



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, Florida 32960



July 31, 2007

Lieutenant Colonel John B. Pechiney
Department of the Air Force
DET 1, 23rd WG/CC
Avon Park Air/Ground Training Complex (ACC)
Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida 33825

Service Federal Activity Code: 41420-2007-FA-1257
Service Consultation Code: 414220-2007-F-0861
Title: Modification of Joint Integrated
Fire Exercise BO
Applicant: United States Air Force
Dated Received: May 22, 2007
County: Highlands

Dear Colonel Pechiney

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your request to modify the terms and conditions of the Joint Integrated Fire Exercise (JIFE) Biological Opinion (BO), dated November 2, 2006. This letter represents the Service's views on the effects of the proposed action in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

The Service understands you request a modification in term/condition eight to allow for the preparation of a single yearly report covering the Spring JIFE (typically conducted in May) and the Fall JIFE (typically conducted in November).

The Service believes it is important to monitor both the direct effects, those effects which are caused immediately by the proposed action, and the indirect effects; those effects that occur later in time but are reasonably certain to occur. This is especially crucial for species such as the Florida scrub-jay (FSJ) (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) (*Picoides borealis*), and the Florida grasshopper sparrow (FGS) (*Ammodramus savannarum*). FSJ and RCW experienced obvious adverse direct effects from the ordnance-related fires that occurred as a result of the Spring JIFE of 2006. The indirect effects of large scale fires on these and other species are not as obvious and may require more time to assess.

The Service has discussed this with your staff and by mutual agreement the term/condition eight will be revised to the following:

The USAF will submit an annual report 90 days after completion of each Fall JIFE. This report will summarize efforts to monitor the direct and indirect effects to listed species and their habitats due to ground activities, ordnance delivery, and ordnance-ignited wildfires



associated with the Spring and Fall JIFEs for that calendar year. The report shall document the date, number, and location of acres burned or otherwise altered due to each JIFE. The report shall summarize monitoring of the post-action response of species and document any species sightings, locations of sightings, and response to, as well as observations of changes in population levels.

The report shall document the responses, both long term and short term, of federally listed species to JIFE affects, which occurred during a given calendar year and indirect effects of JIFEs, which occurred in prior years (such as the ordnance related wildfires of May, 2006).

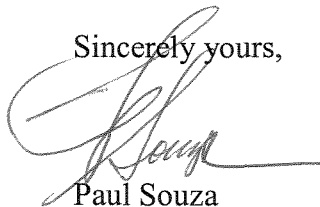
A summary report shall be submitted 90 days after completion of the May, 2010, JIFE. This report shall summarize effects of JIFEs, conducted between November, 2006 and May, 2010, on threatened and endangered species within Avon Park Air Force Range (APAFR). This report will include observed changes in population levels of threatened and endangered species affected by JIFEs.

The modification of this term and condition will not result in increased levels of take of those specified in the JIFE BO, dated November 2, 2006, nor will it result in jeopardy to the species or adverse modification of critical habitat.

This letter fulfills the requirements of the Act and no further action is required. If modifications are made to the proposed action or, if additional information involving potential effects to listed species becomes available, please notify our office.

The Service appreciates your past monitoring and conservation efforts for listed species on APAFR. Your continued conservation management is vital to maintaining healthy populations of Florida grasshopper sparrow, Florida scrub-jay, and Red cockaded woodpecker other listed species. If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact Mark Fredlake at 863-452-4164.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Souza', is written over a horizontal line.

Paul Souza
Field Supervisor
South Florida Ecological Services Office

cc:
APAFR, Avon Park AFR, Florida (Paul Ebersbach)