BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENT
CONFERENCE REPORT

SUBJECT: NHDOT Monthly Natural Resource Agency Coordination Meeting
DATE OF CONFERENCE: December 20, 2023
LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Virtual meeting held via Zoom

ATTENDED BY:

NHDOT
Andrew O'Sullivan
Joshua Brown
Jon Evans
Mark Hemmerlein
Rebecca Martin
Tim Mallette
Dave Smith
Dillan Schmidt
Marc Laurin
Dan Prehemo
Tony King
Jason Ayotte
Wendy Johnson
Mike Mozer
David Scott
Meli Dube
Paul Lovely
Kathleen Corliss
Curtis Morrill
Kerry Ryan
Arin Mills
Rhona Thomson

ACOE
Mike Hicks

USCG
Gary Croot

EPA
Absent

NHDES
Karl Benedict
Seta Detzel
Emily Nichols
Mary Ann Tilton

NHB
Absent

NH Fish & Game
Mike Dionne
Kevin Newton

Federal Highway
Jamie Sikora

US Fish & Wildlife
Absent

The Nature Conservancy
Absent

NH Transportation & Wildlife Workgroup
Absent

Consultants/ Public Participants
Kyle Higgins
Mike Dugas
Mark Debowski
Christine Perron
John Parelli
Steve Hoffman
Brian Colburn
Carol Foss
Peter Steckler
Jennifer Riordan
Seth Hill
Kimberly Peace
Deb Coon
Chris Fournier
Josif Bicja
Tucker Gordon
Katy Lewis
Linda Hutchins
Madelyn Glavin
Trevor Ricker

PRESENTATIONS/ PROJECTS REVIEWED THIS MONTH: *(minutes on subsequent pages)*

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Finalize Meeting Minutes

Finalized and approved the November 15, 2023 meeting minutes.

Wolfeboro, 44455 (X-A005(503)):

The project proposes to replace a failed 60" CMP along NH Route 28, 800' north of Oakwood Road within the town of Wolfeboro. The project will extend approximately 0.1 miles north and south of the culvert location to accommodate construction operations. The culvert carries a tributary of Mink Brook under NH Route 28 northwesterly to Lake Winnipesaukee. It is anticipated that a Standard Dredge and Fill Wetland Permit Application for a Tier 3 stream crossing would be submitted for the project.

Tim Mallette (TM) (NHDOT) provided an overview of the project and the surrounding area including traffic count, posted speed limits, and known hazards off of the roadway. Additionally, the proposed culvert replacement designs and associated impacts were presented and discussed by TM. Dillan Schmidt (DS) (NHDOT) provided an overview of the natural resources in the project area as well as any consultations and coordination with natural resource groups that have been completed or is anticipated to be completed. The purpose of this meeting is to receive input from the various natural resource agencies regarding the proposed project and proposed impacts to natural resources.

Karl Benedict (KB) (NHDES) asked about if this meets 904.09 for the tier 3 criteria as it does look to be an improvement. KB Would like to see more information on the bypass. It appears to be cold water fisheries and will defer to NHFG for any TOY restrictions that should be applied. The proposed size and structure make sense, it is an improvement. In response to the temporary bypass question, TM explained that we may include a HydroBell for the contractor to use, it is higher bypass flow than normal. KB continued by ask about incorporating AOT considerations related to the HydroBell and streambed simulation throughout. TM clarified that the HydroBell would be temporary.

Mary Ann Tilton (MT) (NHDES) noted to include the stream function on the wetland permit application due to the present fisheries.

Seta Detzel (SD) (NHDES) We need more clarity on if this qualifies as an upgrade under 904.09 or if this is an alternative design under 904.07. Andrew O'Sullivan (AO) (NHDOT) explained that as this project is below the minimum threshold, we probably will do alternative design and we'll try to hit everything in 904.07 although we would not be able to get all of it. We plan to move forward with the alternative design unless Karl tells us we are good with 904.09, would you agree with that? SD asked if this would pass the 100 yr. storm which AO responded that it would accommodate the 100 yr. storm. SD would still need more detail on if the proposed design would qualify as an upgrade under 904.09n and AO proposed a separate meeting to discuss. SD suggested taking a closer look at the mitigation thresholds outside of square footage criteria alone. AO said we would need to conduct a separate meeting as this is the first we have heard of this and NHDOT does a lot of alternative designs. SD agrees that a follow up meeting would be beneficial.

Mike Dione (MD) (NHFG) This site has a lot of fisheries and is a highly productive wild brook trout stream. There are documented landlocked salmon spawn in Mink Brook with possible pond up into this tributary in high water. It is also possibly to have rainbow smelt spawn in this tributary. For time-of-year (TOY) restrictions would be October 15 - November 30, (Brook trout and Salmon) and march 15 - April 30 (Rainbow smelt) (no in-water work).
Kevin Newton (KN) (NHFG) No Comment.

Mike Hicks (MH) (ACOE) take a look at the SPGP on page 40, condition number 20. This addresses TOY restrictions, working in the dry, and coffer dams. An alternative window can be proposed with USFWS, NHFG. See what you can do with those conditions with the proposed TOY restrictions. There is leeway in condition number 20 with working in the dry.

AO indicated that we likely would seek an alternative TOY window from condition 20. TM clarified that there would be coffer dams, therefore the working in the dry conditions may work.

Gary Croot (GC) (USCG) No Comment. No navigable waters involved for CG bridge purposes.

Londonderry, 41715 (X-A004(724)):

Jason Ayotte started the presentation by providing an overview of the project and some historical background. The project involves the conversion of the intersection of Stonehenge Road and NH Route 28 to a single-lane roundabout, along with associated improvements to the roadway approaches. The purpose is to improve intersection operations and safety. The project includes replacement of two Tier 3 stream crossings, utility relocations, closed drainage system upgrades, and construction of a water quality treatment swale. This is the project's second Natural Resources Agency Meeting (NRAM) presentation, and the first was held on March 16, 2022 sharing the potential alternatives. The March 16, 2022 NRAM expressed concerns regarding wetland and priority resource area impacts and stream crossings, which were focal areas of the proposed design. Between the NRAM meetings, NHDOT conducted vernal pool assessments, additional wetland delineations, surveyed Nutall Reed Grass, coordinated with NHF&G regarding wildlife considerations, and refined the design alternatives and gained public support. The single-lane roundabout alternative was selected and, has fewer impacts to the project-area resources than the signalized intersection.

