



DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**Wildlife Resources Section
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Stephen S. McDaniel
Director

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Dear WV Approved Mussel Surveyors,

I hope the 2020 field season treats you well. There have been several changes to the Protocol this year. Many are just clarifications to address questions that have come up over the years. I do want to reinforce the importance of reading through the protocol and revising template reports to meet the requirements. I believe the violation standards previously provided (and on the website) put forth an even playing field for all and I think most are aware that there are no excuses for not complying. One consistent issue last year was failure to notify the agencies as to when you will be in the field. This should be done within the two weeks prior to conducting field work, 24 or 48 hrs is fine. There are additional contacts noted in your scientific collecting permit that you should also notify, such as the local Natural Resources Police Officer or District Office. Yes, we know schedules change. Make it a practice to email us of changes and then re-notify when rescheduled. Below are some of the more significant changes to be aware of.

- Information to be included in an Inadvertent Return Response Plan and information needed to report, Page 5,
- Surveyor Qualifications – more specific experience requirements, Page 6,
- Group 3 salvage limitations for new impact areas, Page 7,
- Additional information on water withdrawals, guidance to be posted on website, Page 9,
- Change in buffer transect spacing for dredging activities to bring into line with other activities, Table 3, Page 24,
- See variances, Section 6, Page 10,
- More detailed Scope and Reporting checklists, Pages 10 and 22,
- Group 2 Phase 2 change from quadrat excavations to additional search effort, Page 18,
- Group 2 maximum cell size 25m², Page 17,
- Significant changes in salvage section, Page 20.

To reiterate the directive made last year, all scopes of work are to come directly from the Approved Surveyor for approval. If the contracting company wishes, they may request tentative approval of the scope but then it must be submitted by the Approved Surveyor for final approval. Likewise, the final mussel survey report must be submitted by the Approved Surveyor or they must be cc'd on the submittal. It is the surveyor's responsibility to ensure all reports are submitted accurately. All reports or cover letters should include the contact person and contact information to whom project concurrence is to be provided.

In the 2018 Protocol additional criteria for maintaining your certification was established. The yearly reporting for calendar year 2020 continuing education is due February 15, 2021. I added some clarification on the instructions page of the reporting spreadsheet which will be posted on the website. Pay attention to all reporting deadlines. My replacement may not be as nice with reminders.

For both the DNR and FWS there are new generic email addresses to which all scopes and scientific permit applications are to be submitted. Barb Sargent is still in charge of scientific collecting permits and is the primary reviewer on the state's generic email. The scopes are then assigned to other staff. Submit your scope and once your project has been assigned to a staff member, they then can be contacted directly for questions. Bear with the FWS as they are in the process of moving and the phone number in the Protocol is not currently active, though it may reach the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, their new office.

Finally, many of you know already but, I will be retiring June 30. I have enjoyed working with you and greatly appreciate the cooperation over the years as we have made great strides in protecting mussel resources in West Virginia. Know that I will try my hardest to get things in place to make a smooth transition and will work hard to get your scopes approved and projects moving forward until my departure.

Here's to a Wonderful Field Season
Maybe I'll see you on the river sometime!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JL Clayton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Janet L. Clayton
Mussel Program Leader (at least for now)