



# Best Management Practices for Construction and Development Projects Alligator Snapping Turtle

*Macrochelys temminckii*

**Common name** • Alligator Snapping Turtle  
**Scientific name** • *Macrochelys temminckii*  
**Federal status** • None  
**State status** • None

## Purpose and Use

The information in this document is to be used to help avoid and minimize species impacts due to construction practices. It is not intended to be used as a guide to manage habitat for a given species. If that is the goal, please contact the Department of Conservation for habitat management information. Because every project and location differs, following the recommendations within this document does not ensure that impacts will not occur to the species and additional information might be required in certain instances. Following the recommendations within this document does not complete Endangered Species Act consultation that may be necessary for species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more information.

## Ecology

Alligator Snapping Turtles are a species of conservation concern. They are confined to river systems flowing south into the Gulf of Mexico from Florida to eastern Texas and Oklahoma and north to Missouri and Illinois. They are mainly found in sloughs, oxbow lakes and deep, muddy pools of large rivers in the southeast Missouri, as well as along the Mississippi River and large reservoirs in southern Missouri. Because Alligator Snapping Turtles are mainly aquatic, movement patterns are linear within the river system. They are known to travel up to 10 river miles within a few weeks, but the majority of their time is spent hiding in root snags or among submerged logs. Females are occasionally observed on land while laying approximately 16 to 52 eggs during May or June. Hatching typically takes place in late summer. Alligator Snapping Turtles consume a variety of foods (e.g. fruits, nuts, crayfish, snakes, turtles, etc.), but fish are the main prey. They are the largest freshwater turtle species in the world and can reach shell lengths up to 26 inches and weigh over 100 pounds.

## Reasons for Decline

At one time, the Alligator Snapping Turtle was probably common in riverine systems of extreme southern and southeastern Missouri. The primary threat is loss of sloughs and oxbows and alteration (e.g. channelization, removal of woody debris, etc.) of rivers. However, the

species has expanded into reservoirs in southern Missouri. In addition, degradation of remaining habitat because of non-point source pollution continues to threaten the status of the Alligator Snapping Turtle. Other threats include illegal harvest for meat and turtle trade, as well as incidental drowning on trotlines.

## Specific Recommendations

Maintenance and restoration of sloughs and oxbow lakes, as well as riparian corridors along the rivers are critical for the survival of many species, including the Alligator Snapping Turtle.

- Avoid removing or destroying unique aquatic habitat features, such as downed trees, submerged logs, or root snags that provide habitat for the Alligator Snapping Turtle.
- Draining or destroying known wetland, sloughs and oxbow habitat or channelizing rivers should be prohibited.
- Erosion and sediment controls should be implemented, maintained and monitored for the duration of the project.
- Disposal of wastes and garbage should be done in designated areas far from wetlands.
- If application of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers in or near seasonal wetlands is necessary, carefully follow all label directions and consider application of more wildlife and wetland friendly herbicides and pesticides

## General Recommendations

Refer to Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Wetlands and Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Streams and Rivers. Refer also to Amphibian and Reptile Management Guidelines.

If your project involves the use of Federal Highway Administration transportation funds, these recommendations may not fulfill all contract requirements. Please contact the Missouri Department of Transportation at 573-526-4778 or [www.modot.mo.gov/ehp/index.htm](http://www.modot.mo.gov/ehp/index.htm) for additional information on recommendations.

## Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in wetlands, rivers and streams, contact:

For species information:

[Missouri Department of Conservation](#)

Resource Science Division  
P.O. Box 180  
2901 W. Truman Blvd  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
Telephone: 573/751-4115

For species information and Endangered Species Act  
Coordination:

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

Ecological Services  
101 Park Deville Drive, Suite A  
Columbia, MO 65203-0007  
Telephone: 573/234-2132

For Clean Water Act Coordination:

[Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#)

Water Protection Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
Telephone: 573/751-1300, 800/361-4827

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)

Regulatory Branch  
700 Federal Building  
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896  
Telephone: 816/983-3990

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)

Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division  
901 North 5th Street  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
Telephone: 913/551-7307

**Disclaimer**

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from state and federal agencies, contractors and others to provide guidance to those people who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with these Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Other federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, and state or local laws need to be considered for construction and development projects, and require permits and/or consultation with the appropriate agency. Following the recommendations provided in this document will help reduce and avoid project impacts to the species, but impacts may still occur. Please contact the appropriate agency for further coordination and to complete compliance requirements.