



IN REPLY REFER TO:

## United States Department of the Interior

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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June 8, 2009

Mr. 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 of May 29, 2009 describing the Corps' implementation of the Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) that were included in our June 1, 2008, Biological Opinion for the Jim Woodruff Dam Revised Interim Operating Plan (RIOP). Your letter responds to our earlier request for clarification about the Corps' implementation of RPMs that were intended to: 1) clarify criteria for the 4,500 cfs minimum flow decision (RPM 2a); 2) describe methods for estimating impacts to project purposes if the minimum flow is not reduced to 4,500 cfs during severe drought conditions (RPM 2b), and 3) undertake various studies of listed mussels (RPM 5d).

The additional information provided in the May 29 letter answers our questions about these three efforts. With respect to RPM 2a, your letter now makes it clear that entering the composite storage drought zone does not constitute an automatic reduction to a minimum release of 4,500 cfs, and that the Corps will consider a variety of additional data before reducing flows to avoid an unnecessary taking of listed species.

Your letter also reports progress on RPM 1c, which deals with hydrologic modeling/forecasting tools that could improve the Corps' ability to predict flows and levels during droughts. We are optimistic that the Corps' partnership with the Southeast River Forecast Center to obtain 3-month flow forecasts for each node in the Corps' ResSim model of the basin will substantially improve upon previous methods. Please use the semi-annual meetings and the annual report required under RPM1 to update the Service on progress towards realizing this capability.

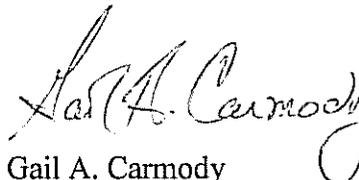
Lastly, your letter reports progress on RPM3, which deals with estimating depletions to basin inflow. Without real-time reporting of water use in the basin upstream of the Woodruff Dam, we agree with the Corps' assessment that it is not at this time practical to directly integrate measures of current depletion rates into the Corps' monthly operational decisions.

Mr. Curtis Flakes

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Please coordinate with us soon on scheduling for sometime in August the next semi-annual meeting required under RPM 1. We would anticipate discussing any results that may be available at that time from the Corps' sampling for young-of-year Gulf sturgeon and listed mussels surveys.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gail A. Carmody". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Gail A. Carmody  
Field Office Supervisor

cc:

DOI Solicitors Office, Atlanta, GA

DOJ, Washington DC

USFWS, Regional Director, Atlanta, GA

USFWS, Field Supervisor, Athens, GA and Daphne, AL