



## United States Department of the Interior

### Fish and Wildlife Service

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Robert K. Larimore  
Chief, Environmental Management Division  
Fort Benning Army Installation  
Fort Benning, Georgia 31905-5000

Re: FWS Log No. **2017-CPA-2986**

Dear Robert Larimore:

This letter is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) response to the letter we received on September 21, 2017. Fort Benning is notifying the Service of a reduction of training restrictions on 32 eligible sites where currently protected clusters (PCs) are being designated as unprotected clusters (UCs). The new designation of UC will be applied on clusters located in the Echo, Juliet, Mike, November, Oscar, Tango, Uniform, and Sand Hill Contonment training compartments on Fort Benning in Chattahoochee County. We submit the following comments under provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703, *et seq.*), and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.*).


Fort Benning Army Installation is notifying the Service that in addition to the 19 previously UCs from 2016, they are unprotecting an additional 32 clusters. This action will include the removal of the two white bands on all UC cavity trees, application of a single orange band on all UC cavity trees, and removal of the 200' buffer. According to your letter, Clusters J02-A, J03-A, and T09-A are currently labeled as "taken." Monitoring of these clusters under the Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) should continue until all RPMs are fulfilled under the associated Biological Opinion. Fort Benning's current 312 Potential Breeding Groups (PBGs) allows for up to 92 clusters to receive the status of Unprotected.

Based on our analysis with the information you provided regarding the proposed action, the Service has determined the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the RCW. However, if new information becomes available or changes in the project occur that may involve federally listed species, further consultation with the Service will be required.

Your requirements under section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act have been fulfilled and based on the information you provided we concur with your finding, and, no further action is required.

If you have any questions or concerns about this consultation or the consultation process in general, please feel free to contact John Doresky at (706) 544-6030.

Sincerely,

  
For: Donald Imm  
Field Supervisor