



New York Field Office

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Federal Activities



Congressional District #25

James T. Walsh

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a premier Federal fish and wildlife conservation agency. Our mission for over 60 years has been to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Great Lakes Activities

Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Study The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is part of the Environmental Delivery Team (EDT) which includes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environment Canada, Transport Canada, and the Seaway organizations of each country. The EDT has been working to develop the environmental portion of the reconnaissance document. The Service has the lead for several topics. The goal of the reconnaissance study is to provide background information and identify those environmental resources that could be impacted by any maintenance or improvement to the existing Seaway facilities.

Wetland and Waterway Protection



Every year, our office reviews approximately 250 public notices prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard. In these public notices, applicants propose to impact wetlands, streams, and other water bodies. The Service is effective at reducing the impacts of these projects on fish and wildlife resources and ensuring that mitigation is provided to achieve fish and wildlife benefits.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with various Federal, State, and County agencies to address sedimentation, bank erosion, and water quality in **Onondaga Creek**, an important local fishery. Activities to date have included restoration plan development and review. Future work will include design and implementation.

Federal Projects

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers coordinates with the Service on all proposed construction projects, such as for flood control, shoreline stabilization, or navigation. Our role is to ensure that construction is planned with a view toward conservation of fish and wildlife.

Cross Lake/Seneca River Flood Damage Reduction Project



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is evaluating ways to reduce flood damages around Cross Lake and along the Cayuga/Baldwinsville reach of the Seneca River. They have proposed to install an inflatable rubber dam at the Baldwinsville Dam. The installation of the rubber inflatable dam will affect the water flow regime throughout the study area including downstream of the dam. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that if the

prevailing mean high water elevations, or their duration, are substantially altered in the project reach, negative impacts to northern pike (*Esox lucius*) spawning may occur. The proposed project may also result in the permanent dewatering of wetlands. We have recommended that the Corps perform a more comprehensive evaluation of the effects of the proposed project on wetlands in the project area. We have also recommended that the Corps fully evaluate each permit request to fill wetlands in this watershed to determine the value of the wetlands for retention of flood waters.

Energy Development

Hydroelectric Power The New York Field Office reviews non-Federal hydroelectric projects that are licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) under the Federal Power Act. Section 10(j) of the Federal Power Act allows the Service to make recommendations for measures to mitigate for project impacts to fish and wildlife resources and to provide protection and enhancement. These measures or an equivalent level of protection must be accepted by FERC. Section 18 gives the Service authority to prescribe fish passage; these prescriptions are mandatory and must be included in the license.

There are currently 172 active projects in New York, including 17 currently undergoing relicensing. The major issues of concern to the Service are protecting fish from being entrained into the turbines, upstream and downstream fish passage past the dams, base flows downstream of the projects, impoundment fluctuations, flows in dewatered reaches, wetland impacts, and public access.

In recent years, many project relicensings are being conducted with wide-scale public participation resulting in negotiated settlements for license conditions. This process allows interested stakeholders to negotiate a balanced package of conditions that include energy production, environmental protection and enhancement, economic benefits, and recreational amenities.

Wind Energy The New York State Renewable Portfolio Standard and the interest in wind power is keeping our staff busy reviewing potential wind projects across the state. At least 15 new projects have been proposed where the wind resource is sufficient to generate electricity. A majority of the projects are proposed in western New York. Several projects are being reviewed closely by our staff related to endangered species and migratory bird issues.



One project of interest is the Flat Rock project in Lewis County which is located close to habitat for the Federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*). Another project is sited between two bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nests in Chautauqua County. The Service is working with both project developers, as well as state and local officials, to evaluate potential impacts to listed species.

We will soon be working with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to evaluate the cumulative effects of numerous wind projects within the state. Funding sources are being sought to convene a committee of stakeholders which will discuss wind energy development issues at the state level.

“Wildlife conservation shall receive equal consideration and be coordinated with other features of water-resource development programs through the effectual and harmonious planning, development, maintenance, and coordination of wildlife conservation and rehabilitation”

1958 Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (P.L. 85-624)