

SNAKE PROTECTION PLAN

Introduction

This Snake Protection Plan (SPP) addresses the timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), which may be present within the Becker Pond Dam Removal project (the Project) area, in Mt Washington, MA. This SPP is being provided as part of the MESA Checklist required for the Project.

Project Summary

As designed, the proposed dam removal will involve construction of a new section of access road and temporary widening of the existing access road to reach the dam, excavation of approximately 525 cubic yards of impounded sediment from behind the dam, and the complete removal of Becker Pond Dam and associated structures.

Snake Protection Plan

The following measures will be implemented as part of the Project, to avoid impacts to snakes.

NHESP-Approved Venomous Snake Biologist

- An NHESP-approved venomous snake biologist (VSB) is required for all direct interactions with venomous snakes and must be available for the duration of the work. An otherwise qualified biologist can provide other environmental services including snake sweeps but may not handle or otherwise interact with any venomous snakes present on-site.

Contractor Education and Awareness Program

- The contractors that will be working in the subject habitat area will complete a tailboard training on snake biology, identification, and ecology conducted by a qualified biologist.
- Handouts containing representative images of the snakes will be provided.
- Increased human activity in the vicinity of snake habitat can lead to increase of potential nest predator species such as raccoons and skunks. In order to discourage any increase in the predator population, contractors will be required to practice good housekeeping and securely dispose of all food wrappers and rubbish.
- If a snake is encountered, the crew will immediately notify the onsite approved wildlife monitor/qualified animal handler.
- All onsite contractors will sign and abide by a confidentiality agreement.

Snake Sweeps

For work that takes place during the active season for rattlesnakes (April 15 – November 15), the following BMPs must be implemented:

- For movement of all vehicles in upland habitats, a biologist is required to sweep for snakes ahead of the vehicle and disturbance (excavation, grading, tree cutting) footprint.
- Snakes may use stockpiled materials or equipment for cover. Stockpiling of equipment and materials will be minimized to the extent practicable for the duration of the Project, and a biologist is required to sweep for snakes prior to moving any stockpiled materials or equipment.

- If a snake is encountered, the approved VSB will:
 - Record observations including description of the surrounding micro habitat; morphological measurements may also be collected and recorded if the snake will be handled (see below);
 - Photo document the snake;
 - If a live snake is encountered, the VSB will encourage the snake to move outside the limits of the work (e.g. 250-500 feet), away from the path of equipment, in the direction the snake was oriented when first observed;
 - If moving the snake does not provide sufficient safety for the snake or onsite personnel, the VSB may detain the snake (see below);
 - If a deceased snake is encountered, the approved wildlife monitor/ VSB will contact NHESP to determine proper removal and disposition of the snake;
 - If a snake is injured, the approved wildlife monitor/ VSB will contact NHESP to obtain information and approval to transport to a certified rehabilitation facility;
 - Within 10 days of observation, the information shall be submitted to NHESP via MassWildlife's Heritage Hub.
- A venomous snake may be detained to provide snake and worker safety. Only the VSB may handle the snake and the VSB will determine and provide the most appropriate method of detention (e.g., covered bucket with air holes, placed in a shaded location), and will be responsible for releasing the snake in an appropriate location that is safe for both the snake and workers. The work activities are anticipated to last for eight weeks, and the VSB will consult with NHESP to determine the most appropriate location to release the snake, given the stage of project construction.
- A visual sweep for snakes will be conducted around all equipment and vehicles prior to moving them around the work site. Snakes may be attracted to the warmth of running vehicles on cool days, or the shade cast by a parked vehicle on warm days, and curl up next to or on tires, or underneath. If snakes are present on/next to/under a vehicle, it cannot be moved until the snake leaves the vehicle and immediate area. If a snake is present near/under equipment that must be moved, the VSB will determine the best approach to move the snake from the area as needed for personnel and snake safety.

General Best Management Practices

- Equipment will be monitored regularly for leaks and a spill kit will be onsite during the work.
- No plastic mesh erosion control materials will be used. Any erosion control fabric used will consist of natural, biodegradable fibers (jute, etc.)