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New Jersey DEP Releases Updated Landscape Project Habitat Mapping

June 30, 2017

New Jersey DEP's Land Use Regulation and Water Quality Management Planning Programs rely on maps developed by the Department's Division of Fish and Wildlife to determine the location, extent and resource value of Threatened and Endangered (TandE) species habitat. The presence of TandE habitat can determine whether Wetland, Flood Hazard Area Control Act and Coastal Permits are approved or denied, and can likewise determine if applications to expand sewer service areas will be approved. The maps were developed as part of DEP's Landscape Project.

On May 9, 2017, the Division of Fish and Wildlife announced that Landscape Project Version 3.3 is now in use. The updated maps incorporate more recent land use and land cover information, new species occurrences since the prior release and the addition of species that were not previously represented, including the Northern Long-eared Bat and the Atlantic Sturgeon. Version 3.3 reportedly adds approximately 147,000 acres of gross land area to the TandE Habitat Inventory. Some of this acreage is already located either in sewer service areas, in environmentally constrained portions of the Highlands and/or is classified as wetlands, preserved open space or open water. This leaves approximately 57,000 net acres of previously unconstrained land as newly protected habitat. Version 3.3 reportedly removes approximately 50,000 acres of previously mapped TandE habitat. Landscape project maps and data are available on DEP's website at www.nj.gov/dep/gis.

Implementation of Version 3.3 will have important implications throughout the State, and property owners, developers and interested parties may want to familiarize themselves with it. If you have any questions concerning this or any related matter, please feel free to contact Neil Yoskin or one of the other members of our Environmental Practice Group.

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