Josh Brown reviewed the resources on the site and displayed the mapping provided by FB Environmental. No vernal pools were located. There is a mapped FEMA floodplain east of the project. GPI determined that there would be no increase in base flood elevation from the proposed project improvements. Both crossings are upgraded to Tier Three because of the presence of the 100-year floodplain at the outlets.

Kyle Higgins reviewed the stream crossings, treatment swale, and existing telephone duct bank. The northern stream crossing is currently conveyed by a 24" reinforced concrete pipe with a catch basin in the middle of the run. It is being replaced with a single 30" reinforced concrete pipe. The southern crossing is currently a 30" reinforced concrete pipe that will be replaced with a 60" reinforced concrete pipe. Alternative designs, including costs and impacts of the structures to resources and utilities, were reviewed. Wetland impact locations and quantities were reviewed.

Josh Brown described the proposed mitigation resulting from the wetland impacts within the floodplain, which results in permanent impacts to a Priority Resource Area.

The following is a summary of key discussion points:

Karl Benedict stated that the design follows the guidance provided at the last meeting. The approach to the stream crossings, including alternatives analysis, roadway design, and impact minimization, seems appropriate. Andy O'Sullivan expounded the proposed stream crossing designs were good candidates for alternatives design meeting the intent of Env-Wt 904.09(c)(2), and NHDOT plans to submit the Standard Dredge and Fill Major Impact Project with alternative design. Karl Benedict suggested a site walk due to the number of resources.

Mary Ann Tilton reminded the group of the importance of ensuring all functional assessments and impact assessments were conducted. Josh Brown explained acknowledge and the functional assessments will be submitted with the permit.

Seta Detzel inquired about the net loss of function to critical species from project impacts. Josh stated that coordination is still ongoing with NH Fish and Game, but the coordination is not related to the culvert designs so there is likely no concern with impacts to the species as it relates to the project design. The resulting coordination will be included within the wetlands application submittal. Seta thinks that the alternative designs for the stream crossings make sense.

Emily Nichols would like to review how mitigation has been approached historically but has no specific concerns with this project. Andy O'Sullivan suggested a follow-up meeting between NHDOT and NHDES to review previous projects.

Kevin Newton acknowledged the previous wildlife coordination with NHDOT, and will meet with NHDOT independently to finalize the wildlife considerations.

There were no other concerns or comments from resource agency members present.

Nashua-Merrimack-Bedford, 13761D (Non-fed):

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss additional work to be added to the 13761D project, the northernmost segment of the FE Everett Turnpike widening project, which is currently under construction. Christine Perron provided an overview of the proposed work. The NHDOT is proposing to add to the project the construction of a berm with a privacy fence in the vicinity of Teaberry Lane. The Teaberry Lane neighborhood extends just to the south of the original project limits. Residents there requested a soundwall and it didn't meet the requirements under the NHDOT's noise policy. NHDOT agreed to instead construct a privacy fence adjacent to the Right-of-Way line. As construction progressed it was requested to move the privacy fence closer to the Turnpike and include a small berm. The berm will be approximately 1,700 feet in length and will be located entirely within existing right-of-way. A wetland delineation was completed in the area where additional impacts will occur. Delineated wetlands are all forested wetlands.

The first alternative that was considered was a 10-foot tall berm with 2:1 side slopes and a 10-foot high wooden stockade fence along the top of the berm. The berm footprint encroached into the wetlands, resulting in almost 28,380 SF of permanent wetland impact. In an effort to reduce wetland impacts, a second berm alternative was developed. The second alternative entails a berm approximately 4 feet tall with 2:1 side slopes and 10-foot high stockage fence along the top. Guardrail will be extended along the Turnpike to protect traffic from the berm and fence. Alternative 2 substantially reduces the overall footprint of the berm, resulting in just 274 SF of permanent impacts and 2,599 SF of temporary impacts. NHDOT is moving forward with Alternative 2 as the recommended alternative.

Wetland impacts that have been authorized for 13761D under NHDES Permit 2021-02109 totaling 14,440 SF. The threshold for a significant amendment that would require submittal of a new application package is 20% of permitted impacts, which equates to 2,888 SF of impact. At 2,873 SF, the total impacts for the berm will be less than 20% of the impacts that were previously permitted for the 13761D project. Therefore, it is anticipated that the berm can be approved as a permit amendment.
Mitigation for the overall 13761 project is being provided cumulatively. The additional 274 SF of permanent impact from the proposed berm will require an in-lieu fee payment of approximately $1,995.

Other resource considerations were discussed. The berm does not impact the existing swale along this area and will not result in an increase in impervious surface; therefore, no impacts to water quality are anticipated. The berm will require approximately 590 SF of tree clearing within the original limits of the 13761D project where an acoustic survey was completed in 2021. That survey did not identify northern long-eared bat or tricolored bat. The appropriate consultation with FWS will be carried out. The NH Natural Heritage Bureau review was updated for the area of the berm and reported Eastern hognose snake, New England cottontail, and spotted turtle as occurring in the vicinity of the project. Since the berm will be constructed as part of 13761D, it will be subject to the contract provisions of that project, including those specific to wildlife (wildlife-friendly erosion controls, educational flyers, and reporting observations of species of concern).

Karl Benedict
In the permitting materials submitted to DES, be sure to summarize the intent of the berm and what it achieves. Jon Evans clarified that the berm is not intended to be a noise barrier; it will simply be a visual barrier.

Is drainage proposed? John Parrelli explained that drainage has already been constructed for 13761D. As part of the berm construction, pipes will be extended and installed under the berm. Catch basins will also be added in the proposed ditch adjacent to the berm. Existing drainage patterns will be maintained. There is an existing treatment swale along the proposed berm that was constructed as part of the Manchester Airport Access Road 11512 series project. Drainage that flows to that today from the high speed lanes and shoulders along the median will be maintained. No changes in wetland hydrology are anticipated. K. Benedict noted that this information on drainage and hydrology should be included in the amendment request.

Mary Ann Tilton
No comments

Emily Nichols
Agree with Karl's comments about information to include in the amendment request.
Agree with additional mitigation that is proposed.

