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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

October 13, 2020

Laura Stull
District Ranger
Glenwood/Pedlar Ranger Districts
27 Ranger Lane
Natural Bridge Station, VA, 24579

Re: Pedlar River North Project Scoping Comments

Dear Ms. Stull:

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.

According to the information currently in our files, Pedlar River-Nicholson Run Stream Conservation Unit (SCU) within and 100 feet of the project areas. SCUs identify stream reaches that contain aquatic natural heritage resources, including 2 miles upstream and 1 mile downstream of documented occurrences, and all tributaries within this reach. SCUs are also given a biodiversity significance ranking based on the rarity, quality, and number of element occurrences they contain. The Pedlar River-Nicholson Run SCU has been given a biodiversity ranking of B2, which represents a site of very high significance. The natural heritage resource associated with this site is:

Parvaspina collina

James Spiny mussel

G1/S1/LE/LE

In addition, the Pedlar River has been designated by the Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) as "Threatened and Endangered Species Water" for the James Spiny mussel and the Green Floater (*Lasmigona subviridis*, G3/S2/NL/LT). There has also been a documented occurrence of a rare dragonfly, the Zebra clubtail (*Stylurus scudderi*, G5/S1S2/NL/NL) at the next bridge to the north of the project that is currently being replaced.

To minimize adverse impacts to the aquatic ecosystem as a result of the proposed activities, DCR recommends the implementation of and strict adherence to applicable state and local erosion and sediment control/storm water management laws and regulations. Due to the legal status of the James spiny mussel and Green floater, DCR also recommends coordination with USFWS and Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR), for the management and protection of these species, the VDWR, to ensure compliance with the Virginia Endangered Species Act (VA ST §§ 29.1-563 – 570).

Also according to a DCR ecologist, two significant communities occur with the Pedlar River North area (blue polygons), with a standard 250-meter SBB buffer (red polygons) displayed in the attached map (Figure 1). In addition to these significant communities, rare plants including the Large purple fringed orchid (*Platanthera grandiflora*, G5/S2/NL/NL) and the Bog bluegrass (*Poa paludigena*, G3/S2/NL/NL) also occur within the natural community polygons. DCR recommends that these areas within the buffer be excluded from any timber harvests or ground-disturbing activity.

Under contract with USFS, surveys are currently being conducted by the DCR-Natural Heritage Program for the proposed project areas. Based on the survey results, DCR may provide additional follow-up comments for this project.

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.

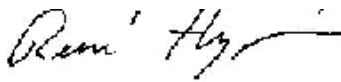
There are no State Natural Area Preserves under DCR's jurisdiction in the project vicinity.

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. There is potential for the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), the Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and /or the tri-colored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) to occur within the project area. Therefore, DCR recommends coordination with USFWS and the VDWR, Virginia's regulatory authority for the management and protection of these species to ensure compliance with the Virginia Endangered Species Act (VA ST §§ 29.1-563 – 570).

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,



S. René Hypes
Natural Heritage Project Review Coordinator

Cc: Ernie Aschenbach, VDWR
Troy Andersen, USFWS

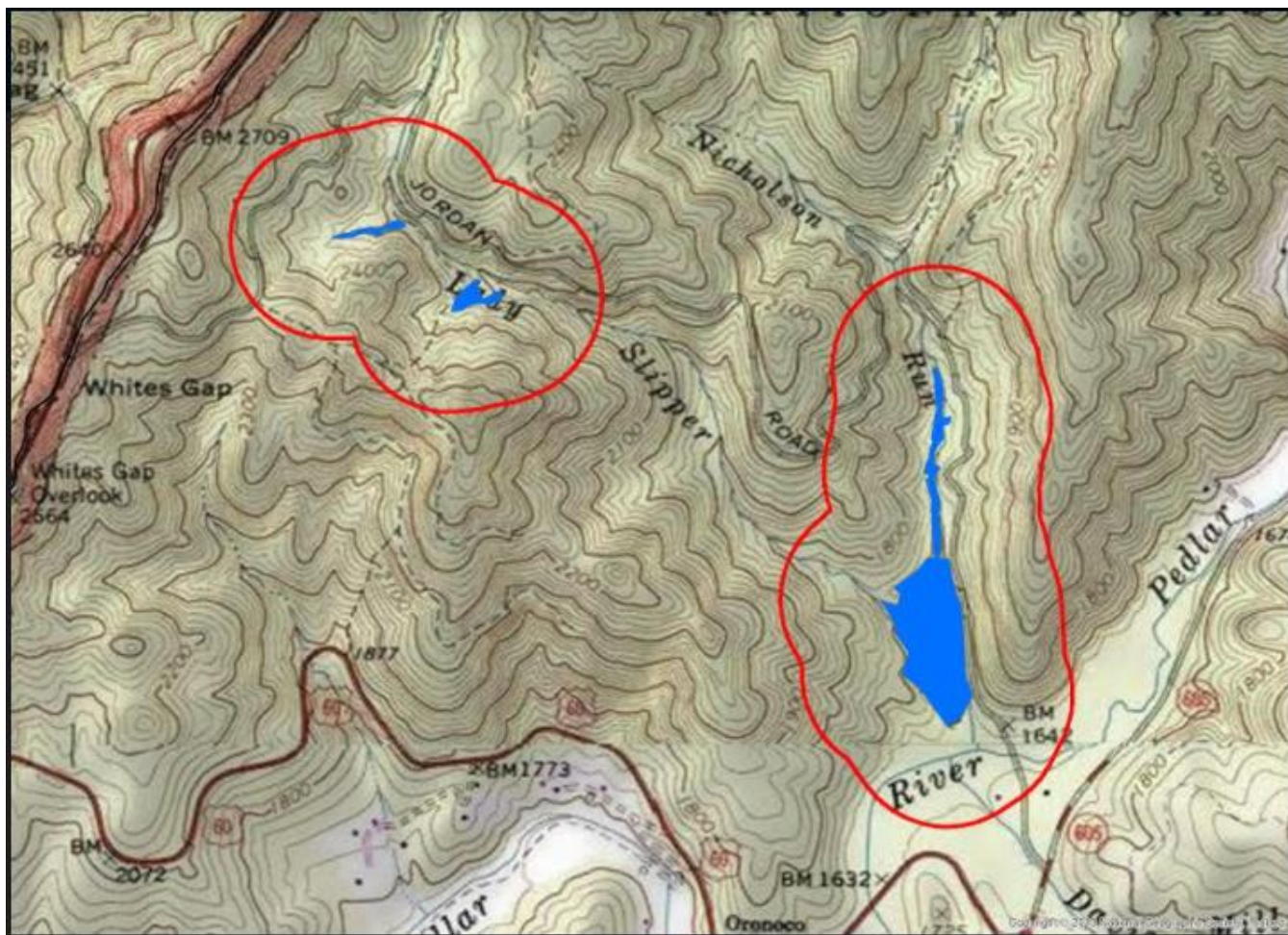


Figure 1: Documented Significant Natural Heritage Communities with 250-meter buffer.