

Public Statement
Cornish 40296

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other state and federal regulations, the NHDOT must investigate the potential impacts that our projects will have on the surrounding natural, cultural, and social environment. Identifying key resources early in the project development process enables the Department to avoid or minimize impacts as design proceeds.

Part of our review involves historic resources. In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Department has reviewed the project area and has determined which historic resources are within the area that would be impacted by the construction of this project. Historic properties can include buildings and structures fifty years or older as well as archaeological sites. In addition to age, it also must be determined if a structure is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The NH Division of Historical Resources, National Park Service, and the NH Division of the Federal Highway Administration have coordinated the identification and evaluation of historical and archaeological resources with plans to rehabilitate Saint-Gaudens Road within the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site from its intersection with NH Route 12A to the Visitor's Center. Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site was originally listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1962. Since the project will be located within existing State right-of-way and the scope is limited to roadway reconstruction, guardrail replacement and installation, installation of underdrain and replacement of drainage pipes, we have mutually agreed that the project will not have an adverse effect on the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site.

Regarding natural resources, for impacts to streams for drainage improvements, a Notification of Routine Roadway and Railway Maintenance will be submitted for approval to the NH Department of Environmental Services. The Connecticut River and Blow-Me-Down Brook are subject to the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act. The Protected Shoreland is defined as all land located within 250 feet of the reference line (natural mean high water level or limit of flowage rights). Any work within the Protected Shoreland will require a Shoreland Permit and a Permit by Notification will be submitted to the NHDES Shoreland Program.

The NH Natural Heritage Bureau was contacted and did indicate that there are records of three rare species (wood turtle, northern long-eared bat, and northern waterleaf) and one exemplary natural community (maple-wood nettle-ostich fern floodplain forest) in the vicinity of the project area. Wood turtles are found in rivers and streams with hard sand or gravel substrate, especially those that are deep, low gradient streams. The streams in the project area consist of intermittent flow with shallow water, and generally lack hard sand or gravel substrate. Also, much of the project area is quite steep. These are not characteristics that are typical of the preferred aquatic or terrestrial habitat of wood turtles. NH Fish & Game was consulted and determined that the project is unlikely to impact wood turtles. If turtles are observed nesting in an area that will be impacted by construction activities, the area shall be avoided until the Bureau of Environment coordinates with NH Fish and Game on how to address the nest site.

The documented occurrence of maple-wood nettle-ostrich fern floodplain forest is not located within the project area. Further, silver maple was not identified in the project area and no evidence of this natural community type was observed in the project area.

The Natural Heritage Bureau also reported a documented population of Eastern waterleaf south of the project area. In general, potential habitat for Eastern waterleaf begins beyond the limits of the maintained ditch line and is not expected to be impacted by construction activities. Suitable habitat was not found adjacent to the edge of the roadway. If the hillside will be impacted by construction, a survey during the growing season will be completed for Eastern waterleaf.

The Department has coordinated with the US Fish & Wildlife Service regarding any potential for impacts to the Northern Long-Eared Bat, which was recently listed as 'Threatened' pursuant to the Endangered Species Act. The Natural Heritage Bureau did not report any known Northern Long-Eared Bat winter hibernacula or maternity roost trees in the vicinity of the project. Clearing of trees necessary for construction of the project will be conducted outside of the Northern Long-Eared Bat active season to reduce potential for impacting the Northern Long-Eared Bat.