



New York & Long Island Field Offices

<http://nyfo.fws.gov>
2009



Congressional District 19: John Hall

Energy Projects

Wind Energy Wind energy has created much interest from developers due to Federal tax incentives, a State renewable portfolio standard, and the desire for diverse energy sources. These projects have been greeted with mixed reactions by local residents and public officials. In New York State, 13 wind power projects have been constructed having a total nameplate capacity of over 1000 megawatts. We are tracking the progress of wind power projects for at least 107 sites throughout the State, none of which are currently proposed for Congressional District 19.



Tidal Energy Another emerging energy technology is tidal energy. Although there are no current tidal power proposals for the mainstem Hudson River, there are 6 preliminary permits under review for tidal projects in the East River and Long Island Sound. The Roosevelt Island Project (Verdant Power) in the East River was the first tidal generation facility in the country as of 2006, and in 2008 applied for a pilot license to install 30 underwater turbines.

Nuclear Energy A draft Environmental Impact Statement for the relicensing of the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant was released in December 2008. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has begun discussions with the applicant on issues related to Federally-listed species. We have concerns about the operational impact of this facility on Hudson River fish due to entrainment, impingement, and heated discharge issues.

There are approximately 6 small hydroelectric energy projects in Congressional District 19, none of which is of concern to the USFWS due to adverse impacts to fish and wildlife.

New York Regional Interconnect

The New York Regional Interconnect, Inc., (NYRI) has proposed a 200-mile 500kV transmission line from the Utica area (Oneida County) to Orange County, New York. The NYRI requested early designation from the Department of Energy as a National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor; however, this has not been granted. Former Governor Pataki signed a law limiting the use of eminent domain for transmission line projects in New York. There is a great deal of public opposition to the proposed project. In the fall of 2008, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission authorized incentives to the project sponsor for project construction, however it is not clear if the project will go forward.

The USFWS trust resources include three Federally-listed species (bog turtle, dwarf wedge mussel, and Indiana bat), as well as migratory birds, interjurisdictional fish, and waters of the United States. The NYRI will likely require authorizations from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for impacts to waters of the United States. The Corps will need to consult with the USFWS pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Several alternatives which reduce potential impacts to habitat, listed species, and migratory birds may be available for this project. The USFWS has no official position regarding the project at this point; however, we are providing technical assistance to the NYRI regarding information needs to assess the project for potential impacts. We are also coordinating with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), National Park Service, and our Regional Solicitor's Office.

Endangered Species

There are several Federally-listed species within your district including the bog turtle (threatened) and Indiana bat (endangered). There is also a Federal candidate for listing, the New England cottontail.

Indiana bat



Little brown bats with WNS (NYSDEC photo)

Indiana bats are found over most of the eastern half of the United States. As of the last winter count there are approximately 513,000 Indiana bats rangewide. New York provided a home to approximately 52,000 of these. Approximately 38,000 Indiana bats used to winter in Ulster County in several abandoned mines and caves. These bats have been tracked to spring/summer roost sites in Ulster, Orange, and Dutchess Counties. The majority of summer sites occur in your district. Unfortunately, there is a new threat to the survival and recovery of the Indiana bat, white-nose syndrome (WNS). WNS refers to a white fungus on the noses of many affected bats. The fungus may be a symptom and not the

cause of the mortality observed to date. In addition, bats affected with WNS do not always have the fungus, but may display abnormal behaviors. WNS has been found in over 45 caves/mines in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont, (and likely New Hampshire and West Virginia) and is killing thousands of winter cave-dwelling bats. The NYSDEC, with the assistance of multiple laboratories throughout the country, is spearheading an investigation into the source and possible spread of WNS. The USFWS is the primary point of contact for the public for cave advisories, decontamination protocols, status of affected sites, and other general information on the syndrome. We have organized surveys for the syndrome at additional caves throughout New England and important hibernating sites elsewhere. We are also facilitating information exchange among USFWS and NYSDEC biologists, through weekly conference calls, and among all involved research labs to avoid redundant investigations. The USFWS is maintaining a database of caves and mines that have been searched in 2008 and 2009 to track new reports of the syndrome. Web pages have also been developed to disseminate accurate information. For additional information, please visit http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html

Bog turtle

The bog turtle is a small wetland-dependent turtle that occurs in two areas in New York – the lower Hudson Valley and in several counties bordering Lake Ontario. The USFWS reviews projects to determine potential impacts to listed species, such as the bog turtle. We are also a partner in efforts to restore and manage habitat for the Federally-listed threatened bog turtle along with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, NYSDEC, New York Natural Heritage Program, and Environmental Defense. This involves control of invasive plant species using techniques such as bio-control of purple loosestrife, manual removal, herbicides, and controlled grazing using cows, goats, and sheep to restore open fen and wet meadow habitats.



Grazer at bog turtle site

Hudson River PCBs – Remediation and Restoration

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have polluted the Hudson River environment since the late 1940s. Two General Electric manufacturing facilities located in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, New York, discharged over a million pounds of PCBs into the river. The PCBs are a major concern because they last in the environment for many decades, low concentrations pose health hazards to humans, birds, fish, and mammals, and they accumulate in living creatures over time.

The USFWS participates in remedial activities by providing technical expertise to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Biological Technical Assistance Group (BTAG). The goal of the process is to clean up or contain the PCBs to reduce present and future risks to human health and the environment. Dredging is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2009.

In a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), the Federal and State trustee agencies are responsible for evaluating the injuries associated with PCB contamination of the natural resources of the Hudson River and determining appropriate actions to restore those resources. Ongoing injury assessment studies include work focused on adverse impacts to mink and birds on the Hudson River.

More information regarding the Hudson River NRDA is available at:
<http://www.fws.gov/contaminants/restorationplans/HudsonRiver/index.html>



Brewster Well Field Superfund Site Restoration Plan

The USFWS and NYSDEC completed a restoration plan related to this Superfund site in 2008. The Brewster Well Field Superfund Site clean-up resulted in impacts to wetlands at that site. Settlement funds negotiated by the USFWS and NYSDEC in 1996 will be used within the next few years by NYSDEC and Environmental Defense to restore and protect wetlands that support or could support the Federally-listed bog turtle. Part of the proposed project is to restore bog turtle habitat at the Bog Brook Unique Area.

