



# Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

ORIGINAL

PF12-9

Division of Environmental Services  
Natural Diversity Section  
450 Robinson Lane  
Bellefonte, PA 16823-9620  
(814) 359-5237 Fax: (814) 359-5175

October 4, 2012

FILED  
SECRETARY OF THE  
COMMISSION  
2012 OCT 11 A 8:59  
FEDERAL ENERGY  
REGULATORY COMMISSION

IN REPLY REFER TO  
SIR# 38723

KIMBERLY D. BOSE  
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION  
888 FIRST STREET, NE, ROOM 1A  
WASHINGTON, DC 20426

RE: **Species Impact Review (SIR) – Rare, Candidate, Threatened and Endangered Species  
PNDI Search No. LARGE PROJECT REVIEW  
CONSTITUTION PIPELINE PROJECT  
MULTIPLE MUNICIPALITIES Township/Borough, SUSQUEHANNA County,  
Pennsylvania**

Dear MS. BOSE:

I have reviewed the map accompanying your recent correspondence, which concerns the above-referenced project. Based on records maintained in the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) database and Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) files, the **timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*, PA candidate)** is known from the vicinity of the proposed project site. Timber rattlesnakes occur in the forested, mountainous regions of the Commonwealth. They prefer forested areas to forage for small mammals (e.g., mice and chipmunks) and southerly-facing slopes for hibernating and other thermoregulatory activities. The timber rattlesnake is threatened by habitat loss/alteration, wanton killing, and poaching.

Given the proximity of the project to known critical timber rattlesnake habitat, we request that a timber rattlesnake habitat assessment be conducted in the project area, **in the project segment skirting Taylor Hill (NE of Susquehanna) between Canawacta Creek and Starucca Creek, by a PFBC recognized/qualified timber rattlesnake surveyor.** We have included the list of PFBC recognized/qualified surveyors and habitat assessment protocol for your convenience. Upon completion of the habitat survey, the qualified rattlesnake biologist is to submit a report to this office (Natural Diversity Section) for review and comment. The habitat survey report should include color photographs of the project area (keyed to a site map or diagram) and a description of habitats occurring within the immediate area to be developed (including access roads), as well as the surrounding area. Potential timber rattlesnake critical habitat (denning/gestating areas) should be photographed and mapped accordingly. In addition, the report should also include detailed project plans and maps with a description of the proposed work (including access roads), project impacts and alternatives. Pending the review of this information, a survey targeting the presence of the timber rattlesnake in the project area and/or other project modifications may be requested.

In any future correspondence with us regarding this specific project, please contact Kathy Gipe at

Our Mission:

[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)

*To protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.*

SIR #38723  
ZIMMER  
Page 2

814-359-5186 and refer to the SIR number above. Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this matter of timber rattlesnake conservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher A. Urban". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "U".

Christopher A. Urban, Chief  
Natural Diversity Section

CAU/KDG/kn

Enclosures (2)

**PENNSYLVANIA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION**  
**Division of Environmental Services**  
**Natural Diversity Section**  
**450 Robinson Lane**  
**Bellefonte, PA 16823-9620**

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**QUALIFIED TIMBER RATTLESNAKE SURVEYORS**

The following list includes persons known to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission whom possess skills and have experience in properly searching for and finding timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*) and in identifying their critical habitat. This information is not to be construed as an endorsement of individuals or firms by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission or any of its employees. Persons not on this list but who have documented experience in conducting scientific studies of, or successful searches for, timber rattlesnakes and their critical habitat may submit their qualifications to the Natural Diversity Section for review and possible inclusion as a recognized biologist/surveyor. Each person added to or deleted from this list shall be at the sole discretion of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. This list is subject to revision at any time without prior notice. Any individuals handling, collecting, or otherwise removing timber rattlesnakes from their natural habitat, even if on a temporary basis for relocation, must first obtain a Scientific Collector's Permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. All permitted collector's encounters with timber rattlesnakes must be reported in writing to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Natural Diversity Section.

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PENNSYLVANIA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION  
Division of Environmental Services--Natural Diversity Section  
450 Robinson Lane  
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Timber Rattlesnake Habitat Assessment Form (revised 02/11/10)

*Project Information*

Project/Property Name: \_\_\_\_\_ SIR# \_\_\_\_\_

Project Type/Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Size\* (acreage): \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant/Landowner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Quad: \_\_\_\_\_ Township/Municipality: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Attach a copy of topographic map and a site sketch showing survey site and natural features identified.

*Assessment Site Information* [Areas within and at least 300 feet around the entire project area need to be assessed.]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Site ID\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ N Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_ W

Map Datum Used: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Size\*\* (acreage): \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* The surveyor should use his/her judgement on the size of the area that a single assessment encompasses. Additional assessment forms should be used to accurately describe and evaluate large contiguous areas by utilizing a separate form for separate habitat areas within the project boundaries. Each separate area assessed should be assigned a Site ID name that is referenced to the overall site sketch.

*Weather Conditions* (Note: Assessment cannot be conducted in snow cover.)

Air temperature (°F) \_\_\_\_\_ % Cloud Cover \_\_\_\_\_

*Habitat Description*

General description: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of remoteness/nearby disturbance (roads, homes, buildings, utility right-of-ways, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Topographical description: \_\_\_\_\_

Slope (Degrees) \_\_\_\_\_

Aspect \_\_\_\_\_ (compass orientation, i.e., direction hillside faces)

Ground Cover:

% rocky ground cover: \_\_\_\_\_

% rocky ground cover that receives direct sunlight: \_\_\_\_\_

List size range and shape of rocks (round, flat, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Project Name \_\_\_\_\_ Site ID # \_\_\_\_\_ (con't)

Vegetative Composition:

% Tree Canopy Cover \_\_\_\_\_

Dominant species present in and surrounding the described habitat:

Trees: \_\_\_\_\_

Shrubs: \_\_\_\_\_

Other plant species of note: \_\_\_\_\_

**Species Observations**

Were herpetofauna species or their signs (e.g., sheds, scat, "forms") observed on-site (include timber rattlesnake observations)? If so, what species and how many?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments/Observations:** (use additional sheets if necessary)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**INVESTIGATOR'S OPINION**

In your opinion, is there timber rattlesnake critical habitat? Yes  or No   
If Yes, what timber rattlesnake critical habitat occurs in this area? See below.

Hibernaculum/Den Yes  or No   
Gestation/Birthing Yes  or No

I certify that to the best of my knowledge, all of the information provided herein is accurate and complete.

Investigator's Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_ Investigator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Reporting. The following items need to be submitted for review:**

- (1) Timber rattlesnake habitat assessment form.
- (2) A project narrative/description, exact project location, equipment to be used in earth moving activities
- (3) Color photographs of surveyed area showing: general panorama, rocky areas, and specimens observed.
- (4) Site sketch showing the location and direction of photos taken.
- (5) Topographic map showing location of area surveyed, the identified potential habitat delineated, the proposed project and associated boundaries.

Please mail these items to: **Natural Diversity Section  
PA Fish & Boat Commission  
450 Robinson Lane  
Bellefonte, PA 16823**