



USFWS Recommends Surveys for Federally-Threatened Small Whorled Pogonia in Virginia



The survey season for small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) is fast approaching. As a federally-listed threatened plant, small whorled pogonia is afforded full protection under the guidelines of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Under Section 7 of the ESA, federal agencies must ensure that no federally-authorized activities will jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species, and this must be determined by a formal consultation process with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This means that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), for example, cannot issue a wetland permit unless it is clear that a federally-listed species will not be harmed by the authorization. Therefore, a detailed survey for small whorled pogonia will likely be required during the wetland permitting process in any of the following Counties: **Appomattox, Amherst, Bedford, Botetourt, Buckingham, Campbell, Caroline, Charles City, Craig, Essex, Fairfax, Franklin, Gloucester, Hanover, Henrico, James City, King George, King William, Lee, Madison, New Kent, Prince William, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Wise, and York.**

While habitat surveys can be performed throughout the year, specific surveys can only be performed from **May 25 to July 15** in counties generally north of Richmond, and **June 1 to July 20** south and east of Richmond. Habitat for this species can be characterized as semi-mature to mature mixed upland hardwood forests with a fairly open understory and minimal aggressive ground level species. FWS generally will **not** accept small whorled pogonia surveys (or any federally-listed plant or animal surveys, for that matter) from unqualified professionals. To qualify as “qualified”, a professional must be included on the FWS-maintained list of survey contacts for a particular species. WEG has staff ecologists who are listed by FWS as survey contacts for small whorled pogonia. These qualified professionals are available to assist you with surveys or any issues that may arise regarding this plant or any other listed species in Virginia.

If you are looking to get any federal permit over the next year, and your project is within an identified pogonia county, it is strongly advised that you have a detailed pogonia survey conducted during the accepted survey window in the upcoming months. This is important because if you miss the opportunity, FWS may require you to wait until the next monitoring season before acting on a permit application.

If you have any questions about whether you need a small whorled pogonia study, feel free to contact your WEG project manager or Keith Goodwin in our Williamsburg office (757-220-6869) or Paul Oldt in our Fredericksburg office (540-785-5544).