DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
10117 PRINCESS PALM AVENUE, SUITE 120
TAMPA, FLORIDA 33610

March 8, 2012

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Tampa Permits Section
SAJ-2011-00551 (IP-TEH)

Ms. Michele Baker
Pasco County Board of County Commissioners
7530 Little Road, Suite 320
New Port Richey, Florida 34654

Mr. John Post, Jr.
Florida Department of Transportation
Florida's Turnpike Enterprise
Post Office Box 613069
Ocoee, Florida 34761

Dear Ms. Baker and Mr. Post:

This is in reference to your permit application requesting Department of the Army (DA) authorization to impact waters of the United States in association with a project known as "Ridge Road Extension" (SAJ-2011-00551 (IP-TEH)). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) recently received the attached comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), dated January 24, 2012. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the wildlife survey information needed to complete consultation with the USFWS under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In consultation with the USFWS, the Corps has determined that current surveys are required for the following species: Britton's beargrass (*Nolina brittoniana*), Brooksville bellflower (*Campanula robinsiae*), Cooley's water-willow (*Justicia cooleyi*), Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens coerulescens*), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), striped newt *(Notophthalmus perstriatu)*, and wood stork (*Mycteria Americana*). Results of the gopher tortoise survey will be reviewed by the Corps and the USFWS to determine required survey efforts for the Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*).

Please provide a detailed wildlife survey plan for these species. This plan will be reviewed by the Corps in consultation with the USFWS. As the results of the wildlife surveys are needed to assess the potential effects on protected species, this information must be provided prior to a permit decision to comply with the ESA. The wildlife survey plan must be approved by the Corps prior to commencement of survey efforts. We request you provide the detailed

wildlife survey plan no later than April 9, 2012. If no response is received, we will assume you have no further interest in obtaining a DA permit and the application will be withdrawn.

The contents of this letter pertain solely to wildlife surveys and do not reflect our ongoing review of other aspects of your application. This letter should not be interpreted as acceptance or approval of any aspect of the proposed application. The Corps is currently reviewing your application and the comments received in response to the November 28, 2011 public notice. You have been provided a copy of these comments in separate correspondence. Upon completion of this review, you will be notified of any outstanding information needed to finalize the evaluation of your application.

Should you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, please contact Tracy Hurst of my staff at the letterhead address, by phone at 813-769-7063, or by electronic mail at Tracy.E.Hurst@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Schnepel

Charles A. Schnepel
Chief, Tampa Permits Section

Enclosure:

USFWS 1/24/12 letter

cc (w/encl):

Mr. Terry Gilbert
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
27 Westpoint Dr.
Crawfordville, FL 32327

Dr. Heath Rauschenberger
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
7915 Baymeadows Way, Suite 200
Jacksonville, Florida 32256-7517

United States Department of the Interior

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

7915 BAYMEADOWS WAY, SUITE 200
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32256-7517

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FWS Log No. 41910-2006-F-0330

January 24, 2012

Colonel Alfred A. Pantano, Jr., District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
10117 Princess Palm Avenue, Suite 120
Tampa, Florida 33610
(Attn: Tracy Hurst)

Dear Colonel Pantano:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife (Service) has reviewed your Public Notice dated 28 November 2011 and other information associated with the permit application SAJ-2011-00551 (IP-TEH) for the proposed Ridge Road Extension, Pasco County, Florida. Our comments are submitted in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*).

In our 29 April 2009 letter to the Corps, the Service recommended measures to resolve outstanding issues regarding the ARNI designation. To date, the Service has not received a revised or approved wetland mitigation plan. Pending the incorporation of previous recommendations provided by the Service into the construction plan set along with an approved mitigation plan, the Service will not object to issuance of the Department of the Army permit. These recommendations include twin 120-foot wildlife underpass bridges at Station 214+00, eliminate Pond No. 10 and the single box culvert at Station 203+00, provide a 50-foot minimum buffer between the Pithlachascotee River wetland jurisdictional limits and Pond No. 5A, provide a 50-foot minimum buffer between the Pithlachascotee River wetland jurisdictional limits and Pond No. 6, install a 10-foot high fence with ¼-inch metal mesh (3-feet above ground and 1-foot buried) along the entire Serenova Preserve, and incorporate grating to allow light in all single box culverts.

In regards to wetland mitigation and potential effects on wood storks, the Service will review the mitigation proposal after the plan has been deemed acceptable by the Corps and the Environmental Protection Agency and determine if the mitigation minimizes the risk of take to an insignificant or discountable level.
In regards to potential effects on the Florida scrub-jay, the previous surveys have expired and new surveys will be required. In addition, we have established an Indigo Snake

Survey Protocol that is to be implemented in the event that the proposed project is keyed to a "May Affect" using the Indigo Snake Effects Determination Key (Snake Key). Because the Snake Key uses the number of gopher tortoise burrows at the site as part of the effects determination, gopher tortoise surveys also need to be updated. All survey results and effects determinations must be submitted to the Service for review in order for us to complete the consultation.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Dr. Heath Rauschenberger at (904) 731-3203.

Sincerely,

Heath Ra

for David L. Hankla
Field Supervisor

Cc:

David Pritchett, US EPA
David Rydene, NOAA-Fisheries
Terry Gilbert, FWCC