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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

September 11, 2020

Theresa L. Tanner
James River and Warm Springs District Ranger
U.S. Forest Service
422 Forestry Road
Hot Springs, VA 24445

Re: Bolar Mountain Wastewater Treatment Facility Project

Dear Ms. Tanner:

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage (DCR) has searched its Biotics Data System for occurrences of natural heritage resources from the area outlined on the submitted map. Natural heritage resources are defined as the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, unique or exemplary natural communities, and significant geologic formations.

Biotics documents the presence of natural heritage resources within the project boundary including a 100ft buffer. However, due to the scope of the activity we do not anticipate that this project will adversely impact these natural heritage resources. Please note, a predictive model identifying potential habitat for natural heritage resources does intersect the project boundary. However, based on DCR biologist's review of the proposed project a survey is not recommended for the resource.

In addition, the proposed project will fragment an Ecological Core (**C1**) as identified in the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisvnl>), one of a suite of tools in Virginia ConservationVision that identify and prioritize lands for conservation and protection.

Ecological Cores are areas of unfragmented natural cover with at least 100 acres of interior that provide habitat for a wide range of species, from interior-dependent forest species to habitat generalists, as well as species that utilize marsh, dune, and beach habitats. Cores also provide benefits in terms of open space, recreation, water quality (including drinking water protection and erosion prevention), and air quality (including carbon sequestration and oxygen production), along with the many associated economic benefits of these functions. The cores are ranked from C1 to C5 (C5 being the least ecologically relevant) using many prioritization criteria, such as the proportions of sensitive habitats of natural heritage resources they contain.

Fragmentation occurs when a large, contiguous block of natural cover is dissected by development, and other forms of permanent conversion, into one or more smaller patches. Habitat fragmentation results in biogeographic changes that disrupt species interactions and ecosystem processes, reducing biodiversity and habitat quality due to limited recolonization, increased predation and egg parasitism, and increased invasion by weedy species.

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Therefore minimizing fragmentation is a key mitigation measure that will reduce deleterious effects and preserve the natural patterns and connectivity of habitats that are key components of biodiversity. DCR recommends efforts to minimize edge in remaining fragments, retain natural corridors that allow movement between fragments and designing the intervening landscape to minimize its hostility to native wildlife (natural cover versus lawns). Mapped cores in the project area can be viewed via the Virginia Natural Heritage Data Explorer, available here: <http://vanhde.org/content/map>.

Under a Memorandum of Agreement established between the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and the DCR, DCR represents VDACS in comments regarding potential impacts on state-listed threatened and endangered plant and insect species. The current activity will not affect any documented state-listed plants or insects.

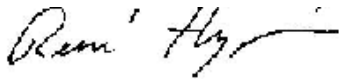
There are no State Natural Area Preserves under DCR's jurisdiction in the project vicinity.

New and updated information is continually added to Biotics. Please re-submit a completed order form and project map for an update on this natural heritage information if the scope of the project changes and/or six months has passed before it is utilized.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) maintains a database of wildlife locations, including threatened and endangered species, trout streams, and anadromous fish waters that may contain information not documented in this letter. Their database may be accessed from <http://vafwis.org/fwis/> or contact Ernie Aschenbach at 804-367-2733 or Ernie.Aschenbach@dwr.virginia.gov.

Should you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 804-371-2708. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "René Hypes", with a stylized flourish at the end.

S. René Hypes
Natural Heritage Project Review Coordinator