



# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

West Virginia Field Office  
Post Office Box 1278  
Elkins, West Virginia 26241

June 2, 1995

Mr. A.B. Borda, Jr., Chief  
Resource Evaluation Branch  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
502 Eighth Street  
Huntington, West Virginia 25701-2070

Dear Mr. Borda:

This constitutes a planning aid report (PAR) for the Dolly Sods Wilderness, Ordnance Removal Plan and Federally listed and candidate species located on the Monongahela National Forest in Grant, Tucker, and Randolph Counties, West Virginia. In cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District (District) proposes to remove ordnance and explosive waste from the Dolly Sods Wilderness to reduce the risk to the public and the environment from unexploded ordnance.

This report is prepared pursuant to provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) (ESA).

The 10,215-acre Dolly Sods Wilderness was a part of the 2,181,000 acre West Virginia Maneuver Area during World War II. Even though areas were searched and cleared by military explosive ordnance disposal teams after the war, at least 20 pieces of ordnance have been found in recent years. A high concentration of ordnance is thought to exist within the Red Creek Valley, an area heavily used by campers, hikers, hunters and other forest visitors. The U.S. Forest Service maintains 20.8 miles of trails and has documented 101 commonly used camping areas in the Wilderness.

The proposed action entails searching trails and camping areas using hand-held metal detectors. Unexploded ordnance specialists will search areas 20 feet wide on both sides of trails for their entire length and all campsites then destroying any ordnance found. If metal is indicated the trail site will be excavated by hand to a depth of one foot. Camps sites will be searched and excavated by hand to a 4-foot depth where metal is detected. Small undergrowth, grasses, and fallen trees will be cleared only if necessary to search an area and only if the area is accessible by recreational users. Due to obvious safety reasons, any ordnance discovered will be detonated in places.

In addition to occasional transient species such as the proposed threatened bald eagle, Haliaeetus leucocephalus, two Federally listed species and seven candidates could occur in the project impact area. These include:

### FEDERALLY LISTED

Northern flying squirrel, Glaucomys sabrinus fuscus  
Cheat Mountain salamander, Plethodon nettingi

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## CATEGORY 2, CANDIDATES

Southern rock vole, Microtus chrotorrhinus carolinensis  
Eastern woodrat, Neotoma floridana magister  
Southern water shrew, Sorex palustris punctulatus  
Appalachian cottontail, Sylvilagus obscurus  
Northern goshawk, Accipiter gentilis .  
Cerulean warbler, Dendroica cerulea  
Butternut, Juglans cinerea

Although a number of listed and candidate species can occur in the project impact area, the Service is primarily concerned about possible impacts to the Cheat Mountain salamander. Several populations of the salamander and large tracts of unsurveyed high potential habitat occur in the project impact area. The Cheat Mountain salamander is nocturnal, resting during the day under leaves, logs, bark, or rocks on the forest floor. Disturbance due to clearing or ordnance detonation could directly affect the salamander.

The Service attended a meeting on May 16, 1995 with representatives of the U.S. Forest Service, District staff, and the consultant, Newbolt Enterprises. Newbolt Enterprises was furnished maps showing occupied and potentially occupied habitat of the Cheat Mountain salamander in the Wilderness. These maps were developed by Dr. Thomas Pauley of Marshall University, the authority on the species. The Service has provided additional information to Newbolt Enterprises regarding the ESA aspects of the project.

In accordance with Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, Federal agencies are required to ensure that any actions they carry out, fund, or authorize are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or result in destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of such species. If the Federal agency determines that its proposed action may affect a listed species or critical habitat, it must consult with the Service. In the case of a proposed species, it must confer with the Service.

Pursuant to Section 7 (c) of the ESA, the Service recommends that a biological assessment be prepared regarding the impacts of the project on listed and proposed species. The purpose of the biological assessment is to determine whether or not any such species and habitat are likely to be adversely affected by the action. Biological assessments are designed to assist Federal agencies determine if formal consultation or a conference is required. The following information should be included in the preparation of the biological assessment to evaluate the impacts to the endangered northern flying squirrel and the threatened Cheat Mountain salamander.

1. Conduct interviews of recognized experts on the species at issue, including those within the Service, WVDNR, universities and others who may have data not yet found in scientific literature.
2. Review up to date literature and other scientific data to determine the species distribution, habitat needs, and other biological requirements.
3. Analyze the effects of the action on individuals and populations of each species and its habitat, including indirect and cumulative effects of the action.
5. Analyze alternative actions that may provide reasonable and prudent or conservation measures.
6. Conduct any studies necessary to fulfill the requirements of (1) through (5) above.

7. Review any other relevant information.

If you determine that the proposed action "may affect" any of the listed species or Critical Habitats you must request, in writing, formal consultation with our office, pursuant to Section 7(a) of the ESA. If the determination is "no effect," no further consultation is necessary, unless requested by the Service. Regardless of your findings you should provide this office a copy of the biological assessment and any other relevant information that assisted you in reaching your conclusion. If you have any questions, please contact William A. Tolin at this office (304-636-6586).

Sincerely,



Christopher M. Clower  
Supervisor