

# Key Points in the Consultation on the ACF Revised Interim Operating Plan



Apalachicola/Chattahoochee/Flint River Basin

Southeast Region, June 2, 2008



# Biological Opinion – Effects to ESA-listed Species and Critical Habitat

- Gulf sturgeon
- Fat threeridge
- Purple bankclimber
- Chipola slabshell



# Conclusion of Biological Opinion

- The Service's opinion is that the Corps' proposed action:
  - Has adverse effects,
  - But will not jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species,
  - Nor adversely modify their critical habitat.

▪

# Effects of the RIOP to the Species

## ■ GULF STURGEON

- Some sturgeon eggs and larvae may be exposed and die after a rapid stage decline in the river.
- Proposal has no additional appreciable changes in the magnitude or duration of freshwater inflows to Apalachicola Bay.

# Effects of the RIOP to the Species

## ■ LISTED MUSSELS

- In most years, the minimum flow will be at least 5,000 cfs.
- Flows lower than 5,000 cfs may still occur under extreme drought conditions.
- If this summer is as dry as summer 2007, criteria to reduce flows to 4,500 cfs may be met in the fall of 2008.
- At 4,500 cfs, up to 9% of the fat threeridge population could be exposed.
- Once reservoirs refill, flow reductions to 4,500 cfs are unlikely.

# Minimizing the Impacts to Species

- We are requiring the Corps to consider several items to minimize adverse impacts:
  - Clarifying the drought operation component of their plan could help ensure that the reduction to 4,500 cfs only occurs under circumstances where composite storage levels can be significantly improved by the reduction.
  - Evaluating alternative ways to calculate basin inflow would allow the Corps to better forecast flows and levels in the system and inform others when to implement water conservation steps.
  - Evaluating strategies to stabilize fall rates could reduce the exposure of sturgeon eggs and larvae.

# The Health of the ACF System

- Fish and wildlife of Apalachicola River and Bay need a natural pattern of flow to thrive.
- In the time before the large reservoirs and metropolitan areas upstream, there were no recorded daily average flows on the Apalachicola River less than 5,000 cfs.
- Declining trends in threatened and endangered species populations suggest that the ACF system is stressed.
- Growing uses in the basin will cause more conflicts in dry years and more effects to listed species.



# The Health of the ACF System Depends on All the Users

- Reservoir storage is now used to augment river flow that has been reduced by municipal and industrial consumption and agricultural irrigation.
- During extreme drought, Lake Lanier declines are due in large part to water consumption withdrawals and releases made for water consumption and water quality.
- All water users share in the responsibility for the conservation of a healthy river system, and we hope the states will continue working towards consensus on allocating limited resources in an effort to meet and balance present and future needs throughout the system.

# What is Next?

- The Service's opinion covers the Corps' revised Interim Operating Plan for five years unless a new plan is proposed sooner.
- The Corps has announced it is beginning the planning process to revise their water control manuals for the ACF system.
- The Service will work closely with the Corps and the states in that process, and provide input on the fish and wildlife effects of any alternative plans.
- Water use is a state responsibility.

# More Information

Corps of Engineers: <http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife:

- <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/>
- <http://www.fws.gov/panamacity/>

Drought Status:

- <http://www.drought.gov/>
- [http://drought.unl.edu/dm/DM\\_southeast.htm](http://drought.unl.edu/dm/DM_southeast.htm)
- [http://www.srh.noaa.gov/alr/wro/wro\\_ga/wro\\_ga.html](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/alr/wro/wro_ga/wro_ga.html)