Mike Dionne
No comments

Kevin Newton
Send updated project information to NHFG to comment on BMPs for wildlife.

Mike Hicks
The Corps has elected not to do informal conference with the USFWS on tricolored bat; Mike will be meeting with USFWS and NHDOT in the near future to discuss the status of the FE Everett Turnpike project and consultation on bats.

Nashua-Merrimack-Bedford, 13761B (non-fed):

Stephen Hoffmann introduced the proposed 13761B project involving the replacement of the existing Wire Road and Baboosic Lake Road bridges over the F.E. Everett Turnpike in Merrimack, New Hampshire. The proposed project is part of the overall Nashua-Merrimack-Bedford, 13761 F.E. Everett Turnpike widening project. The bridges in the 13761B project are located in the middle segment of the overall project.

The existing bridges will be reconstructed and replaced with longer bridge structures that can accommodate the proposed F.E. Everett Turnpike widening. The proposed 13761B project also includes drainage improvements and the construction of three stormwater treatment areas. The proposed widening will be completed under the subsequent 13761C project.

The anticipated advertising date is October 29, 2024. Anticipated permitting requirements include a NHDES Standard Dredge and Fill Permit as well as a Standard Shoreland Permit. Permit applications are anticipated to be submitted to NHDES in late May or early June 2023.

Baboosic Lake Road Impacts:
Impacts associated with the Baboosic Lake Road bridge replacement are limited to 249 SF of permanent impacts to a palustrine emergent wetland located in a drainage swale that drains from a small pond located in a residential yard. An intermittent stream was delineated at the outlet, and a stream is mapped in USGS StreamStats at this location with 70.8-acre watershed. The stream would be considered a Tier 1 stream based on watershed size under the NHDES Stream Crossing Rules. However, the proposed project does not involve complete replacement of the existing structure. Impacts are limited to the wetland at the inlet side, and are associated with lengthening and reconstructing the inlet.

Wire Road Impacts:
Impacts from the proposed Wire Road bridge replacement are limited to a small, isolated palustrine emergent wetland (W-17), a small, unnamed intermittent tributary of Baboosic Brook (S-6), and two locations along the bank of Baboosic Brook (S-7) associated with an existing drainage outlet and a proposed stormwater treatment outlet.

W-17 – This wetland is a palustrine emergent depression located in a cleared portion of the existing roadway shoulder. The entire wetland was considered a permanent impact due to indirect impacts associated with changes in drainage that are anticipated to result in changes to the hydrology of this wetland. An access road will be constructed across a ditch that drains to the wetland in order to construct a proposed stormwater BMP. The BMP area will not be constructed within any portion of the wetland.

S-6 – The proposed project will relocate an existing outlet of an intermittent stream, resulting in 630 SF / 62 LF of permanent channel impacts. The existing channel will not be filled, however, the abandonment of the existing channel was included as an impact due to the change in the location of the outlet. S-6 has a total watershed area of 219.24 acres, and is considered a Tier 2 crossing based on watershed size. However, the outlet is located within the 100-year floodplain of Baboosic Brook, elevating the classification to a Tier 3 crossing. The 13761B project will only replace and reconstruct the outlet. The inlet and remaining crossing structure will be replaced under the 13761C project. In the final condition, the existing 36" culvert will be upsized to a 48" culvert, and the configuration of the existing crossing and drainage system will be reconfigured to provide a straight crossing.

Baboosic Brook (S-7) – A proposed drainage outlet will be replaced near the eastern limits of the proposed project along Wire Road. The proposed outlet reconstruction is anticipated to result in 71 SF / 12 LF of permanent bank impacts. Temporary bank and channel impacts are also proposed at this location for construction access and the installation of soil erosion and sediment controls. Temporary impacts are also proposed in the vicinity of the Baboosic Brook crossing structure under the F.E. Everett Turnpike, north of the Wire Road bridge. The proposed 328 SF / 48 LF of temporary impacts are associated with the construction of a stormwater BMP outlet in the vicinity of Baboosic Brook. The proposed impacts are associated with the installation of soil erosion and sediment controls for the protection of water quality of Baboosic Brook.

Impacts, Mitigation, and Permitting Summary:
The proposed 13761B project is anticipated to result in 4,496 SF of permanent impacts / 1,266 SF of temporary impacts to palustrine wetlands and surface waters including Baboosic Brook and an unnamed intermittent tributary of Baboosic Brook. The proposed project is anticipated to require a Standard Dredge and Fill permit for the wetland and surface water impacts. The project is anticipated to be classified as a major impact classification for the potential Tier 3 classification as well as cumulative impacts for the overall 13761 project. The project is also anticipated to require a standard shoreland permit for impacts within 250 feet of the reference line of Baboosic Brook.

Mitigation is anticipated to be required for the 3,795 SF of permanent wetland impacts, 62 LF of permanent channel impacts, and 12 LF of permanent bank impacts. The total in-lieu fee mitigation payment is anticipated to be $51,484.63. Final impacts and mitigation may change

slightly as design is refined prior to submittal of the permit applications. Total combined temporary and permanent wetland and stream impacts for the 13761D, 13761E, 13761A, and the 13761B project total 2.06 acres, resulting in a total in-lieu fee payment of $417,058.68.

Floodplains:
The proposed project is anticipated to result in 490 CY of fill within the FEMA mapped 100-year floodplain of Baboosic Brook. Fill is required for the proposed bridge replacement, required grading, and construction of a proposed retaining wall along Wire Road in the NE bridge quadrant. Floodplain impacts will be evaluated for the entire middle segment including the 13761C project. Due to PFAS contaminated soils, NHDOT is proposing to keep soil onsite and minimize the amount of additional soil excavation.

Stormwater:
Similar to floodplain impacts, stormwater treatment was evaluated for the entire middle segment, including the 13761E, 13761B, and 13761C projects. The middle segment has 63.96 acres of existing impervious, with a total proposed area of 83.26 acres, or a net increase of 19.30 acres of impervious surface. The proposed project will construct stormwater treatment BMPs that will treat 47.70 acres of impervious. The overall middle segment exceeds AOT requirements and all outlets subject to MS4 will be treated.

