

## **Bat Roost Survey to be Conducted on Beech Mountain**

The Town of Beech Mountain strives to live harmoniously with the natural environment. Though Beech Mountain is known as the “highest town east of the Rockies,” the elevation ranges from 5506’ to 3500 feet, providing a wide range of appealing animal habitats. Mayor Weidner Abernethy notes, “As the Town of Beech Mountain plans for additional water system infrastructure, it’s important to ensure we minimize environmental impact. We’ve contracted with Ecosystem Planning and Restoration, LLC (EPR) to study the area within half a mile of Lake Coffey, Pond Creek, and Buckeye Lake. EPR will do a Bat Roost Survey to give us the information we need to ensure protections are in place for wildlife affected by the upcoming Lake Coffey Drought Mitigation Project.” This project, which will expand the lake to serve as a critically needed secondary water source, will begin in late 2025 and be completed in 2027.

EPR’s Senior Biologist, Heather Wallace, states that the US Fish and Wildlife Service shows four federally protected bat species with potential to occur in the area: the Virginia big-eared bat, the gray bat, the tricolored bat, and the northern long-eared bat. “The winter roosts for these bats are known as hibernacula. Our field team will be walking the area, following transects prescribed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, to look for likely hibernacula. Bats commonly use caves, deep crevices, and old mines for winter hibernation. If we find them, we’ll return later in spring to check for bats as they leave the roost rather than disturbing their hibernation. That’s when we’ll determine the species of bats roosting in the study area. The field reconnaissance team members will carry notification letters from the Town of Beech Mountain to identify them as part of the study team. Field work will begin in mid-January and conclude in mid-March.”

If you have questions about the Lake Coffey Drought Mitigation Project or wish to verify the presence of field researchers in your area, please contact Daniel Davis, Director of Utilities, [bmus@townofbeechmountain.com](mailto:bmus@townofbeechmountain.com), 828-387-9282, or Bob Pudney, Town Manager, [rpudney@townofbeechmountain.com](mailto:rpudney@townofbeechmountain.com), 828-387-4236. More information about water projects and conservation in the Town of Beech Mountain can be found at [www.beechmtnwater.com](http://www.beechmtnwater.com) .

