



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

110 S. Amity Road, Suite 300

Conway, Arkansas 72032

Tel.: 501/513-4470 Fax: 501/513-4480



April 14, 2016

Mr. John Fleming
Division Head, Environmental Division
Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department
P.O. Box 2261
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-2261

Dear Mr. Fleming:

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your letter dated April 7, 2016, regarding the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) proposal to widen and reconstruct sections of Interstate 30 and U.S. Highway 67/167 within the city limits of Little Rock and North Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas. The proposed project also includes replacing the Interstate 30 Arkansas River Bridge.

The AHTD letter stated the following:

The IPaC (Information for Planning and Conservation) website was consulted to determine if endangered/threatened species may occur within the limits of the proposed project. The IPaC report indicated that there were three (3) endangered/threatened species that may occur or could potentially be affected by the proposed project. The three species identified are:

- Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*)- Endangered- Interior Least Tern typically inhabit sandbars and open beaches along large rivers and lakes. They nest on sparsely vegetated areas near water, usually with sandy or gravelly substrates. Interior Least Terns are also known to nest on roof tops, particularly flat roofs with pea gravel substrates.
- Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) - Threatened - Piping Plover typically inhabit sand flats or sandbars along rivers and lakes. Their nests are typically built on sandy or gravelly substrates.
- Running Buffalo Clover (*Trifolium stoloniferum*) - Endangered- Running buffalo clover is typically located in areas that are periodically disturbed with somewhat open habitat. It cannot tolerate full sun, full shade, or severely disturbed areas.

The proposed project will be constructed primarily within existing rights-of-way and the surrounding landscape is highly urbanized. A review of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission Sensitive Species database, the closest recorded Interior Least Tern location is 7.5 miles upstream and downstream from the

proposed project, and the nearest rooftop nesting location is approximately 10 miles to the north. There were no recorded locations for piping plover or running buffalo clover near the proposed project area. Based on the proposed preconstruction boundaries and lack of suitable habitat, it has been determined that the listed species are not likely to be adversely affected by construction of this project. Your concurrence is requested.

Our records indicate there are multiple rooftop nesting locations for Interior Least Tern within 1 mile of the proposed action. However, based on the urban setting of these locations, the Service does not anticipate that this action would have any quantifiable effect on the species. These birds are well acclimated to urban noise, construction activities, automobile traffic, and bridge structures and have chosen to nest in locations already having these conditions.

According to our records, there are no other known federally listed or proposed threatened or endangered species in the directly affected area of the project. Furthermore, the Service concurs with your finding that, "...the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species."

We thank you for your cooperation in helping to protect endangered species. For further assistance or if you have any questions, please contact Lindsey Lewis at (501) 513-4489 or lindsey_lewis@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Melvin L. Tobin
Field Supervisor

c (w/o encl)

Randal Looney, Federal Highway Administration
Cindy Osborne, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Jennifer Sheehan, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
John Turner, Arkansas Natural Resources Conservation Commission
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