



United States Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service
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West Georgia Sub Office
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April 3, 2019

Coastal Sub Office
4980 Wildlife Drive
Townsend, Georgia 31331

Kirk W. Ticknor, Chief
Department of the Army
Installation Management Agency
5751 Constitution Loop, Suite 500
Fort Benning Army Installation
Fort Benning, GA 31905

RE: FWS Log # 04EG1000-2019-I-1217

Dear Mr. Ticknor:

The Service received and reviewed Fort Benning's proposed revisions for the red-cockaded woodpecker monitoring program. The Service provides 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 (*Leuconotopicus borealis*).

According to Section 8-C of the 2003 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Red-cockaded Recovery Plan (Recovery Plan), once a property exceeds the approved number (351 PBGs at Fort Benning) of potential breeding groups (PBGs), they may consult with the Service to revise sampling sizes in an effort to monitor active clusters and PBGs. Currently, Fort Benning has 410 active clusters and 392 PBGs (2018 data) exceeding to goal of 351 PBGs.

The current monitoring plan utilized at Fort Benning consists of 100% of clusters for activity, 100% of clusters for presence of a PBG, and 25% of clusters for productivity. The proposed monitoring plan will consist of:


- All clusters will be captured within 4 metapopulation monitoring units (MMUs) including those located within A-20.
- Each of the MMUs will be divided into two equal sampling units (ACT1 and ACT2) each comprising 50% of the total number of clusters within each of the 4 MMUs.
- Assignment of each ACT sampling unit will be selected randomly without replacement.
- ACT1 group will be sampled on odd years, and ACT2 group will be sampled on even years.
- The proposed monitoring plan will capture 50% of the activity within each MMU, and 25% of the PBGs within each MMU per year.

The Service concurs the above monitoring scheme follows or exceeds the guidelines provided within the Recovery Plan. However, the Service requires the following measures to be followed as outlined in the Recovery Plan:

- Re-initiation with the Service if; (1) number of active clusters decrease by 10% or more from one year to the next, or (2) number of active clusters decrease by 10% or more within a period of five years.
- An annual report will be submitted reflecting the results of the yearly monitoring.
- Any clusters currently being monitored as a result of past consultations remain under the current monitoring plans assigned until completed.

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

Sincerely,


POB: Donald Imm
Field Supervisor