

Protecting the Bicknell's Thrush

The Bicknell's thrush prospers in the White and Green mountain ranges of northern New Hampshire and Vermont, at elevations between 3,500 and 5,000 feet above sea level. They thrive in soft firs and other lush, green trees.

"We need a baseline understanding of how many birds are up north in the United States," said John Lloyd, director of science at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies. "It's a big area with habitat that is difficult to survey, so we don't have a good gauge. The consensus is that there are probably fewer than 200,000 in the world. They are listed as a 'threatened species' in Canada, but their status is currently under review in the U.S."



Photo courtesy of Kent McFarland, Vermont Center for Ecostudies

Now, through a project supported by a \$128,250 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) — with funding from Eversource's Partners for New Hampshire's Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service — ornithologists can determine how to best protect this unique bird and restore its habitat in northern New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.

Globally, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has designated the Bicknell's thrush as threatened, a species they call "vulnerable," setting them apart as a species to protect.

The Bicknell's thrush flies south for the winter beginning in October, taking a circuitous route. Scientists want to better understand its migratory and mating habits in order to offer more effective protection.

"We know the path they take, but not so much about the stopping places," Lloyd said. "The Bicknell's thrush moves down the East Coast just east of the Appalachian Mountains. They seem to hit coastal North Carolina and refuel. Then they launch straight over the ocean to the Dominican Republic or Haiti. We think they may stop over and refuel somewhere like the Bahamas as well."

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology indicates the Bicknell's thrush has one of the most restricted nesting and breeding areas of all bird species in the world. It happens to be in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine mountain ranges. The Vermont Center for Ecostudies is studying where the thrushes nest in higher elevations during the summer, among thick fir tree forests and wet mountains of the northeastern United States.

"Climate change is an important concern," Lloyd added. "If the forests retreat, if we get less snow, and have hardwoods moving up the slope, that could have an effect on the Bicknell's thrush. During the wintering season, we are also concerned about loss of forests down in Hispaniola; avocado plantation owners are clearing higher tracts of land for crops."

SEC Continues Work on NORTHERN PASS APPLICATION

The New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee (SEC) has announced it will hold a public hearing on May 19 at 6 p.m. at the Mountain View Grand Resort, at 101 Mountain View Road in Whitefield to receive public comments on the additional information submitted by Northern Pass to comply with newly adopted SEC rules.

This public hearing is in addition to the five public hearings the SEC held in March. The SEC order, issued on May 4, specifies that the public hearing, including public comments, will be limited to issues presented by the additional information filed by Northern Pass.

The SEC will also hold a hearing on pending motions earlier that day at 11 a.m. at the Mountain View Grand Resort. The hearing will address pending motions on the SEC's timeframe for reviewing the project and a Northern Pass request for partial waivers under the new SEC rules.

The SEC has held a number of hearings in recent months to address issues related to the adjudicative process — a phase of the SEC's review which is outlined in state law. A prehearing conference was held on March 22 to address issues relating to interveners, the SEC's timeframe for reviewing the project, whether to hold additional public hearings, and other procedural issues. On April 12, the SEC held a hearing in Lincoln to discuss pending motions, including all requests to review the SEC's Order on Petitions to Intervene. On April 22, the SEC issued a temporary procedural schedule beginning the discovery phase of the process.

You can find more information about the hearing on the SEC's website www.nhsec.nh.gov, or on the Northern Pass website, www.northernpass.us.



Northern Pass Announces Major Contractors

HIRING NEW HAMPSHIRE WORKERS WILL BE A PRIORITY FOR THE PROJECT

Earlier this month, Northern Pass announced it has forged agreements with a highly experienced team of contractors and material suppliers who will execute the engineering, design, and construction of the Northern Pass transmission line once the project receives state and federal permits.

“The knowledge and expertise these industry-leading companies bring to the project will complement the strengths that Eversource and Hydro-Québec have demonstrated as award-winning energy project developers,” said Bill Quinlan, president of Eversource Operations in New Hampshire. “Securing agreements with these contractors now puts Northern Pass in a strong position to begin the construction phase as soon as all permits are secured.”

Northern Pass will create 2,600 jobs during construction. The workforce will be needed throughout the project’s construction period and on various phases, including: logging, excavating, gravel, trucking, concrete, electrical utility work, paving, fencing, and landscaping. In addition, the project will require other general services and materials, including traffic control, security, equipment rental, waste management, and others.

Hundreds of New Hampshire residents have contacted Northern Pass to ask how they can become involved once construction begins. In the coming months, the project’s major contractors will be in contact with various parties, starting first with local companies that have the capabilities to supply labor, equipment, and materials for the project.

Northern Pass has long been committed to hiring New Hampshire workers for the construction of the project. This commitment was further solidified in 2015 when Eversource announced its *New Hampshire First* jobs initiative. Eversource partnered with local contractors and electrical workers’ unions to help construct and maintain more than \$2 billion in proposed energy projects throughout the state, including the Northern Pass Transmission project.

“Northern Pass will provide a unique opportunity to work on one of the largest infrastructure projects in state history,” said Quinlan. “I have spoken to many highly-skilled men and women around the state who are eager to work on a multi-year project close to home. The project is going to provide significant opportunities for a wide range of New Hampshire workers.”

ABOUT NORTHERN PASS

Northern Pass is a 192-mile electric transmission line project that will provide New Hampshire and New England up to 1,090 megawatts of clean hydropower. This reliable and competitively-priced power will also bring a range of benefits to New Hampshire, including hundreds of millions of dollars in energy cost savings, additional tax revenue, and thousands of jobs during construction and beyond. To learn more about Northern Pass, go to www.northernpass.us. You can also email questions to info@northernpass.us or call **1-800-286-7305**.

Northern Pass Contractors

PAR Electrical Contractors (PAR) will serve as the General Contractor for the project and will construct all overhead portions of the lines, build all substations and transition stations, install the duct bank, and perform the horizontal directional drilling on the underground segments of the line. PAR’s New Hampshire office is in Bow. The company is a subsidiary of Quanta Services, which is the largest transmission and distribution specialty contractor in North America.

Burns and McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc.

is an engineering and design firm based in Kansas City, Missouri, with offices throughout New England, including Manchester. Burns and McDonnell has been working with Northern Pass since the early stages of development and will continue to be engaged as part of the project team.

ABB is a global leader in power and automation technologies. It will engineer and fabricate the underground DC cable and the converter station in Franklin, as well as equipment at the Deerfield substation required to support interconnecting the Northern Pass line to the regional electric grid.

M.J. Electric, LLC, also a subsidiary of Quanta Services, will work with ABB to engineer and construct the converter station, including the buildings and installation of the High Voltage DC converter equipment.

NFWF Meets with 2016 Grant Applicants

Representatives from conservation groups across the region met with officials from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation this month to learn more about the \$1.9 million that has been made available in 2016 through the New England Rivers Fund. A substantial portion of this funding has been provided by Northern Pass, LLC. Last year, the fund delivered funds to nine conservation projects across New Hampshire for a total impact of \$1.7 million.

Three in-person meetings and a webinar were held across New England that outlined the criteria of the grant and offered information about navigating the application process. The application deadline is May 19. For more information about the New England Rivers Fund application process, go to www.nfwf.org/newengland.