



Commissioner Gregory Johnson
Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
#1 Sportsman's Lane
Frankfort, KY 40601

July 31, 2015

Re: Wildlife Impacts Associated With the Proposal for a Federal Prison Facility in Letcher County

Dear Commissioner Johnson:

We are writing to ask you to oppose the U.S. Bureau of Prison's (BOP) proposal for a new federal prison to be built in Letcher County because of the impacts this prison will have on sensitive wildlife, including state and federally protected species.

BOP's proposed project would cover over 700 acres of wildlife habitat with concrete, roads, walls, and fences, greatly diminishing the ability of many species to utilize this area.

The Kentucky Department of Environmental Protection is coordinating the state environmental review process regarding this project. When they ask the Department of Fish and Wildlife for input, we ask that you raise the following specific concerns:

- 1) This project may adversely impact [71 species](#) known to live in Letcher County and recognized as threatened, endangered, or of special concern in Kentucky. This includes the Kentucky red-backed vole, sharp-shinned hawk, American black bear, eastern red damsel, mountain midget crayfish, and Cumberland arrow darter. Protecting these species is integral to protecting Kentucky's rich natural heritage for future generations.
- 2) This project may adversely affect the endangered Indiana and Grey bats, both highly imperiled species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act. As U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe has pointed out, "Bats provide tremendous value to the U.S. economy as natural pest control for American farms and forests every year, while playing an essential role in helping to control insects that can spread disease to people." Habitat exists for both species of endangered bats in second growth forests in Letcher County, but this project could destroy that habitat because it would entail clearing substantial forest acreage.

We urge you to protect these important species by opposing this project.

Our organizations are deeply concerned about the impacts of this project and were joined by nearly two dozen organizations and individuals in submitting [comments](#) outlining why this project should not go forward. These comments contain additional detail regarding our concerns with the project, including the wildlife-related issues of particular relevance for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

In closing, we once again urge you to protect Kentucky's wildlife by opposing this new federal prison. Please confirm receipt of this letter, and do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to further discuss this matter.

Sincerely,



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