



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

West Virginia Field Office
694 Beverly Pike
Elkins, West Virginia 26241



July 26, 2010

RE: Scoping Notice; Incidental Take Permit for Beech Ridge Wind Energy Project

Dear Interested Parties:

This is to notify you of the recent *Federal Register Notice* announcing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regarding an anticipated application from Beech Ridge Energy LLC for an incidental take permit for take of endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and endangered Virginia big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus*) in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA).

The Service will be responsible for completing a review of the ESA Section 10 permit application, and documenting our findings in an EIS pursuant to the NEPA and the ESA. The ESA Section 10 permit application and related habitat conservation plan (HCP) will describe avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures that will be used to protect the Indiana bat and Virginia big-eared bat at the proposed Beech Ridge Wind Project (Project). The EIS will assess the effects on the environment of the proposed action: issuing a permit and implementing the HCP. In addition, the Service's Biological Opinion will document to what extent take of Indiana bats and Virginia big-eared bats will occur, and if that take will result in jeopardy to the species as a whole. If the proposed action will not result in jeopardy to the species, and other permit issuance criteria are met, the Service will issue an incidental take permit authorizing a specific amount of take of Indiana bats and Virginia big-eared bats over a specific period of time to Beech Ridge Energy LLC.

The scoping period for the proposed permit is currently open for public comment. The HCP and EIS are not complete yet, and there are no documents to review. The Service is simply requesting suggestions and information from the public and any interested parties on the scope of issues and alternatives to be included in the EIS. Once the HCP and Draft EIS are completed, they will be available for public review and comment.

Please see the enclosed press release and Federal Register notice for more information.

Sincerely,

Laura Hill
For Deborah Carter
Field Supervisor

Enclosures