



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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State-listed Species Habitat Assessment: Wildlife

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (the Division) may request a Habitat Assessment for state-listed wildlife, which shall follow the guidelines and reporting and submittal requirements provided below.

CONDUCTING THE ASSESSMENT

1. The NHESP must pre-approve the biologist who will conduct the assessment. The biologist must demonstrate experience working with the species that is the subject of the habitat assessment.
2. The assessment should address the entire project site, not just the portion within the proposed project "footprint". The habitat assessment must consider the landscape context of the project site, and identify and map off-site habitat features that may be of importance to the focal state-listed species.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

After the assessment, a summary document **MUST** be submitted that includes the following:

1. *Cover Type Maps*: Upland and wetland portions of the project site should be divided into land-use/land-cover types based upon dominant vegetation and existing development. Certified and potential Vernal Pools (see MassGIS) should be mapped, including all potential vernal pools observed in the field that do not appear on the MassGIS Potential Vernal Pools coverage.
2. *Habitat Map/Existing Conditions*: Each portion of the project site and adjacent land should be classified based upon its ability to provide habitat functions for the relevant species (e.g. feeding, breeding, nesting, etc.). A description should include important site features such as existing developed or disturbed areas, as well as a discussion of the quality of the habitat including calculations of acreages. Hydrology of wetlands and ponds should be described, as should the hydroperiod of any vernal pools. The map should be overlaid on an ortho-photo (see MassGIS) of the project site with an indication of the scale.
3. *Representative photographs* must be provided for all habitat types and key habitat features. Please indicate on a map photograph locations and the cardinal direction of view.
4. *Impact Analysis*: This section should include quantification of the impacts of the proposed project to state-listed species habitat, including calculations of acreages and a description of impacts to each specific habitat function (e.g., potential nesting, breeding, feeding, migratory, overwintering, estivating). Additionally, recommendations should be provided for protective measures, potential design changes that avoid and/or minimize impacts, and possible mitigation if applicable.
5. A list of references, experts, and any other resources used must also be included.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Survey data and reports shall be submitted using the Vernal Pool & Rare Species (VPRS) Information System via the Survey Tool (www.mass.gov/dfw/nhesp/vprs). For more information on how to create a survey and to review all of its functions, please see the Survey Tutorial on our website.

Please also follow the guidelines below:

1. Create a new Survey; Include the NHESP File Number in the survey name and a brief description of project and survey in the Survey description
2. Select target group(s) (e.g. reptiles, amphibians) and map the habitat assessment area(s)
3. Attach report and associated documents through the Photos/Documents tab
4. If ArcGIS shapefiles containing field data are available, email them to the VPRS Administrative Coordinator (contactvprsadmin@state.ma.us); shapefiles cannot be uploaded via VPRS. Alternatively, save the .dbf as a .xls or .xlsx and upload to VPRS through the Photos/Documents tab; data should be in Massachusetts State Plane Coordinate System (meters)
3. Indicate Survey Number in all associated Animal, Plant and/or Vernal Pool Observation Reports
4. When complete, close the survey by clicking the “Close” button in the bottom left corner

Surveys can be reopened and reused if a site is surveyed across multiple years. Be sure to “Close” the Survey once it is ready for the Division’s review. Once the report has been submitted through VPRS, send an email to the relevant Endangered Species Review Biologist to confirm submission.

All state-listed species observations (plants or animals) must be submitted to the Division via VPRS.