Rare Species:
The proposed project is located within the range of the federally endangered northern long eared bat. The project is anticipated to require approximately 5.1 acres of tree clearing, associated with the proposed bridge replacements and construction of stormwater BMPs. Informal consultation with the USFWS will be completed. An acoustic survey was completed in the summer of 2023, and the results of the survey are pending. The USFWS has also proposed listing the tri-colored bat, and a final determination is pending. Consultation with USFWS will be completed if the tricolored bat is listed prior to completion of construction.

The NHB DataCheck Results Letter was updated in December 2023 (NHB23-3295) and included rapids clubtail, American eel, sea lamprey, Blanding's turtle, wood turtle, and New England cottontail. Coordination with NHFG for the overall 13761 project has been ongoing since 2016 and coordination will continue regarding the specific 13761B project.

The NHFG wildlife corridor mapping was reviewed. There are wildlife corridors in the vicinity, but the two bridges are over the existing F.E. Everett Turnpike and are not associated with a stream crossing or other major wildlife corridor.

Agency Discussion:

Karl Benedict commented that overall, it appeared that impacts had been minimized. Mr. Bendict asked about the proposed outlet relocation and the reconstructed portion of Stream 6. Mr. Hoffmann explained that the proposed outlet is close to Baboosic Brook, and the length of reconstructed channel would not be very long. Mr. Benedict requested that streambed simulation material be used in the channel design, and possibly include some plantings along the reconstructed portion of Stream 6. Mr. Benedict also asked about the dewatering permits for the 13761B and other segments of the 13761 project. Brian Colburn stated that the dewatering

permits were project specific. Mr. Benedict also confirmed that impacts for the overall 13761 would be considered cumulative, and confirmed the major impact classification.

Mary Ann Tilton provided a reminder that the functional assessment required under Env-Wt 311.10 should address threatened and endangered species in wetlands and streams.

Emily Nichols with NHDES appreciated the impact summary slide summarizing the impacts and mitigation by project for the overall 13761 project, and asked to please include this information in the permit application.

Mike Dionne indicated that the potential for the project to impact sea lamprey would be minimal, but that American eel may be present. Mr. Hoffmann explained that Stream 6, the unnamed intermittent tributary had a partially perched outlet that likely impedes aquatic organism passage. Mr. Dionne, indicated that American eel are found in some surprising locations and can utilize a variety of small streams and crossing structures.

Kevin Newton asked for the project team to continue consultation and provide additional project information. Educational fliers should be provided to the contractor similar to the other 13761 projects.

Mike Hicks with the US Army Corps had no additional comments.

Bowman Wildlife Crossing, No Project Number:

Christine Perron provided an overview of the project, which is located on US Route 2 in Randolph. The purpose of this project is to identify measures to reduce Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions (WVCs) and to enhance landscape connectivity for wildlife in this area. NH Audubon (NHA) is leading this project in close coordination with NHDOT. McFarland-Johnson (MJ) was hired by NHA to complete an initial study to look at two sites and various design alternatives that could accomplish the purpose of the project. NHA also assembled a project stakeholder team that has been providing input along the way, with representatives from NHDOT, Randolph Conservation Commission, Randolph Forest Commission, NH Fish & Game, US Forest Service, Northeast Wilderness Trust, and The Conservation Fund. Peter Steckler with Northeast Conservation Services is serving as NHA's Project Manager.

The purpose of the initial phase of the project that is currently underway is to identify a recommended alternative, which is expected in early 2024. The next phase of the project is expected to entail design, NEPA, and permit applications, essentially providing a construction-ready project.

One of the early drivers of this project was the 2007 tracking study that was completed by NHA as part of the NHDOT Jefferson-Randolph Route 2 widening project. Preferred wildlife crossing locations were identified by that study, including the area that is the focus of the Bowman Wildlife Crossing project. Another key early driver of this project was moose collisions. Available data on WVCs roughly match up with the preferred crossing locations identified by the tracking study. The NH Wildlife Vehicle Collision Mapper, a new mapping tool being developed

by PSU in collaboration with NHDOT and other agencies, shows 14 WVC between Valley Road and Moose River between 2002 and 2019. The data do not provide information on the species involved in the collisions or the severity of the crash. Overall, WVC data has some shortcomings and the data do not clearly point to any one location as the "best" site for a crossing in this area.

NHDOT requested that any wildlife crossing structure be located at the site of an existing stream crossing. Considering this and existing public lands in the Bowman area of US Route 2, there are two potential sites, one adjacent to the Farrar property, now part of the town forest, and one in Bowman Divide, also adjacent to the town forest. At a landscape level, both sites have good habitat for moose and other wildlife, and there would be value in improving landscape connectivity at either site.

Looking more closely at the culvert locations at each site, the Farrar site consists of a mowed field bordered by northern hardwoods on the upstream side and forested wetland and mixed woods on the downstream side. There are no mapped wetlands or streams at this location. There is a stream channel upstream from the culvert, with flow becoming diffuse through the field and beyond the outlet. Based on drainage area, the culvert would be classified as a Tier 1 stream crossing. At the Bowman site, the habitat is much wetter, with emergent and open water wetlands at the inlet and outlet. Mapped National Wetland Inventory wetlands are located on both sides of Route 2, and there is a mapped stream at the culvert location. Based on drainage area, the culvert would be classified as a Tier 1 stream crossing.

Another consideration from a broader landscape perspective is that the habitat in this area consists of large tracts of managed forestland that will continue to be managed into the future on the town forest and White Mountain National Forest. This type of forest management provides great habitat for moose.

Because part of the purpose of this project is to reduce WVCs, the project is using moose as the design species. A collision with a moose is 13 times more likely to result in a fatality when compared to deer, so reducing the potential for moose collisions provides important safety benefits. Based on a compilation of available research, technical guidance, and observations, structure sizes for moose can be summarized as follows:

- Structures less than 10' high are generally not used.
- Structures between 10 and 15 feet high have a mixed record and are not likely to be 100% successful.
- Structures over 15 feet high are likely to be used.

This information, along with existing site conditions, was used to develop three alternatives. A structure that is 15' high and 40' wide that would be considered an ideal size for moose could be constructed at the Farrar site without impacting the roadway profile due to the depth of fill that is present. The second alternative is a 10' high structure at Bowman, which is the minimum height that moose could use. The project didn't consider anything higher at Bowman because the impacts to the roadway and adjacent properties would have been much higher and would have introduced safety concerns with sight distances and profile changes. The third alternative is the largest structure that would fit at Bowman without raising the roadway and is also just below the threshold of what is defined as a bridge by FHWA, which is an important consideration for

NHDOT. This structure is smaller than a moose would be expected to use but it was important to look at an alternative at Bowman that doesn't impact the roadway profile and that isn't a bridge.

