



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

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October 22, 2008

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

Dear Mr. Flakes:

The purpose of this letter is two-fold: 1) to acknowledge the coordination between our agencies over the past 5 months in implementing the Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) of our June 1, 2008, Biological Opinion on the Revised Interim Operating Plan (RIOP) for Jim Woodruff Dam; and 2) to suggest some agenda topics for an interagency meeting under RPM 2008-1. We would like to schedule this meeting with you sometime in early November.

By letter dated July 11, 2008, we received the Corps' study plans for monitoring listed species and their habitats (RPM 2008-5). We have been working with your staff already to begin some of those studies – most recently, the study to estimate the numbers and depth distribution of listed mussels in the action area (RPM 2008-5; Terms and Conditions 7.4.5.c). We would like to discuss specific methods and schedules for implementing the other components of RPM 2008-5 at the interagency meeting.

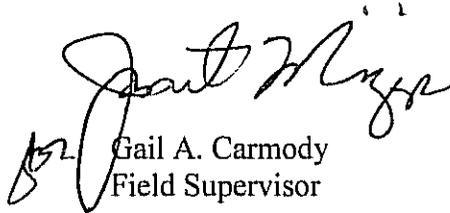
By letter dated August 8, 2008, the Corps documented problems with the Chattahoochee gage that led to an inadvertent reduction in the releases from Woodruff Dam on August 3, 2008, to levels less than the minimum prescribed under the RIOP. We appreciated how you notified us and dealt with the problem as soon as you recognized it. We agree with the conclusion of your letter that the brief dip in flows on August 3 most likely did not result in any take of listed species. We would like to review with you at the interagency meeting the progress to date in drafting and implementing procedures that would further reduce the time required to recognize and respond to similar equipment malfunctions in the future.

By letter dated September 4, 2008, the Corps sent us a document entitled “Drought Operations Clarifications” in response to RPM 2008-2. We believe it would be useful to further flesh out the concepts outlined in this document, and suggest we set aside at least one hour on the agenda of the semi-annual meeting to discuss it. Specifically, we would like to better understand the

Corps' definition of a significant deterioration in storage levels that could occur absent a reduction in the minimum release to 4,500 cfs.

In addition to these topics, we would expect to discuss the status of implementing the other RPMs not specifically mentioned above, current climatic forecasts, and other issues relevant to the RIOP and Apalachicola River listed species. We would be willing to host the meeting at our Panama City office or travel to Mobile. Please coordinate with Jerry Ziewitz of my staff (jerry_ziewitz@fws.gov, phone extension 223) to prepare the agenda and to arrange a mutually convenient time and place for the meeting.

Sincerely yours,



Gail A. Carmody
Field Supervisor