



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ecological Services, Eastern North Carolina Field Office
3916 Sunset Ridge Rd.
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27607

DATE: _____

**MOORE COUNTY, NC
RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER
CLEAR ZONE SELF-CERTIFICATION LETTER**

Project Name: _____

Project Address (Parcel Number and Street Address if Available):

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Moore County online project review process for red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). By printing this letter in conjunction with your project review package, you are certifying that you have completed the online project review process for the project named above in accordance with all instructions provided, using the best available information to reach your conclusions for RCW. This letter, along with your project information, completes the review of your project for RCW in accordance with section 9 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, 87 Stat. 884), as amended (ESA). This letter is only to be used in Moore County, NC. This letter does not complete the review of your project for other listed species. If there are other federally listed species that may be affected by your project, please use the Service's general online review process at this link (<https://www.fws.gov/office/eastern-north-carolina/project-planning-and-consultation>).

A copy of this letter and other project information should be kept for your records. The letter and information do not need to be submitted to the Service for this certification to be valid.

PLEASE NOTE: This letter is not to be used for self-certification of projects that fall within the Red Zone on the map at <https://www.fws.gov/media/nc-sandhills-rcw-red-zone-and-clear-zones-safe-harbor-agreement>. This letter is for projects located in the **Clear Zone** (i.e., any area not marked as red on the map) **and will not take place within 50 feet of an RCW cavity tree**. If your project falls within a Red Zone, or if you can't check both boxes below, please refer to the Service's website (<https://www.fws.gov/office/eastern-north-carolina/sandhills-rcw-safe-harbor>) for additional information or contact our office at (919) 856-4520.

CERTIFICATION:

To use this form to self-certify compliance with the ESA for RCW, the box in Number 1 AND the box in Number 2 must be checked.

1. The box below must be checked:

☐ I have reviewed the most recent online map and the project is **in a Clear Zone.**

2. Read the entire letter and check this box:

☐ I certify that I have read this letter in its entirety and will abide by the listed Conservation Measures herein to the extent practicable.

The red-cockaded woodpecker is endemic to open, mature and old growth pine ecosystems in the southeastern United States. It depends on mature live pine trees for its nesting and roosting sites (called clusters) and for foraging habitat. The Service's Recovery Plan defines the cluster as the aggregation of cavity trees used and defended by a group of red-cockaded woodpeckers and a 200-foot buffer of continuous forest. The Recovery plan also outlines the minimum acreage, distribution, and stocking levels of foraging habitat (stands of southern yellow pine) required to conserve a family group of woodpeckers. Requisite foraging habitat must be found in pine stands contiguous with the cluster and within a 1/2-mile radius of the cluster center (foraging partition). Property development within a cluster and associated foraging habitat, if not carefully conducted, is potentially harmful to the species and may violate the ESA if not specifically authorized by the Service.

Recovery efforts for this species are underway and may result in groups becoming reestablished in areas currently unoccupied by this species. The cumulative loss of foraging and nesting habitat caused by residential and commercial construction is one of the primary threats to the continued existence of the RCW in the North Carolina Sandhills area. The Conservation Measures listed below will help minimize the threats to the RCW.

Recommended Conservation Measures

1. Planners and builders are encouraged to shift proposed development to avoid removing large pine trees.
2. To maintain suitability of the habitat, take measures to prevent damage to the bole and root system of the remaining longleaf pines.
3. Retain turpentine trees and all old growth longleaf pines that may be on the property.
4. Where cutting is necessary, large branches should be removed or trimmed as a first option instead of complete tree removal.
5. Landscaping should use species native to the Sandhills ecosystem that do not exceed seven feet in height. Exotic invasive plants should be avoided.

This certification letter is valid for one (1) year. However, this determination must be reconsidered if the project design is subsequently modified, or if new information becomes available. If an RCW constructs a cavity in a pine tree on the subject property within the one-year time frame, this letter

does not allow disturbance (within the drip line) or removal of the cavity tree, and additional review and approval should be requested. Information about the online project review process including instructions, species information, and other information regarding project reviews within North Carolina is available at our website (<https://www.fws.gov/office/eastern-north-carolina/project-planning-and-consultation>). If you have any questions, please email raleigh@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Archambault, Ph.D.
Acting Field Supervisor
Raleigh Ecological Services Field Office