



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Raleigh Field Office
Post Office Box 33726
Raleigh, North Carolina 27636-3726

April 17, 2012

RECEIVED
Division of Highways
APR 20 2012
Preconstruction
Project Development and
Environmental Analysis Branch

Gregory J. Thorpe, Ph.D.
North Carolina Department of Transportation
Project Development and Environmental Analysis
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1598

Dear Dr. Thorpe:

This letter is in response to your letter of April 13, 2012 which provided the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) with the biological conclusion of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) that the replacement of the following 15 Low Impact bridges in Columbus County may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered wood stork (*Mycteria americana*). In addition, NCDOT has determined that the bridge replacements will have no effect on all other federally listed species.

Structure Number	Description
230039	Bridge #39 across Monte Swamp on SR1006
230041	Bridge #41 across Monte Swamp on SR1006
230043	Bridge #43 across Branch of Monte Swamp on SR1006
230045	Bridge #45 across Big Cypress Swamp on SR1108
230069	Bridge #69 across Big Cypress Swamp on SR1112
230075	Bridge #75 across Big Branch in Monte Swamp on SR1006
230081	Bridge #81 across Tom's Fork on SR1118
230088	Bridge #88 over Branch Toms Fork Creek on SR 1125
230289	Bridge #289 across Grissett Swamp on SR1141
230290	Bridge #290 across Grissett Swamp on SR1141
230291	Bridge #291 across Grissett Swamp on SR1141
230294	Bridge #294 across Grissett Swamp on SR1141
230295	Bridge #295 across Mollie Swamp on SR1141
230320	Bridge #320 across Juniper Swamp on SR1118
230321	Bridge #321 across Juniper Swamp on SR1118

These comments are provided in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543).

Based on the information submitted, no wood storks or nests were observed at any of the bridge locations. However, potentially suitable foraging habitat was available at all but three of the

Based on the available information, the Service concurs with your biological conclusion that the proposed bridge replacements may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered wood stork. We also concur with your conclusion that the projects will have no effect on all other federally listed species. We believe that the requirements of Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA have been satisfied. We remind you that obligations under Section 7 consultation must be reconsidered if: (1) new information reveals impacts of these identified actions that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered in this review; (2) these actions are subsequently modified in a manner that was not considered in this review; or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat determined that may be affected by these identified actions.

Sincerely,

Electronic copy: Ronnie Smith, USACE, Wilmington, NC
Travis Wilson, NCWRC, Creedmoor, NC
Chris Militscher, USEPA, Raleigh, NC