UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services Office
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May 15, 2018

Timothy M. Hill, Administrator
Ohio Department of Transportation
Office of Environmental Services
1980 West Broad Street, Mail Stop 4170
Columbus, OH 43223

TAILS: 03E15000-2018-F-1257

Attn: Matt Raymond

RE: **MOE-536-8.50 (PID 107729)**

Dear Mr. Hill,

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is responding to your request dated May 8, 2018 to verify that the proposed **MOE-536-8.50** project (the Project), PID 107729, may rely on the February 29, 2016, Framework Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Federal-Aid Highway Program projects that may affect the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and/or northern long-eared bat (NLEB) (*Myotis septentrionalis*)[1]. ODOT has determined that the Project is *likely to adversely affect* the Indiana bat and/or the NLEB.

This letter provides the Service's response as to whether the Project may rely on the PBO to comply with Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) for its effects to the Indiana bat and/or NLEB. ODOT has determined that this project will have no effect on any other federally listed species or designated critical habitat other than the Indiana bat and NLEB.

The Project, as proposed, will repair a landslide along SR 536, 9 miles ESE of Woodsfield, in Green Township, Monroe County by constructing a retaining wall. All work will occur in the existing right of way. We understand that the project will result in impacts up to 0.02 acres of suitable wooded habitat (SWH) for the Indiana bat and/or NLEB which will be removed for the project.

Conclusion

The Service has reviewed the May 8, 2018 letter and supporting materials submitted by your office, which describe the effects of the proposed Project and include ODOT's commitment to implement the impact avoidance, minimization, and compensation measures as described for CC2-c projects in the 2016 PBO. These measures include the implementation of:

- CM-1a, which will offset the acreage of SWH to be removed in the Eastern Management Unit, as follows:

[1] Note: The Programmatic Biological Opinion on Final 4(d) Rule for the Northern Long-Eared Bat and Activities Excepted from Take Prohibitions is included in the ODOT PBO by reference.

- 0.02 acres of SWH will be removed during the **active** season within 100 feet from the edge of pavement, this acreage will be replaced at a ratio of 1.25:1; and
- Therefore, 0.025 acres of credits will be subtracted from the acreage credit available at the SCCC2 Bat Conservation Area (BCA).

We confirm that the proposed Project's effects are consistent with those analyzed in the PBO. The Service has determined that projects consistent with the conservation measures and scope of the program analyzed in the PBO are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Indiana bat and/or the NLEB.

Incidental Take

Indiana Bat

The Service anticipates that tree removal associated with the proposed Project will cause incidental take of Indiana bats. As described in the Framework Incidental Take Statement (ITS) of the PBO, such taking will be difficult to detect. The Service determined that it is appropriate to measure the amount or extent of incidental taking resulting from PBO projects using the proposed acreage of tree removal from Indiana bat suitable habitat as a surrogate for the numbers of individuals taken.

The proposed Project will remove 0.02 acres of SWH for the Indiana bat, as defined by the 2016 PBO.

The Service will add the acreage of Project-related tree removal to the annual total acreage attributed to the PBO as a surrogate measure of Indiana bat take and exempted from the prohibitions against incidental taking. Such exemption is effective so long as your agency implements the reasonable and prudent measure (RPM) and accompanying terms and conditions of the PBO's ITS.

Northern Long-eared Bat

The Service anticipates that tree removal associated with the proposed Project will cause incidental take of NLEBs. However, the Project is consistent with the PBO, and such projects will not cause take of NLEB that is prohibited under the final 4(d) rule for this species (50 CFR §17.40(o)). Therefore, this taking does not require exemption from the Service.

Reporting Dead or Injured Bats

Please note that removal of SWH during the bats' active season could result in felling trees in which individual bats or maternity colonies of female bats and their pups are roosting. In addition, pups may not be volant when the tree clearing activity is conducted. Therefore, if workers at the project site observe any bats flying from the trees being felled, all work should cease, and our office must be notified and consulted immediately for guidance on how best to proceed. Such inter-agency coordination can avoid or reduce the direct, mortal take of Indiana or northern long-eared bats as a result of the tree clearing activity.

ODOT, its Local cooperators, and any contractors must take care when handling dead or injured Indiana bats and/or NLEBs, or any other federally listed species that are found at the Project site in order to preserve biological material in the best possible condition and to protect the handler from exposure to diseases, such as rabies. Project personnel are responsible for ensuring that any evidence about determining the cause of death or injury is not unnecessarily disturbed. Reporting the discovery of dead or injured listed species is required in all cases to enable the Service to determine whether the level of incidental take exempted by this PBO is exceeded, and to ensure that the terms and conditions are

appropriate and effective. Parties finding a dead, injured, or sick specimen of any endangered or threatened species must promptly notify this Service Office.

Reinitation Notice

This letter concludes consultation for the proposed Project, which qualifies for inclusion in the PBO issued to Ohio on February 26, 2016. To maintain this inclusion, a reinitiation of this Project-level consultation is required if:

1. the amount or extent of incidental take of Indiana bat is exceeded; *or bats are observed flying from trees during felling, as described in the first paragraph under "Reporting Dead or Injured Bats" above*;
2. new information reveals that the Project may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not considered in the PBO;
3. the Project is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to listed species or designated critical habitat not considered in the PBO; or
4. a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated that the Project may affect.

Per condition #1 above, the anticipated incidental take is exceeded when:

- the Project removes trees from more than 0.02 acres of SWH for the Indiana bat.

In instances where the amount or extent of incidental take is exceeded, any operations causing such take must cease pending reinitiation.

As of this date, our records indicate that projects coordinated under the 2016 PBO have resulted in take of 307.77 acres of SWH:

Management Unit	IT for this project	Cumulative IT to date
Statewide	0.02 acres	**307.77 acres**

We appreciate your continued efforts to ensure that this Project is fully consistent with all applicable provisions of the PBO. If you have any questions regarding our response or if you need additional information, please contact Karen Hallberg at extension 23 in this office.

Sincerely,

Megan Seymour
Acting Field Supervisor

cc (***all email only***):

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