



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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October 19, 2007

Curtis Flakes
Inland Environment Team
Planning Environmental Division
Mobile District, Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 2288
Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001

Dear Mr. Flakes:

Thank you for your letter dated October 19, 2007 (today), about a temporary revision to the Woodruff Dam Interim Operating Plan (IOP). The Service recognizes that the combination of circumstances in the ACF Basin at this time represents a condition that is more severe for the operations of the federal projects than has ever occurred previously, and more severe than the critical period represented in the Corps' 1939-2001 hydrologic models. The hydrologic models that the Corps provided for our September 6, 2006, Biological Opinion indicated that the IOP would manage conservation storage in the federal reservoirs in a manner that would satisfy consumptive demands and minimum releases through the worst drought of record. However, in much of the ACF Basin, various precipitation and drought indices are now at record low levels, and the federal reservoirs are at levels lower than were recorded at this time of year during the 1999-2001 drought, which was the critical period in the models. It is therefore prudent to consider immediate measures to slow the continuing drawdown on storage in order to maintain your ability to serve the various authorized purposes for the federal reservoirs, including fish and wildlife conservation.

Your letter proposes an immediate suspension of the maximum fall rate (down ramping) schedule of the IOP until March 1. You have determined that this operational modification is not likely to adversely affect resources protected under the Endangered Species Act. We have reviewed your rationale for this determination and concur. This concurrence fulfills your responsibilities under section 7 of the Act relative to this action. In the coming weeks, we will continue to work with you to identify possible further drought response measures and evaluate their consequences to fish and wildlife resources.

Sincerely,

Gail A. Carmody
Field Supervisor