

## Ecology GPTQ Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, August 28, 2012

### Welcome and Introductions

- Attendance list at attached.

### Indiana Bat Presentation (Sean Fox, ARCADIS, Ecological Solutions, Doug Chamblin)

- Assess projects within I-Bat range for suitable maternity roosts and foraging habitat. (Range map provided by USFWS.)
- Additional acoustic surveys are necessary if suitable habitat is identified.
  - Acoustic surveys should be conducted within flyways.
  - Identification software includes EchoClass (USFWS) and BCID East
  - Acoustic survey season runs from May 15-Aug 15.
  - Need 10 calls minimum w/ 40% identified to species for data to be valid.
  - Should not sample if 30 minutes of continuous rain is expected.
- Consult with GDOT to see if mist-netting would be necessary.
  - Mist-netting will be required on large widening or new location projects.
- ARCADIS presented their AnaBat set-up
  - Use of AnaBat with microphone perched on 12-ft 2x4.
  - Remove surrounding vegetation/branches to limit insect and other background noises.
  - Choose travel corridors near water.
  - Flyways should be less than 100 ft in width
- Ecological Solutions presented their AnaBat set-up
  - Use of the tri-pod set-up recommended in the Indiana Bat Survey Guidance for Kentucky. Used a 12-volt battery to power the unit. GDOT also uses this method but with 4 AA batteries instead of 12V.
  - Be sure to weather-proof the box and AnaBat. Condensation and rain could be a problem.
  - Areas near water and lights were successful.
  - Set sensitivity as close to “7” as possible without interference.
- Suitable Habitat can be variable
  - Any forested area is suitable foraging habitat for males and non-reproductive females.
  - Foraging- Trees 2” DBH are considered suitable.
  - Maternity roosts- flaky bark with sun exposure. (I-bat was identified in a short-leaf pine snag affected by pine beetle in Ellijay. Also found in a tree cavity in Talledega, AL).
  - Alex Levy provided a study that identifies characteristics of suitable maternity roots for Myotis.
- Challenges
  - No one in GA permitted to mist net for bats. DNR can provide a list of companies that are qualified to mist-net.
  - Contracting issues for amending consultant contracts to include Ibat surveys.
  - Two additional bat species are petitioned for listing
    - Eastern small-footed myotis
    - Northern long-eared myotis
    - little brown myotis also is in decline due to high mortality from WNS
  - If mist-netting is required, radio tracking for 5 days would also be required if Ibat is captured.
  - Rich would like to create a subcommittee to look into ways to create a Programmatic Agreement for the Ibat.
  - Protected Species Survey Reports should be submitted after the acoustic survey at minimum. If mist-netting is required, then the report should be submitted after the mist-net survey.

- Questions
  - Will GDOT come up with a protocol for consultants? Answer: follow FWS protocol (<http://batprotocol.info>).
  - How do you make an “effect determination”? Answer :GDOT is working closely with FWS to get to an effect determination after surveys are complete. For now, this will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

### **T/E Updates (Dave Hedeem, Doug Chamblin)**

- GT status change to a Candidate
  - Need to survey for south of fall line.
  - Draft Rangewide Conservation Strategy available
    - Webinar August 29th (other dates available as well)
  - GDOT to be a signatory on the GT Candidate Conservation Agreement
  - GA does not issue take permit
- Question
  - Is scoping of burrows required?
    - Yes, follow GDOT Eastern Indigo Snake methodology but can scope any time of year for GT.
- Striped Newt status change to a Candidate
  - Review IPaC list and DNR listing for potential counties
  - No GDOT methodology available; methodology would need to be submitted for GDOT approval prior to survey.
  - DNR lists 18 counties where there are occurrences. Should propose an effect determination for all projects in these counties: Baker, Berrien, Brooks, Bryan, Camden, Charlton, Emanuel, Evans, Irwin, Jenkins, Lanier, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, Screven, Taylor, Ware, and Wilcox.
- Atlantic Sturgeon- newly listed as endangered in April 2012
  - GDOT has contacted Dr. Douglas Peterson at UGA for additional information
  - A. Sturgeon can travel into the Oconee/Ocmulgee and any other major Atlantic Slope waterway up to an impoundment.
  - Aquatic surveys are not required –assume they are in the main stem and major tribs. If in doubt, consult with GDNR coastal offices and/or NMFS.
  - Coordination with NMFS may be necessary
  - A. Sturgeon spawns in the fall; shortnose spawns in winter. Be aware of date restrictions on projects.
  - Doug to provide contacts (see below)

### **Impact Calculations- (Meg Hedeem)**

- Verify impact calculations received from designers – don’t assume that impacts calculated correctly.
- Note fill vs. clearing impacts
- For stream impacts- no impact from end of rip rap to the ROW line. There are no temporary stream impacts (unless temporary piping is involved).
- Change in bridge impact calculations. Impacts now calculated in linear feet, not acreage. This is specifically for large rivers as “streams” not “open waters”.
- Note temporary clearing vs. permanent clearing
  - Based on long-term management plan for the area
  - The existing condition of the ecological resource needs to be taken into consideration. Need to also consider conversion of resource types as a result of project impacts. For example, if the existing

condition is a scrub shrub wetland and clearing will not permanently alter this condition, the impact should be considered temporary. This needs to be confirmed by the Corps.

- Temporary and permanent easements have different line codes on the plans. Note they may not be identified as temporary easements but may be identified as easement for construction, for example.
- Please forward all comments/questions to Meg Hedeem. GDOT will compile questions and work out additional guidance with the USACE prior to the next GPTQ.

### **General Questions/Comments**

- Will GDOT send out an email list serve for updates to the scope of work?
  - GDOT is working on this.
- When will Scope of Work updates be available?
- Are USACE transmittal letters required? No.
- Send JD request with the permit, not the report.
- Does EPD need to visit every project? No. They do not need to look at perennial streams or wetlands. They should look at intermittent streams, ephemeral channels, and open waters. However, if these features are outside project limits and will not possibly need a variance, then you do not need to do a site visit with EPD

**Next Meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 13, 2012 from 1:30-4:00 pm in 16<sup>th</sup> floor conference room.**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### IBAT

- Doug to provide PowerPoint presentation and draft range map.
  - Here it is: follow this link to GDOT ftp site (username=dotpublic and password=dotoutside02):  
<ftp://ftp.dot.state.ga.us/DOTFTP/Anonymous-Public/GPTQ-Ecology/8-28-2012/>
- Doug to provide link to free download of Echoclass software
  - <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/mammals/inba/inbasummersurveyguidance.html>

#### T/E Updates

- Doug to provide list of contacts for Atlantic Sturgeon consultation.
  - DNR contacts are Tim Barrett ([Tim.Barrett@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:Tim.Barrett@dnr.state.ga.us)) and Joel Fleming ([Joel.Fleming@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:Joel.Fleming@dnr.state.ga.us));
  - UGA contact is Dr. Douglas Peterson ([dpeterson@warnell.uga.edu](mailto:dpeterson@warnell.uga.edu));
  - NMFS contact is Kelly Shotts ([kelly.shotts@noaa.gov](mailto:kelly.shotts@noaa.gov)).

#### General

- Comments should be provided to Meg regarding impact calculations.
- Comments should be forwarded to Doug regarding topic discussions for next GPTQ.
- GDOT to work on updating Scope of Work.
- Email Doug if you would like to be part of the subcommittee working out a programmatic Indiana bat agreement.