United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

New England Field Office
70 Commercial Street, Suite 300
Concord, NH 03301-5087
http://www.fws.gov/newengland

January 22, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) New England Field Office has determined that individual project review for certain types of activities associated with communication towers **is not required.** These comments are submitted in accordance with provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Due to the rapid expansion of the telecommunication industry, we are receiving a growing number of requests for review of **existing** and **new** telecommunication facilities in relation to the presence of federally-listed or proposed, threatened or endangered species, critical habitat, wilderness areas and/or wildlife preserves. We have evaluated our review process for proposed communications towers and believe that individual correspondence with this office is not required for the following types of actions relative to **existing** facilities:

1. the re-licensing of existing telecommunication facilities;
2. audits of existing facilities associated with acquisition;
3. routine maintenance of existing tower sites, such as painting, antenna or panel replacement, upgrading of existing equipment, etc.;
4. co-location of new antenna facilities on/in existing structures;
5. repair or replacement of existing towers and/or equipment, provided such activities do not significantly increase the existing tower mass and height, or require the addition of guy wires.

In order to obviate the need to contact this office in the future for individual environmental review for **existing** communication towers or antenna facilities, please note that we are not aware of any federally-listed, threatened or endangered species that are being adversely affected by any existing communication tower or antenna facility in the following states: Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Furthermore, we are not aware of any **existing** telecommunication towers in federally-designated critical habitats, wilderness areas or wildlife preserves. Therefore, no further consultation with this office relative to the impact of the above referenced activities on federally-listed species is required.

Future Coordination with this Office Relative to **New** Telecommunication Facilities

We have determined that proposed projects are not likely to adversely affect any federally listed or proposed species when the following steps are taken to evaluate new telecommunication facilities:

1. If the facility will be installed within or on an existing structure, such as in a church steeple or on the roof of an existing building, no further coordination with this office is necessary. Similarly, new antennas or towers in urban and other developed areas, in which no natural vegetation will be affected, do not require further review.

2. If the above criteria cannot be met, your review of our lists of threatened and endangered species locations within Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts may confirm that no federally-listed endangered or threatened species are known to occur in the town or county where the project is proposed.

3. If a listed species is present in the town or county where the project is proposed, further review of our lists of threatened and endangered species may allow you to conclude that suitable habitat for the species will not be affected. Based on past experiences, we anticipate that there will be few, if any, projects that are likely to impact piping plovers, roseate terns, bog turtles, Jesup's milk-vetch or other such species that are found on coastal beaches, riverine habitats or in wetlands because communication towers typically are not located in these habitats.

For projects that meet the above criteria, there is no need to contact this office for further project review. A copy of this letter should be retained in your file as the Service's determination that no listed species are present, or that listed species in the general area will not be affected. Due to the high workload associated with responding to many individual requests for threatened and endangered species information, we will no longer be providing response letters for activities that meet the above criteria. This correspondence and the species lists remain valid until January 1, 2017. Updated consultation letters and species lists are available on our website:

http://www.fws.gov/newengland/EndangeredSpec-Consultation.htm (accessed January 2016)

Thank you for your cooperation, and please contact Maria Tur of this office at 603-223-2541 if you need further assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas R. Chapman
Supervisor
New England Field Office