The Eastern Hellbender was proposed for federal listing in December 2024. However, no restrictions will take effect until the proposal is finalized, which is expected in late 2025 or early 2026. Until then, proposed species do not receive protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), except that federal action agencies must ensure their actions do not jeopardize the species' existence. These agencies may also consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to obtain a conference opinion, which will automatically convert to a biological opinion upon the final listing decision.

In the meantime, NCDOT Construction or Division Environmental Offices may voluntarily coordinate with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) to assess and potentially relocate hellbenders from project sites in western North Carolina. It is recommended that they contact the NCWRC liaison at least two months before construction begins.

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