



Adirondack Park Agency

PROJECT GUIDELINE: ECOLOGICAL AND BIOLOGICAL SURVEYS

Objective: To avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to the biological resources of the Park.

Background:

Before issuing a permit for an activity on private land, the Agency must find that the proposal will not have an undue adverse impact on the natural, ecological, wildlife, open space, or other resources of the Park.¹ When making this finding, the Agency takes into account 37 “development considerations” listed in §805(4) of the Adirondack Park Agency Act; these considerations include factors that relate to the ecological and biological resources of a project site, and include:

- Forest resources
- Open space resources
- Vegetative cover
- Rare plant communities
- Habitats of rare species
- Key wildlife habitats
- Alpine and sub-alpine life zones
- Wetlands
- Fish and wildlife
- Rare, threatened or endangered species

Application Materials and Initial Review:

Upon receipt of a permit application, Agency staff will begin analyzing the ecological and biological resources of the project area. This initial analysis will generally involve review of existing ecological information documented in maps, databases, websites, and published literature. Staff may note potential wetland areas, intact forest blocks, ecological communities in the region, and other important indicators of ecological and biological resources.

¹ Adirondack Park Agency Act §809; Environmental Conservation Law §24-0801(2) (the New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act); 9 NYCRR §577.8(b)(3) (Agency regulations implementing the New York State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers System Act).

Agency staff will also visit the project site, where information can be gathered through direct observation. During the site visit, a staff wetland biologist will confirm the presence of, delineate, and determine a value rating for any involved wetlands. In addition, if the proposal involves the establishment of long roadways or driveways, construction or clearing within intact forest blocks, development within 100 feet of wetlands, or development within an area mapped as potentially important habitat by the New York State Natural Heritage Program, a staff biologist may evaluate site conditions and habitat quality.²

The Need for Additional Surveys:

Based on the proposal submitted, staff analysis, and observations made during the site visit, the Agency may require additional information regarding potential habitat and/or potential species of concern on or near proposed development areas. Often, this additional information will involve submission of a report documenting existing vegetation and other habitat indicators within the boundaries of any wetland or within 230 meters of proposed clearing for roadways, including driveways, or other development. Required surveys may involve, but are not limited to, winter tracking studies identifying and mapping wildlife travel routes; breeding bird surveys; identification of waterfowl nesting, feeding, and migratory feeding areas; and/or reptile and amphibian studies identifying breeding, overwintering, and migration areas.

Some proposals may require a more comprehensive survey of taxa, species, or individuals. For example, the Agency will likely request a survey of specific flora and/or fauna for projects that could impact locally-important habitats such as vernal pools or nesting colonies. These comprehensive surveys must be conducted during the appropriate season, or over several seasons, and may involve detailed field sampling.

² Stormwater treatment, including erosion and sediment controls, is always required when development is proposed within 100 feet of wetlands.