

Northern Long-eared Bat Ranking Criteria Guidance for The Conservation Fund's Diamond Pipeline Account

Funds have been voluntarily transferred to The Conservation Fund (TCF) in order to contribute to the conservation and preservation of Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has agreed to provide technical assistance to TCF during this effort. Because of this, the Service proposed the development of a NLEB Ranking Criteria Committee (Committee) composed of representatives from various conservation groups (The Nature Conservancy, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Arkansas Natural Resources Commission, U.S. Forest Service, and National Park Service) within the state of Arkansas. As a result, each member of the Committee has contributed to the development of this ranking criteria guidance document that will assist with TCF's project funding determinations. It is the recommendation of this Committee that TCF will utilize these ranking criteria in selecting projects, although geographic distribution of projects, the amount of funding requested for a project compared with the total amount of funding available, project readiness, and other such factors may also be considered. Partial funding of one or more projects, when practicable, may be considered.

As suggested below in the ranking criteria, the Committee generally recommends selecting proposals that acquire or protect property that adjoin or are within the NLEB Focus Area (map attached) or acquisition boundary of an existing conservation ownership. Additionally, for easement or fee simple lands, the committee strongly encourages clear and unencumbered ownership of all surface and mineral rights to the property. Please refer to the TCF announcement (a.k.a., request for proposals) for information regarding project cost eligibility (e.g., purchase of land or easement, due diligence expenses, legal and closing costs, etc.).

Applicants are encouraged to rank their project proposals; however, should there be any question of the projects overall ranking, the Committee will convene and assign ranks for each category. Please note, as stated above, these ranking criteria are meant solely as guidance for TCF to utilize.

SPECIES BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the land acquisition will be for the NLEB as well as other listed species, candidate species, and species of greatest conservation need (SGCN).

1) Distance from disturbance. Priority for projects near the actual route of the pipeline (5 pts maximum)

___ Within 5 miles of pipeline ROW - average foraging radius (5 pts)

___ Within 50 miles of pipeline ROW - average migration radius (2 pts)

2) Number of species (plants and animals), in addition to NLEB, benefitted by acquiring proposed property. The following species of concern (i.e., federally listed, candidate, and SGCN) may be counted if they occur within 3 miles of a known record AND contain suitable habitat for the species. (10 pts maximum)

___ Federally listed threatened or endangered (3 pts for each species present (not including NLEB))

___ Candidate Species for federal listing (2 pts for each species present)

___ SGCN (1 pts for each species present)

Identify species:

- _____ (___ pts)
- _____ (___ pts)
- _____ (___ pts)
- _____ (___ pts)

3) Species Presence (NLEB) (Choose the most appropriate statement) (Proof/documentation of presence is required)

___ Species presence verified by visual in a cave located on the proposed property (30 pts)

___ Species presence verified by mist netting or in a roost tree on the proposed property (20 pts)

___ Species presence verified by visual in cave or roost tree not on the proposed property but is within 5 miles of proposed property (15pts)

___ Species presence verified by mist net capture within 5 miles of proposed property (10 pts)

___ Species presence verified (visually vetted) by acoustic within 5 miles (5 pts)

___ No documentation of species present (0 pts)

Total points for species benefits (sum of 3): _____ (45 pts maximum)

ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the proposed land acquisition will be for the NLEB. Projects should identify the conservation benefits to be derived through acquisition of the property in support of the NLEB.

4) Ecosystem benefits (30 pts maximum)

Function

___ Habitat fills a critical role in the life cycle of the NLEB by confirming NLEB presence on the proposed property (i.e., uses cave for hibernacula; known summer roost trees; known foraging habitat) (5 pts)

___ Habitat requires little or no management to provide benefits to the NLEB or restoration funds are available to significantly improve benefits to the NLEB (5 pts)

Connectivity (Choose the most appropriate statement)

___ Habitat links two existing protected areas together, occurs completely within a protected area, or is adjacent to existing protected areas, thereby reducing habitat fragmentation (20 pts)

___ Habitat, while not directly adjacent to a protected area, does occur between and within a mile of two protected areas (10 pts)

