



## United States Department of the Interior

### Fish and Wildlife Service

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AUG 1 2016

Robert K. Larimore, Chief  
Department of the Army  
Installation Management Agency  
Garrison Commander  
5751 Constitution Loop, Suite 500  
Fort Benning Army Installation  
Fort Benning, GA 31905

RE: FWS Log # 04EG1000-2016-I-1559

Dear Mr. Larimore:

This letter responds to your letter requesting comment on proposed aerial training on the digital multi-purpose range complex (DMPRC). Based on your letter, the scheduled training is to occur from September 12-14, 2016 (with September 15, 2016 as a backup date). We have reviewed the information and provide the following comments in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) relative to the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picodes borealis*).

#### Training Details (Action):

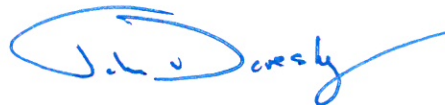
- Two AH-6 Apache helicopters will fly from Lawson Army Airfield to Eelbeck Field, Fort Benning while maintaining an altitude of no less than 500' above ground level each of the three days.
- Eelbeck Field will be used as the forward aerial refueling point (FARP), point of maintenance, and munition arming of the helicopters.
- Daytime training will occur through three iterations between 1130-1945, and nighttime training will consist of three iterations between 2015-2115 totaling six firing events each of the three days (18 firing events).

- Two AH-6 helicopters will fly directly over the DMPRC during each firing event. The helicopters will stop and hover near Buena Vista Road and fire munitions.
- Inert munitions (7.62mm, .50 cal, and 2.75 inch rockets) will be fired at targets within the DMPRC footprint. The 2.75 inch rockets will be fired into the K15 impact area.
- Helicopters will fly over the K15 impact area following firing exercise and return to Eelbeck Field for fuel, rearming, and maintenance.

Fort Benning has conducted three similar gunnery training events in the past (2012, 2013, and 2016) and monitored each event with no identifiable impacts to the RCW. Based on the information provided, the requirements of the ESA have been fulfilled relative to this action, and no further consultation is necessary. Fort Benning's obligations under section 7 of the ESA must be reconsidered (1) new information reveals that the proposed action may affect listed species in a manner or to an extent not previously considered, (2) the proposed action is subsequently modified to include activities which were not considered during this consultation; or (3) new species are listed or critical habitat is designated that might be affected by the proposed action.

If you have any questions, comments or require additional information regarding this letter, please contact John Doresky at (706) 544-6030.

Sincerely,



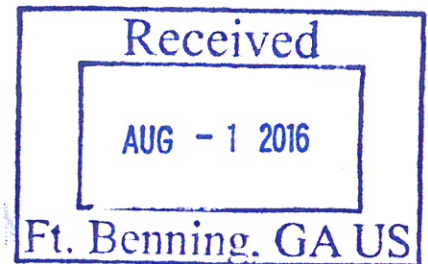
Per:

Donald Imm  
Field Supervisor



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND  
ATLANTIC REGION  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON  
1 KARKER STREET, MCGINNIS-WICKAM HALL  
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA 31905-5000



28 July 2016

Conservation Branch

Dr. Donald Imm  
Field Supervisor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
West Park Center  
105 West Park Drive, Suite D  
Athens, GA 30605

Dear Dr. Imm:

Fort Benning is proposing a modification of training on the digital multi-purpose range complex (DMPRC). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment (3<sup>rd</sup>/75<sup>th</sup>) will conduct a Fire Support Coordination Exercise (FSCX) from 12 to 14 September 2016 (with 15 September 2016 as a backup day) on the DMPRC. This training will include aerial gunnery supporting ground troops. The effects of aerial gunnery training on the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) were not addressed in DMPRC associated NEPA documents (i.e. 2004 DMPRC FEIS, BA and BO). However, through consultation and concurrence with the USFWS, aerial gunnery training over the DMPRC has occurred three times previously. Subsequent monitoring that occurred after each of these approved aerial gunnery training events in 2012, 2013, and 2016, revealed no identifiable impacts to RCWs. Since the proposed aerial gunnery training is similar to what has been conducted previously, Fort Benning believes the manner in which this training (FSCX) is to be conducted will not negatively affect RCWs.

Two AH-6 Apache helicopters will fly from Lawson Army Airfield (LAAF) at no less than 500ft above ground level (AGL) to Eelbeck Field each day during the three day FSCX to take part in aerial gunnery training. Eelbeck Field is the designated forward aerial refueling point (FARP) and where the helicopters will be armed with munitions.

During each of the three training days, aerial gunnery daytime training will consist of three iterations of live fire training between 1130 and 1945. Nighttime aerial gunnery training will consist of three iterations of live fire training between 2015 and 2115 during each of the three training days.

The training scenario for all iterations consists of two helicopters flying directly over the DMPRC during the attack run. The helicopters will stop and hover near Buena Vista Road, and start/stop firing at targets while hovering (Enclosure). Inert munitions

(7.62mm, .50 cal and 2.75 inch rockets) will be fired from the helicopters at targets within the DMPRC footprint near the MICLIC training site close to the K15 dudded impact area (Enclosure). The HE munitions (2.75 in rockets) will be fired into the K15 dudded impact area (Enclosure). The helicopters will fly over K15 and return to the FARP for refueling, rearming or for maintenance. No helicopter will hover over RCW clusters when en route to the FARP and DMPRC.

After reviewing the proposed training (company level CALFEX), Fort Benning believes that the use of aerial gunnery support over the DMPRC is not likely to adversely affect the RCW.

Fort Benning requests your review and concurrence with this action. The point of contact is Mr. Jonathan Neufeldt at 706-544-7705 or [jonathan.h.neufeldt.civ@mail.mil](mailto:jonathan.h.neufeldt.civ@mail.mil). A copy of this letter has been provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - West Georgia Field Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert K. Larimore", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Robert K. Larimore  
Chief, Environmental Management  
Division

Enclosure