

#E1-20370

GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WILDLIFE RESOURCES DIVISION

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COMMISSIONER

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December 27, 2013

Kevin Starnier
Project Manager
Skelly and Loy, Inc.
449 Eisenhower Boulevard, Suite 300
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Subject: Known occurrences of natural communities, plants and animals of highest priority conservation status on or near STB Finance Docket No. 35756, Hartwell Railroad Company, Elbert County, Georgia

Dear Mr. Starnier:

This is in response to your request of December 13, 2013. According to our records, within a three-mile radius of the project site, there are the following Natural Heritage Database occurrences:

GA *Notropis scepcticus* (Sandbar Shiner) approx. 2.0 mi. NE of site in Beaverdam Creek
GA *Sedum pusillum* (Granite Stonecrop) approx. 2.5 mi. SE of site
Savannah River Lakes [DOD/COE] approx. 2.5 mi. NE of site

* Entries above preceded by "US" indicates species with federal status in Georgia (Protected or Candidate). Species that are federally protected in Georgia are also state protected; "GA" indicates Georgia protected species.

Recommendations:

We have no records of high priority species or habitats within the project area. Since this project is in an urban setting, it is not likely to negatively impact rare species or habitats.

We are concerned about streams and other habitats that could be impacted by the proposed rail improvement project. We recommend that stringent erosion control practices be used during construction activities and that vegetation is re-established on disturbed areas as quickly as possible. Silt fences and other erosion control devices should be inspected and maintained until soil is stabilized by vegetation. Please use natural vegetation and grading techniques (e.g. vegetated swales, turn-offs, vegetated buffer strips) that will ensure that the road or ROW does not serve as a conduit for storm water or pollutants into the water during or after construction. These measures will help protect water quality in the vicinity of the project as well as in downstream areas.

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COORDINATOR

Please send all future correspondence to Anna Yellin, Environmental Review Coordinator. Email correspondence is preferred. I can be contacted at anna.yellin@dnr.state.ga.us or 706-557-3283.

Disclaimer:

Please keep in mind the limitations of our database. The data collected by the Nongame Conservation Section comes from a variety of sources, including museum and herbarium records, literature, and reports from individuals and organizations, as well as field surveys by our staff biologists. In most cases the information is not the result of a recent on-site survey by our staff. Many areas of Georgia have never been surveyed thoroughly. Therefore, the Nongame Conservation Section can only occasionally provide definitive information on the presence or absence of rare species on a given site. Our files are updated constantly as new information is received. **Thus, information provided by our program represents the existing data in our files at the time of the request and should not be considered a final statement on the species or area under consideration.**

If you know of populations of highest priority species that are not in our database, please fill out the appropriate data collection form and send it to our office. Forms can be obtained through our web site (<http://www.georgiawildlife.com/node/1376>) or by contacting our office. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Anna Yellin
Environmental Review Coordinator

Data Available on the Nongame Conservation Section Website

- Georgia protected plant and animal profiles are available on our website. These accounts cover basics like descriptions and life history, as well as threats, management recommendations and conservation status. Visit <http://www.georgiawildlife.com/node/2721>.
- Rare species and natural community information can be viewed by Quarter Quad, County and HUC8 Watershed. To access this information, please visit our GA Rare Species and Natural Community Information page at: <http://www.georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern?cat=conservation>.
- Downloadable files of rare species and natural community data by quarter quad and county are also available. They can be downloaded from: <http://www.georgiawildlife.com/node/1370>.
- cc: Victoria Rutson