



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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June 1, 2018

Squannacook Greenways Inc.
88 South Harbor Road
Townsend, MA 01469

RE: Applicant: Squannacook Greenways Inc.
Project Location: Parallels Route 119, Groton and Townsend
Project Description: Construction of a stone dust rail trail and unpaved parking area
NHESP File No.: **03-13131**

Dear Applicant:

The Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (the "Division") received a MESA Project Review Checklist, site plans and supporting documentation for review pursuant to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) (MGL c.131A) and its implementing regulations (321 CMR 10.00).

The proposed project includes the construction of a 3.7 mile stone dust trail along an abandoned rail line and a parking area.

The Division has determined that this Project will occur within the actual habitat of the Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), a species state-listed as Threatened. This species and its habitats are protected in accordance with the rare species provisions of the MESA. Fact sheets for state-listed species can be found at www.mass.gov/nhesp.

Based on a review of the information provided and the information currently contained in our database, the Division has determined that this project, as currently proposed, **must be conditioned in order to avoid a prohibited Take of state-listed species (321 CMR 10.18(2)(a))**. **To avoid a prohibited Take of Blanding's Turtle** the following conditions must be met:

1. As proposed, all work shall be performed between November 7 and March 15 in order to avoid impacts to Blanding's Turtle. If this is not possible, the Applicant shall submit a Blanding's Turtle Protection Plan. Said Protection Plan must be approved in writing by the Division prior to the start of Work. The Division is available for consultation on the development of the plan.
2. The installation and maintenance of signage to direct users to stay on the trail shall be completed as proposed. Further, boulders or fencing shall be installed to deter off trail use if needed. Additional coordination with the Division shall be required for placement and installation of boulders/fencing if they are necessary.
3. Operations and Maintenance of the trail besides the use of hand tools shall require additional coordination with the Division.
4. All erosion and sedimentation controls shall be removed and properly disposed of after the project is completed and as soon as surrounding areas are stabilized.

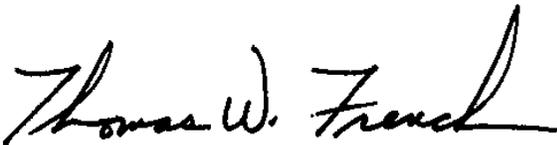
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Please note that any future expansion or improvements of the trail will require additional coordination with the Division. Further, the Division would have significant concerns with the expansion of the trail eastward along the abandoned rail line.

Provided the above-noted conditions are fully implemented and there are no changes to the project plans, this project will not result in a Take of state-listed species. We note that all work is subject to the anti-segmentation provisions (321 CMR 10.16) of the MESA. This determination is a final decision of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife pursuant to 321 CMR 10.18. Any changes to the proposed project or any additional work beyond that shown on the site plans may require an additional filing with the Division pursuant to the MESA. This project may be subject to further review if no physical work is commenced within five years from the date of issuance of this determination, or if there is a change to the project.

Please note that this determination addresses only the matter of state-listed species and their habitats. If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact David Paulson, Senior Endangered Species Biologist at 508-389-6366.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas W. French". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Thomas W. French, Ph.D.
Assistant Director

cc: Cedwyn Morgan, Squannacook Greenways, Inc.