Implementing a Rangewide Programmatic: The Indiana Bat and Northern Long-Eared Bat Programmatic Consultation in Practice

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Session Overview

I. Session Overview

II. Making of a Programmatic

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IV. State Perspectives

V. Panel Discussion

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Indiana Bat Rangewide Conservation Strategy
and Programmatic Consultation

Background

Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*)

– Federally endangered species, listed 1967

– Found over most of the Eastern half of the United States

– Hibernate in large numbers in caves

– Roost in summer in tree snags

Image courtesy FWS
Background

Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

– Federally threatened, listed 2015
– Found in 37 states from the Atlantic coast westward to eastern Montana and Wyoming
– Threatened by white-nose syndrome
Background

Consultation and mitigation approaches

– Vary greatly across the bats’ ranges
– Have been rapidly changing in recent years
– Will evolve independently in response to white-nose syndrome

Such variations and changes cause uncertainty, conflict, delays, large workloads for agencies
Project History

• FHWA proposed collaboration with FWS to develop a range-wide Conservation and Consultation Strategy focused on Indiana Bat

• Other modal agencies, FTA and FRA, then joined the working group
Project History

2012
- FHWA and FWS agree to develop a range-wide Conservation and Consultation Strategy
- FHWA, FTA and FRA and supported by the USDOT Volpe Center.
- Collaborative development of programmatic, biweekly meetings

2015
- FHWA and FWS released the Programmatic Informal Consultation, in conjunction with USDOT partners

2016
- FWS signed Programmatic Biological Opinion, effects of select transportation actions
Project Summary

Programmatic consultation

- One of the largest, spanning five Regions and covering 38 States and the District of Columbia
- Includes streamlined consultation procedures, which reduce agencies’ workload and ensuring appropriate interagency coordination of actions

The conservation measures will further landscape-scale conservation for both bat species, and species which use similar forested habitats
Formal and Informal Programmatic

The rangewide consultation covers both the Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat (NLEB). It is the culmination of a partnership between FHWA/FTA/FRA and USFWS, and is consistent with the major goals of this effort:

1) Landscape-scale conservation for both the Indiana bat and NLEB.

2) To reduce time, cost, and workload associated with ESA Section 7 consultation.

3) To create consistency in ESA Section 7 consultation for the two bat species across their ranges.
Outcomes to Date

• Programmatic informal used on over 919 projects, in at least 18 States
• For State DOTs, methodology repeatable, simple
• Avoids effects analysis or extensive documentation by State DOTs to inform the informal consultation
• State DOTs now simply fill out project submission form, 20-30 minutes to complete
Outcomes to Date

• Standard practice for informal consultation: 30 days for FWS respond to project lead agency, often with weeks of back and forth, then conduct surveys for 6 months – 1 year

• Using the programmatic, process takes ≤14 days from receipt of project submittal, often completed within 8 days
Outcomes to Date

• State DOTs are aware of surveys they need to conduct earlier, and may do so in a more systematic way

• More transparency and predictability to FHWA and State DOTs through proactive planning

• The range-wide consultation has increased consistency for partnering agencies throughout the species’ range
Team Members

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*Image courtesy FWS*