



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION IV
611 RYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 400
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011-4005**

June 9, 2003

Gail A. Carmody, Project Leader
Ecological Services &
Fisheries Resources Office
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1601 Balboa Avenue
Panama City, FL 32405

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR COMMENTS REGARDING ENDANGERED/THREATENED
SPECIES AND CRITICAL HABITATS**

Dear Ms. Carmody:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is requesting comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding any potential impacts to endangered and threatened species and critical habitats as a result of reclamation activities being conducted at Eglin Air Force Base. This letter is a followup to the telephone conversation held on June 5, 2003, between Dr. Jon Hemming of your staff and Robert Evans of the NRC's staff.

The Department of the Air Force submitted a decommissioning plan to the NRC by letter dated May 24, 2002. Supplemental information was submitted by letter dated November 1, 2002. The licensee is requesting the unrestricted release of property where depleted uranium munitions were previously tested. The 4-acre property is included in Test Area C-74L which is situated in the northeastern portion of Eglin Air Force Base. Test Area C-74L is located in Walton County, Florida, northeast of the city of Niceville and east of State Route 285. The property is located in Section 11 of Township 2 North, Range 21 West.

The NRC is considering the issuance of an amendment to Materials License 42-23539-01AF to release the site from the license. If approved, the licensee can use or sell the property without restriction by the NRC. The NRC questioned the Air Force about the impact the reclamation would have on endangered species. In its November 1, 2002, letter, the Air Force stated:

"Eglin Air Force Base is home to the snail darter, indigo snake and the red cockaded woodpecker. All of which are endangered species. Information provided by Eglin Environmental Management office indicates that the stream that runs south of the controlled area at Test Area C-74L contains the snail darter. The stream is approximately 200 feet beyond the controlled area. The land immediately after the controlled area slopes down to the stream. Currently a berm located in the southern back of the controlled area will prevent silt and contaminated soil from being released from the controlled area. Additional silt fencing will be placed at the rear of the controlled area as indicated by washed out areas to prevent silt from leaving the controlled area. Also use of manual remediation of hot spots/areas instead of mechanical removal of the top 6 inches of soil in the controlled area will significantly

reduce the chance of silt and soil removal from the controlled area which could effect the habitat of the snail darter.”

As part of its review of the decommissioning plan, the NRC is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact. An EA is required by 10 CFR 51.30. The NRC requests your assistance in completing this EA.

In summary, the NRC requests your comments regarding the presence of any endangered or threatened species or critical habitats that may exist in the vicinity of Test Area C-74L. If any impacts are identified, please provide acceptable measures to avoid or mitigate these impacts. If you have any comments regarding the NRC's revised decommissioning plan review, please provide them within 30 days so they may be fully considered in the development of the EA document.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter and your response will be made available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the Publicly Available Records (PARS) component of NRC's document system (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> (the Public Electronic Reading Room).

If you require additional information, please contact Mr. Robert J. Evans, Senior Health Physicist, at (817) 860-8234 or the undersigned at (817) 860-8191.

Sincerely,

/RA/

D. Blair Spitzberg, Ph.D., Chief
Fuel Cycle and Decommissioning Branch

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cc:
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NLHolbrook

RIV Materials File Room (5th floor)

ADAMS: Yes No Initials: RJE

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