pennsylvania
FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

May 22, 2025

IN REPLY REFER TO
SIR# 61250

Civil and Environmental Consultants, Inc.
Gretchen Addington
700 Cherrington Parkway
Moon Twp, Pennsylvania 15108

RE: Species Impact Review (SIR) – Rare, Candidate, Threatened and Endangered Species
PNDI Search No. 835709_1
Stargazer Renewable Development
Hamlin Township, Norwich Township, Sergeant Township: MCKEAN County

Dear Gretchen Addington:

This responds to your inquiry about a Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) Internet Database search "potential conflict" or a threatened and endangered species impact review. These projects are screened for potential conflicts with rare, candidate, threatened or endangered species under Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission jurisdiction (fish, reptiles, amphibians, aquatic invertebrates only) using the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) database and our own files. These species of special concern are listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Wild Resource Conservation Act, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Code (Chapter 75), or the Wildlife Code.

Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*, PA Species of Special Concern)

Timber Rattlesnakes occur in the forested, mountainous regions of the Commonwealth. They prefer forested areas to forage for small mammals (e.g., mice and chipmunks) and southerly-facing slopes for hibernating and other thermoregulatory activities. The Timber Rattlesnake is threatened by habitat loss/alteration, wanton killing, and poaching.

Given the proximity of the project to known critical Timber Rattlesnake habitat, we recommend that a Timber Rattlesnake habitat assessment be conducted in the project area by a qualified Timber Rattlesnake surveyor. We have included a list of qualified surveyors and habitat assessment protocol for your convenience. Upon completion of the habitat survey, the qualified rattlesnake biologist is to submit a report to this office for review and comment. The habitat survey report should include color photographs of the project area (keyed to a site map or diagram) and a description of habitats occurring within the immediate area to be developed (including access roads), as well as the surrounding area. Potential Timber Rattlesnake critical habitat (denning/gestating areas) should be photographed and mapped accordingly. In addition, the report should also include detailed project plans and maps with a description of the proposed work (including access roads), project impacts and alternatives. Pending the review of this information, a survey targeting the presence of the Timber Rattlesnake in the project area and/or other project modifications may be requested.

Blue-Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*, Endangered)

The Blue-Spotted Salamander is the rarest of the "mole" salamanders that occur in Pennsylvania. There are only three documented populations in the Commonwealth. Like the other mole salamanders (Spotted, Marbled, Jefferson), Blue-Spotted Salamanders live the majority of their lives underground, except during the breeding season, when they are observed moving to and from ephermeral/vernal pools. **Blue-Spotted Salamanders are generally associated with lowland swamps and marshes and surrounding uplands with sandy or loamy soils**.

Based on the review of this information and the proximity of the project to known element occurrences of the Blue-Spotted Salamander, potential habitat could be present within the proposed disturbance area. Therefore, additional evaluations are necessary to confirm whether or not the project site contains Blue-Spotted Salamander habitat and to determine the potential for adverse impacts to this species. We request completion of a **habitat assessment** to characterize and determine if potential habitat exists within the vicinity of the proposed project area.

A qualified biologist, who possesses the necessary Scientific Collector's Permit and Threatened and Endangered Species Permit issued by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, must conduct this habitat assessment. A list of biologists recognized as qualified by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to perform this assessment is enclosed.

Bigmouth Shiner (*Notropis dorsalis*, Threatened)
Burbot (*Lota lota*, Endangered)

Rare or protected fish species are known from the vicinity of the project site. Given the status and sensitivity of the species of concern, we will need more information to allow for a more thorough evaluation of potential adverse impacts from the proposed project. Items such as a detailed narrative accurately describing the project including possible instream work, **stream crossings,** sequence of activities, **basic site plans and map,** aerial maps of the general area, project alternatives, stream characterizations, wetlands/waterways and acreage to be impacted, general habitat descriptions or onsite color photographs (keyed to a site map) would expedite our review process. Follow-up information may be uploaded to the PA Conservation Explorer site PNDI project file. Pending the review of this information a survey for the species of concern may be warranted.

This response represents the most up-to-date summary of the PNDI data and our files and is valid for two (2) years from the date of this letter. An absence of recorded species information does not necessarily imply species absence. Our data files and the PNDI system are continuously being updated with species occurrence information. Should project plans change or additional information on listed or proposed species become available, this determination may be reconsidered, and consultation shall be re-initiated.

If you have any questions regarding this review, please contact Josh Brown at [redacted] or [redacted] and refer to the SIR # 61250. Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this important matter of species conservation and habitat protection.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Christopher A. Urban, Chief
Natural Diversity Section

CAU/JRB/dn

Enclosures