___ Habitat is not directly adjacent to a protected area, but is within a mile of a protected area. (5 pts)

___ Habitat is further than one mile from any protected areas. (0 pts)

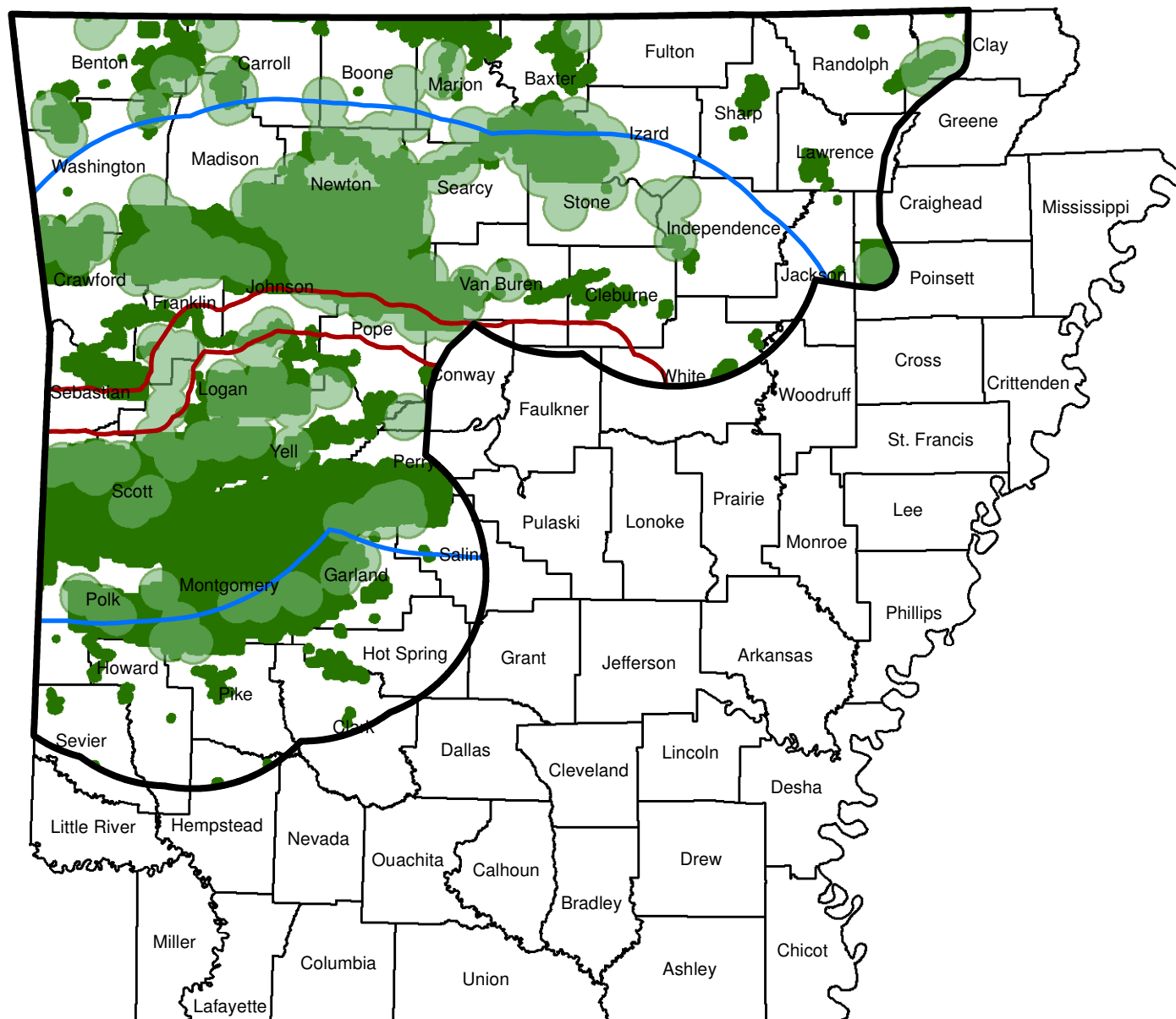
***Total points for ecosystem benefits (sum of 3(i.e., function + connectivity): _____
(30 pts maximum)***

COST SHARE CONTRIBUTIONS

Cost sharing is encouraged and will allow TCF to maximize the conservation benefit to the NLEB.

TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS PROPOSAL (sum of 1-4 above (i.e., species benefits + ecosystem benefits), maximum 75 points): _____

Northern Long-eared Bat Focus Area Map for the Diamond Pipeline Project



- NLEB Consultation Area
- Pipeline 5 Mile Buffer
- Pipeline 50 Mile Buffer
- NLEB 5 Mile Buffer
- Arkansas Protected Areas

Note: This map depicts the focus areas for Northern Long-eared Bat conservation as it relates to The Conservation Fund's Diamond Pipeline Account. This map should be used in conjunction with the attached "Northern Long-eared Bat Ranking Criteria Guidance" document. This map is subject to change. If you have any questions please contact the Arkansas Field Office at 501-513-4483.