



State of Utah

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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*Deputy Director*

July 19, 2016

Larry Crist  
Utah Field Supervisor  
Utah Ecological Services Field Office  
2369 Orton Circle, Suite 50  
West Valley City, Utah 84119

**Subject: Yellow-Billed Cuckoo Survey and Evaluation for the West Davis Corridor EIS  
Addendum**

Dear Mr. Crist:

This letter is a follow up to the correspondence between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) regarding the West Davis Corridor (WDC) Project “no effect” determination. UDOT provided the USFWS a “no effect” determination for the WDC Project on December 13, 2012 which the USFWS concurred with on January 14, 2013. On October 3, 2013 UDOT provided the USFWS the results of a 2013 survey for the Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo (WYBCU) within the WDC study area. To summarize the results of these efforts, no WYBCUs were detected during the surveys conducted in 2013 and no contiguous, high-quality riparian habitat exist within the study area. Based on the survey UDOT concluded that no high-quality nesting habitat that could potentially be used by WYBCU would be removed by any of the WDC action alternatives and therefore there would be “no effect” on the WYBCU.

In July 2016 the USFWS provided UDOT the June 2015 *Guidelines for the Identification of Suitable Habitat for the WYBCU in Utah* and requested that a re-evaluation of habitat be conducted based on these guidelines. HDR wildlife biologist Kurt Rautenstrauch, PhD conducted the re-evaluation which is attached to this letter. The re-evaluation concluded there is no suitable WYBCU nesting habitat within the WDC Project area. Based on the 2013 survey and the re-evaluation using the 2015 guidelines UDOT has determined that the proposed WDC Project would have “no effect” on the WYBCU.

This additional information on the WYBCU will also be included in the Final EIS for the WDC project.

If you have any questions, please contact Vince Izzo at 406-396-6223.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Jefferies".

Randy Jefferies, P.E.  
Project Manager, UDOT Region 1

cc: Pam Kramer, UDWR  
Brandon Weston, UDOT Environmental Services



# Memo

Date: Tuesday, July 19, 2016

Project: West Davis Corridor EIS, Utah

To: Vince Izzo

From: Kurt Rautenstrauch, PhD

Subject: **2016 Re-Evaluation of Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo Habitat within the West Davis Corridor Study Area**

Three sites within the West Davis Corridor (WDC) study area were surveyed for western yellow-billed cuckoos (*Coccyzus americanus*) (WYBCU) in 2013 (HDR Inc. 2013). No WYBCU were detected during the surveys, and it was concluded based on those results and descriptions of habitat characteristics available at that time (Halterman et al. 2010, Laymon and Halterman 1987, 1989) that riparian areas within the WDC study area are not suitable nesting habitat for the WYBCU.

Revised *Guidelines for the Identification of Suitable Habitat for WYBCU in Utah* have been compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service based on information in Halterman et al. (2015). According to the guidelines, the following parameters, which are summarized in Table 1, characterize suitable breeding and nesting cuckoo habitat in Utah:

- Vegetation that is predominantly multi-layered, with riparian canopy trees and at least one layer of understory shrubby vegetation;
- Patches of multi-layered vegetation (as described above) that are at least 5 ha or greater in extent and separated from other patches of suitable habitat by at least 300 meters;
- Somewhere within a patch, the multi-layered riparian vegetation should be at least 100 meters wide by 100 meters long.; and,
- Open areas, or gaps of multi-layered vegetation within a patch are less than 300 meters.

To ensure that the conclusions reached in the 2013 evaluation of WYBCU habitat in the WDC study area remain valid, the characteristics of the three riparian areas, as described by HDR (2013) and summarized in Table 1, were compared to the revised *Guidelines*.

**Farmington Creek** – Riparian vegetation along Farmington Creek has an overstory of native trees but little or no understory. The 6.3-ha patch of riparian vegetation consists of a narrow (27–57 m width) band of vegetation immediately adjacent to the creek. The site is not suitable nesting habitat for the WYBCU because of the lack of understory and narrow width of the riparian vegetation.

**Haight Creek** – Most of this area is an open marsh with dense patches of shrubs and a sparse, open canopy of trees. Riparian overstory vegetation covers about 2.3 ha. The largest patch of that vegetation is about 150 m long by 50 to 90 m wide, and the remainder of the riparian overstory is 10–30 m wide. Because of the lack of overstory and small size and narrow width of the riparian vegetation, the site is not suitable nesting habitat for the WYBCU.

**Howard Slough** – This site is dominated by a dense, single-layered stand of non-native Russian olive. The riparian vegetation covers 2.3 ha and is 12 to 43 m wide. The riparian corridor at this site is too small and narrow to be suitable nesting habitat for WYBCU.



**Table 1. Guidelines for Identification of WYBCU Habitat in Utah and Characteristics of Riparian Vegetation in the WDC Study Area.**

	Vegetation	Structure	Patch Size	Patch Width
<b>2015 WYBCU Habitat Guidelines for Utah</b>				
2015 Guidelines	Native riparian or mixed native/exotic	Multilayer, with riparian canopy and at least one layer of shrubby understory	>5 ha of multilayer vegetation patches	>100 m wide (and 100 m long) somewhere in riparian patch
<b>West Davis Corridor Riparian Areas</b>				
Farmington Creek	Native riparian	Overstory present, very limited understory	6.3 ha	27–57 m wide
Haight Creek	Mixed native riparian and marsh	Sparse overstory, dense patchy understory	2.3 ha	10–30, with small area up to 90 m wide
Howard Slough	Exotic	Short dense overstory, dense understory	2.3 ha	12–43 m wide

## References

Halterman, M., M.J. Johnson, and J.A. Holmes. 2010. Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo Survey Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) #3. Draft. May 24. [www.southernsierraresearch.org/Workshop/YellowBilledCuckooWorkshop/Materials/YBCU%20Survey%20SOP%203\\_Draft\\_6-7-5%20with%20survey%20form.doc](http://www.southernsierraresearch.org/Workshop/YellowBilledCuckooWorkshop/Materials/YBCU%20Survey%20SOP%203_Draft_6-7-5%20with%20survey%20form.doc).

Halterman, M., M.J. Johnson, J.A. Holmes and S.A. Laymon. 2015. A Natural History Summary and Survey Protocol for the Western Distinct Population Segment of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Techniques and Methods.

HDR Inc. 2013. Technical Memorandum 25: 2013 Yellow-Billed Cuckoo Surveys in Support of the Environmental Impact Statement West David Corridor Project. Prepared by HDR Engineering Inc. for Utah Department of Transportation.

Laymon, S.A., and M.D. Halterman. 1987. Can the western subspecies of the yellow-billed cuckoo be 10 saved from extinction? *Western Birds* 18: 19–25.

Laymon, S.A., and M.D. Halterman.. 1989. A proposed habitat management plan for yellow-billed cuckoos in California. Forest Service General Technical Report PSW-110, pp. 272–277.