yellow. The length of the carapace usually ranges from 4.5 to 6.5 inches, but can measure up to 8 inches long. The shell is made up of a combination of scales and bones, and it includes the ribs and much of the backbone.

Each individual turtle has distinctive head markings. Males usually have red eyes and a concave plastron, while females have brown eyes and a flat plastron. Box turtles also have a horny beak, stout limbs, and feet that are webbed at the base. This turtle gets its name from its ability to completely withdraw into its shell, closing itself in with a hinged plastron. Box turtles are the only Connecticut turtle with this ability.

Range

Eastern box turtles are found throughout Connecticut, except at the highest elevations. They range from southeastern Maine to southeastern New York, west to central Illinois, and south to northern Florida.

Habitat and Diet

In Connecticut, this terrestrial turtle inhabits a variety of habitats, including woodlands, field edges, thickets, marshes, bogs, and stream banks. Typically, however, box turtles are found in well-drained forest bottomlands and open deciduous forests. They will use wetland areas at various times during the season. During the hottest part of a summer day, they will wander to find springs and seepages where they can burrow into the moist soil. Activity is restricted to mornings and evenings during summer, with little to no nighttime activity, except for egg-



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laying females. Box turtles have a limited home range where they spend their entire life, ranging from 0.5 to 10 acres (usually less than 2 acres).

Box turtles are omnivorous and will feed on a variety of food items, including earthworms, slugs, snails, insects, frogs, toads, small snakes, carrion, leaves, grass, berries, fruits, and fungi.

Life History

From October to April, box turtles hibernate by burrowing into loose soil, decaying vegetation, and mud. They tend to hibernate in woodlands, on the edge of woodlands, and sometimes near closed canopy wetlands in the forest. Box turtles may return to the same place to hibernate year after year. As soon as they come out of hibernation, box turtles begin feeding and searching for mates.

The breeding season begins in April and may continue through fall. Box turtles usually do not breed until they are about 10 years old. This late maturity is a result of their long lifespan, which can range up to 50 to even over 100 years of age. The females do not have to mate every year to lay eggs as they can store sperm for up

to 4 years. In mid-May to late June, the females will travel from a few feet to more than a mile within their home range to find a location to dig a nest and lay their eggs. The 3 to 8 eggs are covered with dirt and left to be warmed by the sun. During this vulnerable time, skunks, foxes, snakes, crows, and raccoons often raid nests. Sometimes, entire nests are destroyed. If the eggs survive, they will hatch in late summer to early fall (about 2 months after being laid). If they hatch in the fall, the young turtles may spend the winter in the nest and come out the following spring.

As soon as the young turtles hatch, they are on their own and receive no care from the adults. This is a dangerous time for young box turtles because they do not develop the hinge for closing into their shell until they are about 4 to 5 years old. Until then, they cannot entirely retreat into their shells. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, dogs, and some birds will prey on young turtles.

Conservation Concerns

The eastern box turtle was once common throughout the state, mostly in the central Connecticut lowlands. However, its distribution is now spotty, although where found, turtles may be locally abundant. Because of the population decline in Connecticut, the box turtle was added to the state's List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species when it was revised in 1998. It is currently listed as a species of special concern. The box turtle also is protected from international trade by the 1994 CITES treaty. It is of conservation concern in all the states where it occurs at its northeastern range limit, which includes southern New England and southeastern New York.

Many states have laws that protect box turtles and prohibit their collection. In Connecticut, eastern box turtles **cannot** be collected from the wild (DEP regulations 26-66-14A). Another regulation (DEP regulations 26-55-3D) "grandfathers" those who have a **box turtle collected before 1998**. This regulation limits possession to a single turtle collected before 1998. These

regulations provide some protection for the turtles, but not enough to combat some of the even bigger threats these animals face. The main threats in Connecticut (and other states) are loss and fragmentation of habitat due to deforestation and spreading suburban development; vehicle strikes on the busy roads that bisect the landscape; and indiscriminate (and now illegal) collection of individuals for pets.

Loss of habitat is probably the greatest threat to turtles. Some turtles may be killed directly by construction activities, but many more are lost when important habitat areas for shelter, feeding, hibernation, or nesting are destroyed. As remaining habitat is fragmented into smaller pieces, turtle populations can become small and isolated.

Adult box turtles are relatively free from predators due to their unique shells. The shell of a box turtle is extremely hard. However, the shell is not hard enough to survive being run over by a vehicle. Roads bisecting turtle habitat can seriously deplete the local population. Most vehicle fatalities are pregnant females searching for a nest site.

How You Can Help

- *Leave turtles in the wild. They should never be kept as pets. Whether collected singly or for the pet trade, turtles that are removed from the wild are no longer able to be a reproducing member of a population. Every turtle removed reduces the ability of the population to maintain itself.*
- *Never release a captive turtle into the wild. It probably would not survive, may not be native to the area, and could introduce diseases to wild populations.*
- *Do not disturb turtles nesting in yards or gardens.*
- *As you drive, watch out for turtles crossing the road. Turtles found crossing roads in June and July are often pregnant females and they should be helped on their way and not collected. Without creating a traffic hazard or compromising safety, drivers are encouraged to avoid running over turtles that are crossing roads. Also, still keeping safety precautions in mind, you may elect to pick up turtles from the road and move them onto the side they are headed. Never relocate a turtle to another area that is far from where you found it.*
- *Learn more about turtles and their conservation concerns. Spread the word to others on how they can help Connecticut's box turtle population.*



State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Natural Resources
Wildlife Division
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