



## United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
1208-B Main Street  
Daphne, Alabama 36526

**APR 06 2011**

IN REPLY REFER TO  
2008-FA-0369

Mr. James F. Crew  
Alabama Power Company  
600 North 18th Street  
P.O. Box 2641  
Birmingham, Alabama 35291-0830

Dear Mr. Crew:

This letter is in response to Alabama Power Company's (APC) January 7, 2011, request for comments on the Martin Dam Project (FERC No. 349) Preliminary License Proposal (PLP). We have reviewed the information and are providing the following comments in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. et seq.) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Our comments are specifically applied to the sections of the PLP as follows:

### Section 4.4.3 Fish and Aquatic Resources

#### *Section 4.4.3.3 Proposed PME Measures*

In addition to educating local landowners on the value of natural shorelines, the Service recommends, based on the results of the Purcell et al. (2010) study, that no new seawalls be constructed unless it is absolutely necessary to protect land and property. We suggest that shorelines be naturally contoured, and rip-rap used as only as a last resort to address existing significant erosion.

We agree with your statement about the importance of vegetated shoreline buffers to protect water quality and stabilize shorelines. However, we suggest including stronger language to encourage shoreline developments to maintain the 30' control strip within the project boundaries and also to increase the total buffer width to at least a 100'.

Regarding the fishery downstream of Thurlow Dam and starting on page 4-57, APC recognizes the importance of high spring flows to the spawning success of the paddlefish. We recommend that APC continue supporting these flows when upstream flows are supportive. We would also

like to stress the importance of flows related to the protection of the Tallapoosa pebblesnail (*Somatogyrus pilsbryanus*). Although this rare snail is not protected under the ESA, it nonetheless is a very rare animal that is not known to occur at any other location.

Although not a specific PME measure, the Service encourages APC to continue pursuing opportunities to improve and mitigate problematic areas both inside and outside of the FERC designated boundaries of the Martin project. These may include the enforcement of poorly designed or unpermitted shoreline activities, correction of poor land use practices within Lake Martin's contributing watershed, or any past or future activity that may ultimately influence water quality and fishery/wildlife habitat within the Project.

Although not mentioned in the PLP, Section 18 of the Federal Power Act designates the Service and NOAA as the authorities for prescribing fish passage at FERC licensed hydroelectric projects. Due to the presence of several large dams located downstream of Martin Dam, we do not currently have any specific recommendations for passage. However, we would like to continue working with APC to develop comprehensive monitoring plans for fish passage and movement downstream of Martin, in the Tallapoosa and Alabama rivers.

Since the drought of 2007, significant steps have been taken to develop a comprehensive drought operations plan for the Alabama River Basin. We encourage APC to continue working on this plan, giving consideration to how it can be best applied to Martin drought operations.

#### Section 4.4.4 Terrestrial Resources

##### *Section 4.4.4.3 Proposed PME Measures*

The Service appreciates the efforts of APC to develop the Wildlife Management Program (WMP) for the Martin Project. As mentioned in the WMP, the Service believes the greatest wildlife benefit would likely result from concentrating management efforts on the eastern portion of the Project lands, where the majority of existing longleaf pine-dominated habitat occurs. Under the WMP, the Core Management Area would be managed towards a desired forest condition consistent with the "good quality foraging habitat" for the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). Although there are no recent RCW records from Lake Martin, managing for "good quality foraging habitat" is indicative of a healthy longleaf pine ecosystem and should be the standard used for timber management. Although not a specific PME measure, the Service encourages APC to consider enrolling those project lands containing suitable RCW habitat into the statewide Safe Harbor Plan.

As discussed in the previous section, the SMP should include measures to eliminate the construction of seawalls, the placement of rip-rap for non-erosive situations, and should require the planting of only native vegetation in the buffer zones. We also encourage APC to require wider buffer widths that will be more protective of water quality in the reservoir and provide more productive and diverse wildlife habitat.

4.4.5 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

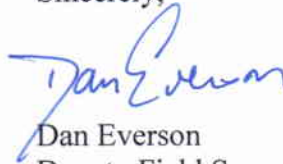
*Section 4.4.5.3 Proposed PME Measures*

As mentioned in the previous section, the Service agrees with the steps APC has taken to develop the Wildlife Management Plan and manage certain “core” areas for the enhancement of a healthy longleaf pine ecosystem. We also encourage APC to continue meeting with the Service, ADCNR, and other experts to explore enhancement opportunities for the RCW on Project and Non-Project Lands around Lake Martin.

Although the Tallapoosa pebblesnail (*Somatogyrus pilsbryanus*) is not protected under the ESA and it is listed by the ADCNR as a “species of moderate concern,” we believe it should be included in Table 4-20.

We appreciate the opportunity to make comments on the PLP. If you have any questions, please contact Jeff Powell at (251) 441-5858.

Sincerely,



Dan Everson  
Deputy Field Supervisor  
Alabama Ecological Services Field Office