



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PLATEAU BUILDING, ROOM A-5  
50 SOUTH FRENCH BROAD AVENUE  
ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA 28801

June 8, 1983

#62

SE 7-2-2-51

*File*

**SURNAME**

Mr. Joseph R. Binder  
Director  
Southeast Area - Electric  
Rural Electrification Administration  
Washington, DC 20250

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*R. Curran*  
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RE: 4-2-83-106

Dear Mr. Binder:

This is in response to your letter of April 18, 1983, received April 20, 1983, requesting formal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, on the impacts of the Big Rivers Wescor/Western Kraft Transmission Line. This letter presents the Biological Opinion of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

The endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) is the only federally listed species considered in this consultation. We have reviewed the biological assessment provided by Big Rivers Electric Corporation, the information provided in your letter and other pertinent information in our files. Copies of pertinent documents and documentation of personal communications are contained in an administrative record maintained in this office.

### Project Description and Impacts

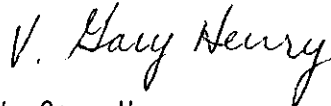
The Big Rivers Electric Corporation proposes to construct approximately three miles of parallel 161 KV tie lines in Hancock County, Kentucky. The proposed project, when constructed, will cross three streams, Muddy Branch Creek, Indian Creek, and Sandy Branch Creek which may provide summer habitat for the endangered Indiana bat. The Big Rivers Electric Corporation and REA have assessed the value of the habitat to be destroyed by the project but have not conducted the surveys necessary to actually determine if in fact the area is used by the Indiana bat during the summer. Rather than conduct these surveys they have assumed that the Indiana bat uses the area under consideration during the summer and have modified the project accordingly. In order to reduce potential impacts to this species the woody vegetation along the portions of the right-of-way crossing the three streams listed above will not be disturbed during the time period that the Indiana bat would be anticipated to be in the project area. These wooded areas will be cut either before May or after September. After completion of the project the right-of-way adjacent to the streams will be maintained by hand. No chemical control agents will be used.

The project as proposed will affect the Indiana bat to a limited degree by destroying a small portion of its summer habitat. However, because of the alterations to the project mentioned above and the limited amount of habitat destruction involved, we believe that the project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Indiana bat. This evaluation includes a consideration of the cumulative impacts of the proposal. Incidental taking of the Indiana bat should not occur because of the time restrictions placed upon project construction.

The Rural Electrification Administration is reminded of its continuing responsibility to review its actions in light of Section 7 and to reinitiate this consultation if new information becomes available which indicates that the construction of this project may affect listed species or Critical Habitat in a manner not considered in this consultation or a newly listed species which may occur within the impact area of this project.

We appreciate the efforts you and the Big Rivers Electric Cooperation have made to meet your responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act and look forward to working with you in the future on other projects.

Sincerely yours,



V. Gary Henry  
Acting Field Supervisor  
Endangered Species Field Supervisor

cc:  
Director, FWS, Washington, DC (AFA/OES)  
Regional Director, FWS, Atlanta, GA (ARD-FA/SE)  
Field Supervisor, ES, FWS, Cookeville, TN