

ATTACHMENT A. DNR NATURAL HERITAGE INFORMATION SYSTEM CONCURRENCE. -

From: [Joyal, Lisa \(DNR\)](#)
To: [Anderson, Diane \(DNR\)](#)
Subject: RE: NHIS Data Request: Whitewater River Channel Restoration
Date: Tuesday, August 05, 2014 11:25:17 AM
Attachments: [nhis_data_request_WhitewaterRiver_signed.pdf](#)
[NHIS_WhitewaterRiv_PATResourceComments.pdf](#)
[WhitewaterRiv_USGS.PDF](#)
[WhitewaterRiver_ProjArea.pdf](#)
[Wildlife Friendly Erosion Control\(acc\).pdf](#)

I have reviewed the attached assessment of the potential for the above project to impact rare features, and concur with your assessment.

Given the potential presence of rattlesnakes, it may be appropriate to limit the use of erosion control mesh (if any) to wildlife-friendly materials (see enclosed fact sheet).

Spreading sedge (*Carex laxiculmis*), a state-listed threatened plant, has also been found in the vicinity of the proposed projects. As with the other rare plants, this species is found in the surrounding bluffs.

The reference number for this correspondence is ERDB #20140359.

Thank you for notifying us of this project, and for the opportunity to provide comments.

Lisa Joyal

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## Whitewater River Channel Restoration Project, NHIS Request Attachment

Natural Heritage Review and Comments from PAT Area Resource Specialist:

- 1) MHs37 and MHs49: These high quality native plant communities will be avoided by the scope of the project and/or project design. MHs37 communities are upslope or downstream of the project area and will not be impacted. MHs49 is mapped within the stream project boundary but will not be impacted by project design. The excavation and grading necessary for stream stability downstream of the foot bridge will put the channel back to its pre-2007 flood location. This design moves restoration work further from MHs49 communities. All riparian areas will be restored to a combination of MHs49 and FFs59 communities.
- 2) Outstanding biodiversity significance rating: Adjacent NPC landscape (upslope of project area) is rated as outstanding biodiversity significance. The proposed project should not significantly impact that rating.
- 3) Timber rattlesnake: No known den sites occur within the project area or on the bluffs immediately adjacent to the project area. All known den locations within the park are approximately 1 mile away in Trout Run valley. If a rattlesnake is observed within the project area during construction, it will either be left alone or relocated to an appropriate location depending on construction sequences.
- 4) Bat concentration: A maternity colony of bats was identified in the early 1980s in an old building near the project area (near visitor center). The building was demolished during construction of the current visitor center. Subsequent visits by MBS failed to detect a maternity colony in the same area. Park staff constructed a bat condo to mitigate the demolition of the old building, which failed to be used by bats. The bat condo was eventually replaced with several small bats houses near the visitor center which are currently used by bats. Additional bat houses should be constructed within the proposed development area to provide maternity habitat for bats. The project area does not currently provide good habitat for northern myotis due to the lack of cavity trees and low quality of forest community.
- 5) Pickerel frog, Cerulean warbler, Louisiana waterthrush: These species are documented along the Middle Branch Whitewater River. The stream restoration may temporarily impact habitat for these riparian species. Louisiana waterthrush has not been documented within the project area. It is more likely to occur in higher quality areas up and downstream of the proposed restoration project. Therefore, minimal to no impacts to Louisiana waterthrush are expected.

Cerulean warblers have been documented within close proximity to the restoration site. Project designs minimize impacts to surrounding forest canopy. One cluster of cottonwood and willow may be impacted by project construction. In addition, new channel alignment between the HWY 74 bridge and the foot bridge will result in the loss of stream bank vegetation and woody cover. These impacts will occur in fall (non-breeding season) and should not significantly impact Cerulean warbler habitat long-term.

Pickerel frog occurs throughout Whitewater State Park. Construction and grading activities will impact pickerel frog habitat during project implementation. Project designs include the restoration of flooded pools which will improve habitat for aquatic species including pickerel frog. Direct impacts to pickerel frogs and frog habitat will likely be offset by the restoration of pools and riparian areas after project completion.

- 6) Plain wild indigo, wolf's bluegrass, cliff goldenrod, woodland bluegrass: All these plant species are associated with surrounding high quality NPCs. These species mostly occur further upslope in dryer oak woodland, dry rock outcrops, and bluff prairies. These high quality resources are important habitat for many plant and animal species (especially invertebrates). We actively manage and protect these sensitive areas. These habitats occur in steep topography and are not suitable for development.
- 7) Peregrine falcon: Peregrine falcons have nested on a cliff above the south picnic area for the past 5 to 10 years. The proposed development will not significantly impact this peregrine falcon nesting site.

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- 8) State Public Waters, Designated Trout Stream and Tributaries: The Middle Branch Whitewater River is a state public water and designated trout stream. In addition, the confluence of 2 tributaries (springs) occur within or adjacent to the project area. The confluence of the springs with the Middle Branch Whitewater River will not be impacted by project design. All permits will be applied for as part of project review.
- 9) American Brook Lamprey: Brook lamprey are documented in the Middle Branch Whitewater River. Spawning season is in the spring so project construction will avoid this timeframe. Direct impacts will occur to brook lamprey if they are present in the project area during construction. Habitat improvements and stream stability (that are hopefully achieved through this project) will provide long-term benefits to lamprey populations in Whitewater State Park.
- 10) Trout and aquatic invertebrates: The Middle Branch Whitewater River is a well-known trout fishery. Spawning reds occur just downstream of the project area at a high density. Minimizing sediments during construction and avoiding trout spawning season will be important project requirements. The amount of sediments release by construction activities is expected to be somewhat low due to the heavy cobbles and sands that make up much of the substrate. Much of the silts have been removed from past extreme flood events. Construction is proposed to start immediately after Labor Day and be completed before trout spawning season in October.

Aquatic invertebrates will be impacted by this project. Dr. Mundahl (Winona State University) has completed extensive research on aquatic invertebrates at Whitewater SP. Aquatic invertebrate diversity is much lower in the proposed stream restoration project area compared with higher quality areas upstream of the HWY 74 bridge (personal communication, Dr. Mundahl). Stoneflies and other longer-lived species are not abundant or do not occur in the project area. The severe flooding within the project area may be a contributing factor to the low diversity of aquatic invertebrates in the project area. Again, stream stability and habitat improvements from this project may improve conditions for this group of species.