



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF
INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
284 STATE STREET
41 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA ME 04333-0041



JUDITH CAMUSO
COMMISSIONER

Patrick Johnson
JPS Surveying and Engineering
October 3, 2022

Dear Patrick,

As you know on September 28, 2022 we conducted a site visit of the proposed “The Timbers” project, off from Sanford Road, Wells. The purpose of the site visit was to assess the site for the presence of the State Endangered New England cottontail rabbit and its habitat. New England cottontails are an early successional obligate species, only occurring in thickets of shrubs and young forests, generally with stem densities >20,000 stems/acre.

Our protocol for assessing areas for cottontail presence is to conduct surveys in winter, ideally 2-4 days after a snow fall to allow for good tracking conditions and presence of fresh fecal pellets (which subsequently undergo a genetic analysis to confirm the species). During our site visit, there was an abundance of live herbaceous vegetation and falling leaves that would obscure fecal pellets. Therefore, we were well outside the parameters of our typical survey protocols, making it unlikely that we would find cottontail sign, even if they were present. Unsurprisingly, we did not find any evidence of cottontail presence.

However, I was able to make a more thorough assessment of the property for potential cottontail habitat. The property is primarily composed of a mid-successional white pine and hardwood (primarily oak and red maple) forest, with little understory vegetation (see below for representative photos). A recent timber harvest has opened the canopy in some areas, but the resulting regeneration is relatively sparse and primarily white pine. The property had no areas that had an adequate stem density of shrubs or deciduous young trees to be suitable habitat for New England cottontails.

Based on the lack of suitable cottontail habitat, and the nearest documented cottontail location being approximately 1.5 miles away (which is further than the typical dispersal distance of an individual), it is unlikely that New England cottontails occupy the property. Therefore, I do not anticipate a significant impact to the species from this project.

Sincerely,

Cory Stearns
Small Mammal Biologist
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Representative Photos:





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