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**Congress of the United States**  
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ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

September 9, 2013

Daniel M. Ashe  
Director, United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street NW, Room 3331  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Re: National Mitigation Hatcheries

Director Ashe,

I write to express my interest in the long-term plans that the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has regarding federal trout mitigation hatcheries that are currently operating in the Southeastern United States. As you are aware, these hatcheries were established to mitigate the impact of impounding streams via federal power generation activities. Up to this point, the mitigation hatcheries have proven useful in mitigating the impact to wildlife and have grown to become an important component of local economies. In many areas, the presence of a thriving trout population promotes the economy through tourism, retail purchases, and many other services provided by local businesses and residents. Given the uncertain fiscal environment, I am concerned over the future of these hatcheries, and seek to understand how FWS will treat these facilities in the long-term.

I recognize that FWS has encountered budgetary challenges regarding the mitigation hatcheries without a stable, dedicated funding source. However, Congress has appropriated funds annually specifically for the purpose of operating the trout hatcheries and those funds should continue to be used for that purpose so long as the appropriation continues. Additionally, I applaud the work that FWS has done to continue to work with other federal entities including the Corps of Engineers, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Bureau of Reclamation to provide appropriate levels of mitigation funding for FWS. As a long-term funding plan continues to be developed between these partners, I encourage all parties to continue working towards the goal of fully funding hatchery operations.

Through conversations with FWS staff, it has become clear that there is a strong possibility some of the national mitigation hatcheries may be required to be placed in receivership. With the noted economic impact to the communities, I am

concerned that the closing of any of these facilities will have severe impacts to many local businesses nearby. I have several questions regarding the future operations of these facilities to which I would appreciate your response.

1. Does FWS plan to close any of the national mitigation hatcheries during the upcoming fiscal year?
2. Is there an overall strategy by FWS to prioritize other service activities and to systematically absolve itself of responsibilities to operate mitigation hatcheries?
3. In states that are not in a position to take over operations of the mitigation hatcheries, how does FWS intend to continue to provide the mitigation services that have been carried out in the past?
4. In states that are in a position to take over operations of the mitigation hatcheries, does FWS intend to work with the states to transfer ownership in a manner that would allow continued operations without disruption of service? How does FWS intend to structure the finances of a proposed transaction?
5. If ownership is transferred to a state, how does FWS plan to deal with the federal appropriations and funds from federal power entities which are designated for hatchery operations? Will the states have access to these funds in order to carry out continued hatchery operations?

In addition to these questions, if there is any other information available regarding the future of the national mitigation hatcheries, please notify my office.

Sincerely,



Doug Collins  
Member of Congress  
Ninth District of Georgia