Brian Colburn provided a more detailed overview of the three alternatives, which is summarized as follows:

FARRAR LOCATION
- Opening = 40' Wide x 15' High Structure
- Length = 35'
- Openness Ratio = 17.1
- Utilizes Existing Terrain to Avoid Raising the Roadway
- Avoids Impacts to Existing Forest
- 20' Wide Path – 20% Maximum Slope
- 3:1 Side Slopes from Path
- Estimated Project Costs = $5.5 to $6 Million
- Temporary roadway to the north would be required to maintain traffic during construction

BOWMAN LOCATION – OPTION #1
- Opening = 20' Wide x 10' High Structure
- Length = 53'
- Openness Ratio = 3.8
- Requires Raising the Roadway 2'
- 20' Wide Path
- Flat path to and through the structure would likely be permanently under water.
- Connected to Wetlands at Inlet and Outlet
- Estimated Project Costs - $4.5 to $5 Million
- Minor temporary widening would be required to maintain traffic during construction
- The profile raise and temporary widening would result in temporary and permanent wetland impacts along the toe of slope.

BOWMAN LOCATION – OPTION #2
- Opening = 9' Wide x 8' High Structure
- Length = 53'
- Openness Ratio = 1.4
- Avoids Raising the Roadway
- 20' Wide Path
- Flat path to and through the structure would likely be permanently under water.
- Connected to Wetlands at Inlet and Outlet
- Estimated Project Costs = $3 to $3.5 Million
- Temporary widening would result in temporary impacts along the toe of the slope.

As part of the alternatives analysis, the project team is also looking into other design elements that could help improve safety and the use of the crossing. Fencing is commonly used with crossings for large wildlife out west and does make crossings more effective. However, crossings out west are more typically located in areas of very large public lands with few driveways and other access concerns. When fencing crosses driveways, a gate or cattle guard is necessary in

order to maintain the wildlife barrier. A key consideration for fencing is to provide the same length on each side of the road to make it less likely that an animal gets trapped in the road. Approximately 1,500 to 1,600 feet of fencing could be placed at the Farrar or Bowman site on each side of the road while trying to limit driveway crossings. Fencing at either site would require crossing existing driveways, some of which provide access to homes. This would need to be addressed by providing gates or cattle guards at the driveways, which was not viewed favorably by abutters who attended the public meeting in Randolph. Another concern with fencing is the regular maintenance that is required.

Another consideration is the use of animal detection systems. There are two broad types that involve area-cover systems (passive (infrared or video, algorithms) or active (radar signals)) and break-the-beam systems (beam of infrared, laser or microwave radio signals). This type of technology is still very much evolving and hasn't been used in the northeast. With machine learning and artificial intelligence, the technology will continue to improve and some of these systems already have very high success rates.

The recommended alternative that will be identified could be a combination of the two sites, crossing structure, fencing, and/or animal detection system. The purpose of discussing the project at this time is to get initial thoughts and feedback to help inform the decision-making process.

The following is a summary of key discussion points:

Andy O'Sullivan asked if wetland mitigation would be triggered by the project. C. Perron replied that is too early to know for sure, but the larger structure at Bowman could result in impacts that exceed mitigation thresholds.

Karl Benedict commented that he was supportive of the project and it would likely be considered a "functional uplift" in regard to stream crossings that could potentially be viewed as self-mitigating. Considerations for self-mitigating would be simulated streambeds, plantings, naturalized design, and demonstrating avoidance and minimization of impacts from roadway slopes. He noted that Priority Resource Areas, if present, would need to be a consideration in future mitigation discussions.

Mary Ann Tilton commented that she liked the presentation and thought it was a cool project.

Seta Detzel noted that she has seen moose crossings in northeast Canada. She recommended looking at the criteria for restoration projects, which would allow a mitigation exemption if the project met the criteria and resulted in a net functional gain. If fencing is considered as a standalone option, then jurisdictional impacts would not be as clear cut as far as being exempt from mitigation. If Priority Resource Areas are impacted, mitigation would also be difficult to exempt. She commented that she would like to see this project succeed due to its benefits.

Mike Dionne commented that this is a great project and he sees NHFG being very supportive of it. He noted that moose numbers are declining and every moose counts, so his preference would be for a larger crossing that moose would be expected to utilize.

Kevin Newton asked if information on infrared animal detection systems could be shared. He commented that this is an interesting project and he was glad to see that there is a NHFG representative on the project stakeholder team.

Mike Hicks had no comments.

Jamie Sikora noted that he could provide information on the FHWA wildlife crossing pilot program and other potential grant opportunities.

Henniker-Hopkinton, 40633 (X-A004(443)):

Jenn Riordan (GM2) introduced the project which involves improvements to the US Route 202/NH Route 9 and NH Route 127 & Old Concord Road intersection in Henniker and Hopkinton. The purpose of the project is to improve the capacity, safety, and operational efficiency of the intersection. The project is needed due to a history of crashes at the intersection. The following project alternatives were evaluated:

- No Build
- Traffic Signal Installation – Would have the least amount of environmental impact (of the build alternatives) but would cause delays on US Route 202/NH Route 9 and delays for some turning movements.
- Grade Separation Options – Would have the largest footprint and the most environmental impact. Would require substantial property acquisitions. The project would extend further east and would involve impacts to the Contoocook River bridge. Due to the impacts and significantly higher cost, this alternative was not selected.
- Roundabout – This is the preferred action.

The preferred project would involve the construction of a two-lane hybrid roundabout. The eastbound and westbound approaches on US Route 202/NH Route 9 would be widened. NH Route 127 and Old Concord Road would be reconstructed to have one approach lane. A stormwater treatment Best Management Practice (BMP) is proposed in the southeast intersection quadrant. All work would be within the existing NHDOT right-of-way. Roads would remain open during construction. Traffic would be shifted to construct the roundabout and approach roadways. The project is currently in preliminary design, with final design scheduled for 2024 and construction in 2025.

