



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
446 Neal Street
Cookeville, TN 38501

December 20, 2011

Mr. Stephen J. Campbell
Chief, Watts Bar Special Projects Branch
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Subject: FWS# 12-CPA-0081. Watts Bar Nuclear Plant, Unit 2 – Biological Assessment for section 7 Consultation Related to the Operating License Application, Rhea County, Tennessee.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Thank you for the letter received November 8, 2011, transmitting a Biological Assessment (BA) within the draft Supplement 2 to NUREG-0498, “final Environmental Statement Related to the Operation of Watts Bar Nuclear Plant [WBN], Unit 2 – Draft Report for Comment (DSEIS), in Rhea County, Tennessee. Watts Bar Unit 1 has been in operation since 1996 and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) have conducted numerous studies and water quality monitoring associated with this TVA nuclear facility. Based on a variety of information and data generated by TVA and TDEC, as well as research by Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff, the NRC has determined that operation of Watts Bar Unit 2 “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” the federally endangered gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) and pink mucket (*Lampsilis abrupta*); and will have “no effect” on the endangered rough pigtoe (*Pleurobema plenum*), fanshell (*Cyprogenia stegaria*), dromedary pearly mussel (*Dromus dromas*), orangefoot pimpleback (*Plethobasus cooperianus*), and the threatened snail darter (*Percina tanasi*). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) biologists have reviewed the information provided and offer the following comments.)

Due to the utilization of the supplemental condenser cooling water system and the existing mitigative and monitoring measures in place for the Watts Bar nuclear plant, we concur with your determination of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” for the gray bat and pink mucket. We also agree with the “no effect” determinations for the rough pigtoe, fanshell, dromedary pearly mussel, orangefoot pimpleback, and snail darter. Therefore, based on the best information available at this time, we believe that the requirements of section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as

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amended, are fulfilled. Obligations under the Act must be reconsidered if (1) new information reveals impacts of the proposed action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered, (2) the proposed action is subsequently modified to include activities which were not considered during this consultation, or (3) new species are listed or critical habitat designated that might be affected by the proposed action.

If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Steve Alexander of my staff at 931/528-6481 (ext. 210) or by email at steven_alexander@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy W. Shute". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

for Mary E. Jennings
Field Supervisor