



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240



ER 05/1007

DEC 14 2005

Mr. Thomas W. Waters
Chief, Policy and Policy Compliance Division
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: CECW-P (SA)
7701 Telegraph Road
Alexandria, Virginia 22315-3860

Dear Mr. Waters:

The U.S. Department of the Interior (Department) has reviewed the Chief of Engineers Proposed Report on the Hocking River Basin, Monday Creek Sub-Basin, Hocking, Athens, and Perry Counties, Ohio.

Our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been coordinating with the Huntington District of the Corps of Engineers on the Monday Creek Project, including providing letters of comment on the Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment. We believe that the proposed report adequately addresses the concerns and recommendations expressed in the Service's letters, particularly with respect to fish and wildlife resources and compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As proposed in the report, this project will result in significant habitat gains for aquatic species and their supporting ecosystems. Treatment and restoration of approximately 202 sites affected by acid mine drainage in the Monday Creek watershed will not only restore aquatic habitat but will also provide hydraulic connectivity of the headwater ecosystems in each sub-watershed. The recommended plan would essentially restore 98 percent of the aquatic habitat of the Monday Creek watershed, including over 58 miles of aquatic stream habitat, providing the potential for a future sustainable ecosystem. The Department supports the conclusions of the proposed report and applauds the Corps of Engineers and project sponsors for developing a project concept that truly reflects an ecosystem restoration initiative.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the documents and provide comments. Our Service point of contact is Lyn MacLean, Federal Projects and Permits Coordinator, Region 3, 612-713-5330.

Sincerely,



Willie R. Taylor, Director
Environmental Policy
and Compliance

cc: Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, National Park Service
Director, Geological Survey
Director, Office of Surface Mining
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3