Environmental resources and impacts were then discussed. Federally-listed species include northern long-eared bat. A No Effect determination was received in IPaC. A bat acoustic survey will be completed during the final design phase, if needed for tri-colored bat. State-listed wildlife species include northern black racer, spotted turtle, and wood turtle. Consultation with NH Fish & Game is ongoing.

Keyser Pond (located 500-600 feet west of the project) is impaired for chlorophyll-a, total phosphorus, and cyanobacteria. The project would result in approximately 15,200 square feet of new impervious surface and over 200,000 square feet of ground disturbance so NHDES Alteration of Terrain (AoT) requirements need to be met. Under the new AoT rules, the project should classify as redevelopment and will need to treat 100% of new imperious and 30% of

existing impervious. The stormwater treatment BMP proposed in the southeast intersection quadrant should meet the AoT treatment goals. The design of the BMP will be further developed during the final design phase.

A Zone A floodplain is located at the eastern edge of the project along the Contoocook River. No impacts are anticipated since the roadway is raised above the river and the floodplain.

Conservation land is located adjacent to the project area (Contoocook State Forest and Hopkinton-Everett Flood Control Reservoir). No impacts are anticipated since all work would be within the existing NHDOT right-of-way.

No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated. A Phase IA/IB archaeological survey was completed for the project area (with a follow-up survey for the stormwater treatment area). Portions of the project area were considered to be archaeologically sensitive, but no artifacts were found and no further surveys are recommended. No historic resource impacts are expected. The former Boston & Maine Railroad crosses under the Contoocook River bridge (this is currently a snowmobile trail). Keyser Pond Campground is more than 50 years old. No impacts to these resources/properties are proposed.

The project area is mostly upland, but there are scattered wetlands and streams. No wetland or stream impacts are proposed. An unnamed perennial stream crosses through the project. A wetland roadside swale is located at the western edge of the project. The Contoocook River is located to the east. The Contoocook River Local Advisory Committee was contacted and they provided several recommendations for the project, including support for the roundabout alternative (compared to grade separation options) and adding stormwater treatment measures.

A vernal pool is located north of the project, adjacent to NH Route 127. Work would occur within the vernal pool buffer zone (both the Vernal Pool Envelope and the Critical Terrestrial Habitat). Site visits were conducted in 2020 and 2021 to look for indicator species. Wood frog and spotted salamander eggs and fairy shrimp were observed. A vernal pool characterization form was completed to document the visits and the existing conditions. A vernal pool assessment was completed using the USACE 2020 Rapid Assessment Method. This compared proposed conditions within the vernal pool buffers to existing conditions using aerial photos and project plans. The assessment showed that the changes in land use would not be substantial enough to result in adverse impacts to the vernal pool. There was no change in the score between existing and proposed conditions. Based on the assessment results, it is assumed that mitigation for vernal pool impacts won't be required and a Wetland Permit application won't need to be submitted for the project.

The meeting was then opened for comments and discussion.

Karl Benedict (NHDES)

- Confirmed that no NHDES Wetlands Permit is required. Deferred to USACE for comments on vernal pool mitigation.

Mary Ann Tilton (NHDES)

- No comments

Emily Nichols (NHDES)

- No comments. Recommended that impacts continue to be avoided and minimized.

Mike Dionne (NH Fish & Game)

- No comments

Kevin Newton (NH Fish & Game)

- Received consultation materials and will provide a response. Recommendations will likely include minimizing entrapment of reptile species in drainage features and possible time of year restrictions.

Mike Hicks (USACE)

- Will discuss vernal pool mitigation with others at USACE and will contact NHDOT/GM2 by the end of the week (12/22/2023) if mitigation is required for the vernal pool buffer impacts.

Littleton, 43809 (X-A005(203)):

The NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) is proposing to rehabilitate four bridges in Littleton: I-93 NB and SB over the Ammonoosuc River (#188/060 and #187/060) and over Industrial Park Road (#190/058 and #189/058). The project will consist of substructure repairs, expansion joint replacement, bearing replacement, and pavement overlay. Temporary access roads will be constructed and removed as part of the project, to access the piers for substructure repairs for the bridges over the Ammonoosuc River. The temporary access roads will also be used for access to construct a temporary girder support system to support the superstructure of the bridges over the Ammonoosuc River during bearing replacement. The four bridges will be included into one combined project, which is anticipated to be constructed in 2024 and 2025, with an anticipated advertisement date of January 2024. A Standard Dredge and Fill Wetland Permit Application for a Tier 3 stream crossing and Shoreland PBN will be submitted for the project.

Kimberly Peace (KP) (Hoyle Tanner) provided an overview of the project and the natural resources in the project area. The purpose of the meeting was to receive input from NHDES with regard to impacts to wetlands, shoreland permitting, and proposed mitigation (ARM Fund payment) for the project.

Karl Benedict (KB) (NHDES) asked about the areas identified as permanent impacts. KP explained that much of the impacts have been identified in areas requiring excavation and regrading for installation of the temporary causeways and their associated footings. While the causeways and footings will ultimately be removed, due to the need to excavate and regrade these areas, permanent impacts were identified to accommodate for minor changes in the grade and substrate resulting from removal of the causeways. KB asked that a schedule including the timeframe for the installation and removal of the causeway be provided in the permit application. KB requested that the application include an indication of how areas below OWH would be restored and noted that the areas along the banks are a wildlife corridor and would like to see the banks restored. TR stated the causeways will be installed one at a time and that one would be removed prior to constructing the other. KP stated that the river is flashy and the limited

hydraulic analysis conducted for the project supports installing riprap on the banks for the causeway and as restoration, as the banks are currently. Chris Fournier (CF) (HEB Engineers, Inc) noted the riprap installed for causeway access is meant to be removed once the repair is done. KB stated that is what DES wants.

Emily Nichols (EM) (NHDES) stated she cannot speak to mitigation until the impacts are confirmed with KB.

Mike Dionne (MD) (NHF&G) stated with the water diversion there may be a time of year restriction for trout. He will follow up on this. Jonathan Evans (JE) (NHDOT) asked if he knew what that restriction would be and MD stated possibly no in water work October/November. MD stated he would talk to fisheries.

Kevin Newton (KN) (NHF&G) stated he doesn't have many concerns however he would like to see vegetation on the banks for wildlife.

