



**Blanding's Turtle Protection Plan for
Four Mile Pond Dam – Georgetown Road
Boxford, MA**

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Prepared for:

MA Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
NHESP File #09-27017

Prepared by:

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Oxbow Associates, Inc. (OA) has prepared this Turtle Protection Plan to avoid incidental mortality (prohibited "Take"; 321 CMR 10.02 under the MA Endangered Species Act (MESA) to Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) at the subject site during the proposed site work associated with minor concrete repairs of existing Four Mile Pond dam located on Pye Brook. The dam will be accessed using 30-foot wide, and 145-foot long existing cart path within an access easement off Georgetown Road. Only minor shrub trimming will be required along the access road. The total area of easement and the work area within the PH/EH is 0.128 acres. Work will not result in habitat disturbance for *E. blandingii*. The entire repair is anticipated to take 2-3 business days.

This protection plan is comparable to similar measures required by NHESP for analogous projects in the Commonwealth. OA will obtain a Scientific Collecting Permit (SCP) from Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW) prior to implementation of this plan. A brief memorandum will be provided to NHESP within 10 days of completion of the turtle clearing surveys including the date, time, conditions, personnel, hours-on-site, and results. OA will prepare and submit Rare Animal Observation reports via Heritage-hub, as needed.

Blanding's Turtle Protection Precautions

There are four general components to the turtle protection plan:

1. Administration of a worker training program

Prior to initial construction work, the construction crew(s), project foreman, and site engineers (as applicable), will be provided a brief (est. 20 minutes) introductory session on Blanding's turtle biology, behavior, and conservation. Contractors will be notified about their responsibilities, and best practices regarding the maintenance of the turtle barrier, gates, and overall wildlife mortality avoidance. Laminated poster(s) with images of turtles, contact information for a qualified biologist(s), and instructions regarding proper protocol if a Blanding's turtle is encountered will be provided. These posters will be given to the construction supervisor and available for review by all workers.

2. Installation of a Turtle Barrier Fence

Given the existing condition of the site and short (2-3 days) duration of this project, OA will request NHESP approval for turtle protection plan without barrier installation.

3. Clearing surveys immediately prior to initiating upland work.

Upon NHESP's approval of this Plan, visual surveys shall be conducted by qualified turtle biologists. The largely pre-cleared Limit of Work (approximately 0.173 acres) will be searched prior to any earthwork. OA estimates a total of 1.0 person-hours (0.173 acres x 4 hr/acre = 0.7 hrs.). This is primarily terrestrial site shaded by threes with cleared understory and sparse opportunities for turtles to hide. Any animals present would be in deeper water or may occasionally cross the work site during the August - September. These surveys shall occur under appropriate weather conditions for reptile surveys.

4. Turtle observations, relocations, and reporting

Any turtles encountered (state-listed or common) by contractors will be reported to the turtle biologist, and the turtle biologist shall relocate the turtle to a nearby location outside of the work area with similar conditions. This will be completed under guidelines specified in the SCP from MDFW. Documentation will include standard morphometric data (mass, carapace length and depth), age as determined by annuli count, determination of sex, description of behavior and local environment at time of capture, and photographs taken of the animal. Any turtles found will be recorded using hand-held GPS receivers with sub-meter accuracy and reported to NHESP using Heritage Hub.