

NCDOT Guidelines to Assess Potential Project Impacts to the Bald Eagle and Survey Protocols

The bald eagle has been delisted as of August 8, 2007 from the Endangered Species Act. The bald eagle will still be protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Surveys may still need to be conducted. The USFWS has issued guidance in the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. The following are NCDOT bald eagle survey protocols based on the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. See the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines for life history.

- All projects are to be assessed for bald eagle nests within NC
- A bald eagle survey area consists of the study area and a 660 feet radius from the edge of the study area (this is the bald eagle survey area)
- First assess if the bald eagle survey area is within 1.0 mile from a feeding source (large body of water large enough to support fish, or commercial fishing ponds) (2 acres is a guideline, but can depend on the quality of the pond, use best professional judgement)
- If no feeding/water source within 1.0 mile of the bald eagle survey area then no survey necessary
- If feeding/water source within 1.0 mile then survey needed within the bald eagle survey area in appropriate habitat
- If bald eagle nest found within survey area and contact USFWS for coordination. Consultants, contact the ECAP project manager.

These are only guidelines so always use your best professional judgement. Call USFWS with any questions on the Act or the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. Look up NHP data (on GIS) and contact WRC and USFWS for known eagle nests. Not all known locations are located on NHP.

- Surveys can be done year round but the optimal time to survey is November to early March when the leaves have fallen off the deciduous trees. The most likely time to see bald eagles on a nest is January to May.
- Have a pair of binoculars when surveying
- If habitat is of high quality for nesting and foraging, then a helicopter survey may be needed. Talk with your supervisor to determine if a helicopter survey is needed. Consultants, discuss with ECAP Regional Manager before scoping.

If a nest is found within the survey area:

- Mark location on aerial photo.
- GPS nest
- Watch nest to see if any eagles return to nest (if during nesting season).
- Note if any eagles seen near the nest or around the area.
- Contact USFWS

See NRTR example for standard language to use for in NRTR and other documents.