Jamie Sikora (JS) (FHWA) asked if there has been coordination with the Town of Littleton. There is a trail that is in the area and while ATVs are not allowed on the trail, he believes there is an agreement with Town allowing ATVs on Industrial Park Road that could be impacted by the project. JS also noted that the trail may be a section 4(f) recreational resource. JE stated that the Department is aware of this 4(f) resource and coordination with the Town as well as the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) who operates the trail is ongoing to ensure any impacts or concerns associated with this resource have been adequately addressed.

Seta Detzel (SD) (NHDES) asked if there are any PRAs. KP stated there are pockets of floodplain wetlands that we are trying to avoid. Should there be impacts to these wetlands they will be minimal and temporary. SD stated that temporary impacts to PRAs would not require mitigation and that the permit application should include documentation that shows there is no loss to the functions and values of the wetlands.

David Scott (DS) (NHDOT) stated that the advertisement date for the project shown as January 2024 will likely shift to a date later in 2024 which has yet to be determined.

Acworth, 43566C (FEMA 670946):

Jason Ayotte (JA) (NHDOT Project Manager) provided an overview of the project, which will address a deteriorated and damaged culvert carrying an unnamed stream under NH Route 123A adjacent to the Cold River in the Town of Acworth. The original damage to the culvert and roadway occurred in 2021 during a high rainfall event which caused extensive flooding in the area. The Department is coordinating with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to receive funding for project, and is working to meet the resulting permitting, scheduling, and design requirements. Linda Hutchins (LH), representing FEMA, is also in attendance. JA explained that the NH Department of Transportation (the Department) has met with Town officials who agreed to allow the road to be closed during construction in order minimize construction timeframe and impacts to resources in the area, especially the Cold River. The Town also requested to schedule construction during the Summer of 2025 to avoid impacting the school bus routes in the area. The current advertisement date is July 16, 2024. The

purpose of this meeting is the review the proposed mitigation prior to submission of the permit application to the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Wetlands Bureau.

Kimberly Peace (KP) (Hoyle, Tanner and Associates) provided an overview of the existing conditions, alternatives, and the natural resources in the project area. The work will address an existing 4' high x 2.8' wide x 28' long concrete box culvert with a top consisting of a corrugated metal pipe (CMP) arch that conveys an unnamed stream under NH Route 123A to the Cold River in the Town of Acworth, NH approximately 0.5 miles west of Gates Mountain Road. The Department has investigated three alternatives including repair, replacement with a 14' span and replacement with a 6' span. Repair was deemed infeasible due to the poor condition of the concrete culvert, corrosion of the corrugated metal topper, and undermining of the existing wingwalls. Due to the shallow placement of the culvert under the roadway and the resulting high chloride content in the soil, leaving the existing structure in place would result in rapid and continual deterioration causing a safety concern for this alternative. Replacement with an NHDES Stream Crossing Compliant 14' span structure was also considered but was deemed infeasible due to the substantially higher costs and impacts to resources including the Cold River, which were not justifiable compared to the potential improvements. The Department's preferred alternative would replace the existing structure with a 6' span which provides safety improvements, meets the 50-year and 100-year storm requirements, improves connectivity, and minimizes costs, construction timeframe and impacts to the Cold River and other jurisdictional areas. The work would involve installation of a 6' wide x 6' high x 34' long precast concrete box culvert with headwalls and wingwalls, along with permanent repairs to NH 123A roadway pavement, base materials, and embankment. The culvert would be embedded to allow for natural stream simulation through the crossing.

KP described the existing conditions in the area. The unnamed brook is a Tier 1 Stream according to the 0.19 square mile watershed size; however, it is considered Tier 3 due to proximity to the Cold River, which is designated and subject to Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (SWQPA). The NH Natural Heritage Bureau reviewed the project area and determined that there are no known records of protected species in the project area. The project is located in the ranges of the federally protected northern long-eared bat (NLEB) and northern bulrush. A plant survey was performed and determined that there is no suitable habitat for northern bulrush, and the appropriate consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding impacts to NLEB has been completed. The Cold River is a predicted cold-water fishery, however, the work as proposed would not permanently impact the channel of the river. KP described that the unnamed stream exists at the culvert outlet as a surface water but then diffuses and is connected to the Cold River subsurface, as there is a large berm created by debris deposited by the Cold River in this area and there is no surface water connection. In addition to the unnamed stream and the Cold River, there is another intermittent stream flowing parallel to the Unnamed stream & perpendicular to Cold River, and two delineated wetlands adjacent to the roadway.

Karl Benedict (KB) (NHDES) asked if there is a history of flooding at this location. JA stated the damage that occurred was a result of debris blocking the culvert and not the culvert flooding. KB stated the crossing is a Tier 3 crossing per Env-Wt 904.05 (a)(2) and (a)(3) and would require a major impact permit. KB confirmed that even though there is a pile of debris that prevents direct surface water connection to the Cold River it is still hydraulically connected, and it is located

within a 100-yr floodplain. In addition, the use of a closed bottom structure does not meet Env-Wt 904.07 for a Tier 3 stream crossing and should be permitted as an alternative design.

The Cold River is a designated river and Meli Dube (MD) (NHDOT Environmental Manager) initiated coordination with the Cold River Local Advisory Committee (CRLAC), who are not active at this time. MD spoke with Tracie Sales, NHDES Rivers Program Administrator, who reviewed the project details and agreed that a waiver from a Tier 3 to a Tier 1 for this crossing would be acceptable. KB recognized this could address Env-Wt 904.05 (a)(2), but because the outlet is in the 100-year floodplain, it would need a second waiver for Env-Wt 904.05(a)(3) and that NHDES is unlikely to approve two waivers and an alternative design. Andy O'Sullivan (AO) (NHDOT Wetlands Program) agreed with KB's conclusion and the project could proceed as a Standard Dredge and Fill Application Major Impact Project with an alternative design request.

KB inquired about potentially restoring a surface water connection between the unnamed stream and the Cold River. AO and JA discussed that some connectivity will be restored due to nature of the work and the grading which will be necessary to install the larger structure and stabilize the unnamed stream and the banks of the Cold River. The Department typically seeks to minimize impacts to wetlands and surface waters to the maximum extent practicable but will investigate potentially expanding the grading work further to provide additional stream restoration and connectivity in this case.

