



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

ARIZONA DIVISION

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November 7, 2012

In Reply Refer To:
015-A(208)S
HOP-AZ

015-A(208)S
015 M0 015 H8574 01C
Virgin River Bridge #6 (STR #1619) Geotechnical Investigation
Request for concurrence

Mr. Brian Wooldridge, Fish & Wildlife Biologist
U.S Fish & Wildlife Service
Southwest Forest Science Complex
2500 South Pine Knoll Drive
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

Dear Mr. Wooldridge:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as lead federal agency, and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), as the project sponsoring agency, propose to rehabilitate Virgin River Bridge No. 6 at milepost (MP) 15.58 on Interstate 15 (I-15). A geotechnical investigation involving approximately 14 borings is planned prior to the bridge construction to obtain soil and substrate data. The limits of the geotechnical investigation, from MP 15.49 to MP 15.99, are located approximately 6.7 miles east of the unincorporated communities of Beaver Dam and Littlefield in Mohave County, Arizona. While FHWA is the lead federal agency, ADOT is designated as the non-federal representative for this project for the purposes of informal consultation pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

The enclosed Biological Evaluation (BE) describes the proposed geotechnical investigation and considers the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the investigation on federally protected and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Sensitive Species for the project area. Fourteen species are evaluated in detail due to the potential presence of the species, suitable habitat, and/or Critical Habitat for these species within or near the project area. During coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and BLM biologists, it was agreed that all fourteen special status species would be analyzed in a single document to streamline the biological analysis and consultation process.


The BE concludes that the proposed geotechnical investigation will have no effect to the Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*). However, the geotechnical

investigation may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the Virgin River chub (*Gila seminuda*), woundfin (*Plagopterus argentissimus*), and Virgin spinedace (*Lepidomeda mollispinis mollispinis*). In addition, the proposed investigation may affect, but is not likely to affect, designated Critical Habitat for the Virgin River chub, woundfin, and Southwestern willow flycatcher.

With submittal of this letter and BE, FHWA and ADOT are requesting concurrence with the determination that the referenced geotechnical investigation *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the Virgin River chub, woundfin, and Virgin spinedace or designated Critical Habitat for the Virgin River chub, woundfin and Southwestern willow flycatcher. If you have questions, please contact Rebecca Swiecki, FHWA Environmental Coordinator, at 602.382.8979 or [Rebecca Swiecki@dot.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Swiecki@dot.gov), or Kris Gade, ADOT Environmental Planning Group Biologist at 602.712.7649 or kgade@azdot.gov. Thank you for your continued cooperation and interest in this project.

Sincerely,



 Karla S. Petty
Division Administrator

Enclosure