



Illinois Department of Transportation

2300 South Dirksen Parkway / Springfield, Illinois / 62764

December 29, 2009

CIRCULAR LETTER 2009-20

FRESHWATER MUSSELS

COUNTY ENGINEERS/SUPERINTENDENTS OF HIGHWAYS
MUNICIPAL ENGINEERS/DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC WORKS/MAYORS
CONSULTING ENGINEERS

According to the October 30, 2009 Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Checklist of Endangered and Threatened Animals and Plants of Illinois, there are currently 16 species of mussels listed as endangered, and eight species listed as threatened. As these species are all sensitive to siltation and other pollutants, much care must be taken to avoid impacts to their environment during bridge construction or rehabilitation.

In the development of a project, special studies and coordination are required when the action may affect a threatened or endangered species. The Environment Section of the Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) works closely with IDNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify the likelihood of any listed species in the project area. The Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) then performs mussel surveys to determine the presence of the species. If a threatened or endangered mussel is found, a Conservation Plan is developed and an Incidental Take Authorization (ITA) permit (granted by IDNR) is applied for. This permit process may take up to six months. Once the permit is granted, the INHS will relocate any listed species to a suitable habitat, usually upstream, out of harm's way of the project.

In order to protect the mussels, certain conditions must be met before surveys and relocations can occur. Therefore, the INHS typically performs mussel surveys and relocations in the late summer (August-September).

Please keep this information in mind when you are determining your project timeline. As the survey window is small, close coordination between the Bureau of Local Roads and Streets, BDE and INHS will be necessary to ensure safe and accurate survey results, as well as meeting the anticipated construction timeline.

If you have any questions please contact BDE's Environment Section at (217) 782-4770.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell Lewis".

Darrell W. Lewis, P.E.
Acting Engineer of Local Roads and Streets