Seta Detzel (SD) (NHDES) concurred that the work would be classified as a Major Impact Project and that the unnamed Stream should be classified as a Tier 3 stream. Because the delineated wetlands are contiguous to a Tier 3 stream, the wetlands impacted near the inlet area will become a Priority Resource Area (PRA) and impacts to these areas would require compensatory mitigation. SD further discussed what may qualify a project to be considered self-mitigating. The Department proposes that the anticipated impacts to the banks and channel of surface waters would be self-mitigating according to Env-Wt 904.05(f)(1)(b) as there will be hydraulic, connectivity and AOP improvements compared to the existing condition. KB recommended consulting with NH Fish and Game Department (NHF&G) to assess the impacts and improvements discussed above.

Mike Dionne (M. Dionne) (NHF&G) stated there is no fish data for the unnamed stream, but the Cold River is known trout habitat. He also stated the rock/debris pile most likely excludes trout from entering the unnamed stream and would like to see connectivity restored in this area if possible. AO stated the channel of the unnamed stream upstream of the crossing is very steep and unlikely to be naturally accessible to trout. It was agreed that a site visit would be best to efficiently assess the likelihood of fish using the stream and what benefits the proposed aquatic organism passage improvements may provide. An on-site meeting was subsequently scheduled for January 11, 2024.

Kevin Newton (KN) (NHF&G) stated while there are no wildlife records, the cold river could support wood turtles and requested that this be considered during the design and construction of the project. The Department will include standard commitments previously developed in coordination with NHF&G to ensure that best practices are used to protect turtles during construction.

Mike Hicks (MH) (USACE) stated that because the culvert was permitted in the past and is being repaired or replaced in-kind, a United States Army Corps of Engineers Individual Permit would not be required.

LH concluded by thanking the Department for inviting her to the meeting and stated that she is working closely with MD to meet permitting and schedule milestones but has no further comments on the NDHES permitting process.

Plymouth, #41583 (X-A004(680)):

Andrew O'Sullivan (NHDOT) introduced Tucker Gordon, Josh McAllister, and Katy Lewis (HEB Engineers, Inc.). Tucker stated Josh and Katy are unable to attend but that Maddie Glavin (HEB Engineers, Inc.) would be recording minutes.

Tucker Gordon (HEB Engineers, Inc.) introduced the Highland Street Improvements Project. The proposed project would consist of the reconstruction of approximately 2,000 linear feet of Highland Street in Plymouth, NH between the Broadway Street intersection and Old Ward Bridge Road intersection. The proposed reconstruction would include roadway upgrades, pedestrian access improvements, and drainage system improvements.

This is a federally funded TAP Project which will follow the LPA process. The project is anticipated to be classified as a Categorical Exclusion for NEPA documentation.

The Project Area is a two-lane roadway, with substandard pedestrian infrastructure. The project area is a densely developed residential neighborhood. T. Gordon noted that a portion of the project corridor narrows and creates snow removal issues for the Town of Plymouth. Additionally, T. Gordon noted that improvements to the intersection with Old Ward Bridge Road are being considered as part of the proposed project. The primary purpose of the proposed project is to improve pedestrian safety and access and to improve the overall condition of the corridor.

T. Gordon presented photos of the project area to show the existing condition of the roadway corridor and the pedestrian infrastructure. T. Gordon noted that there would be no significant utility changes as part of the proposed project. The goal of the project is to provide continuity between the sections of Highland Street to the east and west of the project area, which have sufficient sidewalks and curbing.

T. Gordon reviewed environmental considerations related to the proposed project. The project area is a densely developed residential area. The NHDHR Request for Project Review (RPR) has recently been completed and will be submitted to NHDOT this week for review. T. Gordon noted that he anticipates the need for coordination related to Section 106 and Section 4(f) due the age of some nearby properties, but hopes to avoid impacts and achieve a No Adverse Effects determination. The NHB DataCheck returned no known records in the project vicinity. The USFWS IPaC tool noted that the project is within the ranges of the Northern Long-eared Bat and the Monarch Butterfly.

There are jurisdictional wetlands, which have been delineated, associated with two culverts in the project area. T. Gordon stated that they are hoping to avoid impacts to these resources, but will not know until later in the project. There is no wildlife habitat in the 2020 Wildlife Action Plan in the project vicinity. The project area is a low priority area for invasive plant management.

T. Gordon presented three (3) overall alternatives: No-Build, Reconstruction In-Kind, and Reconstruction with an Improved Typical Section. The No-Build alternative would not achieve the project goals and would result in continued corridor deterioration and poor pedestrian access. Reconstruction In-Kind would improve the corridor condition, but would not improve pedestrian safety and access. Neither of these alternatives are being considered further. Reconstruction with an Improved Typical Section has two other alternative considerations; widening of a small section of the corridor along the curve, and improvements to the intersection with Old Ward Bridge Road. The widening of a portion of the corridor is being considered due to inadequate sidewalk width and associated snow removal challenges for the Town. Improvements to the intersection with Old Ward Bridge Road are being considered due to the poor geometry of the intersection and difficulty with vehicular and pedestrian movement.

T. Gordon reviewed the project status and schedule. Currently, the project is in the Engineering Study phase, which we hope to conclude in January 2024. The Preliminary Design phase would follow and would be completed in May 2024; wetlands permit applications, if necessary, would be submitted in September 2024; final design is scheduled to be completed in January 2025; bidding is scheduled for April 2025; and construction is planned for Summer/Fall of 2025.

T. Gordon concluded the presentation and Andrew O'Sullivan (NHDOT) began soliciting feedback from attendees.

Karl Benedict (NHDES) noted that the project team is attempting to avoid and minimize wetland impacts as much as possible. K. Benedict noted that if impacts are required, they should be minimal and would not pose a significant problem. Direct discharges of stormwater should be avoided. If wetland impacts are needed, coordination can happen with NHDES.

Seta Detzel (NHDES) stated that since no wetland impacts are proposed at this time, there are no mitigation considerations.

Mike Dionne (NHF&G) had no comment.

Kevin Newton (NHF&G) noted that the Baker River and Pemigewasset River are important Wood Turtle habitat and that considerations should be made for encountering the species during this project.

Mike Hicks (ACOE) had no comment.

Jamie Sikora (FHWA) had no comments at this time. If there are Section 106 and/or Section 4(f) uses, the project team should reach out for coordination.