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Corps forwards Biological Assessment for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river basin to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

MOBILE, Ala. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile District today forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a Biological Assessment for the potential impact of current and prospective reduced water flows in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river basin on three threatened and endangered species. The need for the new assessment is driven by changing conditions in the basin related to the exceptional ongoing drought in Alabama, Florida and Georgia.

The Biological Assessment includes a proposal to store as much fresh water in the basin as possible while minimizing harm to the three species, the Gulf sturgeon and two mussels, the endangered fat threeridge and the threatened purple bankclimber.

The assessment also includes important provisions to be applied when remaining storage in the Lake Lanier, West Point Lake and Lake Walter F. George reservoirs approaches critically low levels. Specifically, the provisions allow for increased flexibility to manage flows as water storage levels change;

and for increased retention of inflows (i.e., rainfall) into the basin's reservoirs while lower outflow rates are maintained.

Corps releases from the reservoirs serve a number of authorized purposes in addition to the protection of the species. Any decision to reduce flows into the Apalachicola River will not eliminate the requirement to continue to make releases from all the lakes to provide for water quality and water supply downstream.

The Biological Assessment can be viewed at <http://www.sam.usace.army.mil>