



Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Division of Environmental Services
Natural Diversity Section
595 E Rolling Ridge Dr.
Bellefonte, PA 16823
814-359-5237

September 21, 2020

IN REPLY REFER TO
SIR# 53193

Clauser Environmental, LLC
Aaron Clauser
19 School House Lane
Cape May, New Jersey 08210

RE: Species Impact Review (SIR) – Rare, Candidate, Threatened and Endangered Species
PNDI Search No. 712750_1
Plum Run Trail
CHESTER County: East Bradford Township, Westtown Township

Dear Mr. Clauser:

Due to the **Broad-headed Skink (*Plestiodon laticeps*, Candidate)** being known from the watershed, to further determine if the proposed project could have an adverse impact on the species of concern, the Commission had requested a habitat evaluation of the project area.

PFBC Natural Diversity Section staff examined the site with the permittee on September 11, 2020 and determined that the project area could potentially be occupied by the species of concern. During the site visit we discussed recommendations to minimize impacts to the species of concern. The following recommendations apply to the wooded areas of the proposed trail.

Broad-headed skinks are described as arboreal and semi-fossorial in habitat use. Key habitat features include large trees and snags with exfoliating bark or crevices; logs/log piles, rock piles, shed bark; stumps; root wads; ground burrows. Broad-headed skinks hibernate under stumps/roots below the frostline. In order to avoid disturbance to hibernating individuals, I recommend that the project excavation and tree-clearing be conducted between **April 15 and October 15 (April 15 to June 30, preferred)**, during the active period of broad-headed skinks. Trail construction should avoid removal of large trees (>10" dbh), to minimize disturbance to nests. Where allowable, stumps/roots should be left intact.

I also recommend that potential habitat features (logs, debris, rocks, bark, etc.) be removed from the trail site prior to excavation activities. This should take place during the non-breeding season (**October 15 to June 15**) to avoid impacts to eggs/guarding females. In order to further minimize impacts to broad-headed skink, habitat features should be established in wooded areas, outside of the proposed trail ROW. These include log piles, rock piles, snags, coarse woody debris, etc.

Our Mission:

www.fish.state.pa.us

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

If any species of concern are found during project activities, the animal should be moved no farther than necessary out of the immediate project area (no farther than 0.25 miles away within appropriate habitat in the same watershed). Threatened and endangered species observed in the survey should be photographed and areas they were observed/captured should be mapped accordingly. The surveyor should also report other herpetofauna seen while conducting the surveys. Given your experience and onsite consultation with PFBC, we feel that you will be able to coordinate and implement these recommendations to minimize impacts to broad-headed skink.

If these recommendations can be implemented, best management practices are employed and strict erosion and sedimentation controls are used, then I do not foresee the proposed project resulting in adverse impacts to the Broad-headed Skink (*Plestiodon laticeps*).

This response represents the most up-to-date summary of the PNDI data and our files and is valid for two (2) years from the date of this letter. An absence of recorded species information does not necessarily imply species absence. Our data files and the PNDI system are continuously being updated with species occurrence information. Should project plans change or additional information on listed or proposed species become available, this determination may be reconsidered, and consultation shall be re-initiated.

If you have any questions regarding this review, please contact Josh Brown at 814-359-5129 and refer to the SIR # 53193. Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this important matter of species conservation and habitat protection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher A. Urban". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Christopher A. Urban, Chief
Natural Diversity Section

CAU/JRB/dn