



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR ARMAMENT CENTER (AFMC)
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA

Mr. Robert J. Arnold
Eglin AFB Mission Enhancement Committee
101 West D Avenue, Suite 222
Eglin AFB FL 32542-5492

JUN 13 2008

Mr. Randall A. McElheney
Chairman, Northwest Florida Transportation Corridor Authority
132 Harrison Avenue
Panama City FL 32401-2726

Dear Mr. McElheney

Since granting conceptual approval on 30 Oct 2007 for a bypass across Eglin, we have begun an environmental analysis of the conceptually approved route. This analysis is being accomplished in a collaborative manner that includes the Air Force, your planners and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Results at this point show that the preferred route transverses habitat of the Flatwoods Salamander in the area west of Hurlburt Field.

The salamander is currently listed as a threatened species by the USFWS under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973. In accordance with the Sikes Act of 1997, Eglin's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) provides management and protection of listed species, including the salamander, within Eglin's boundaries. To comply with the ESA and the INRMP, the Air Force must ensure no action associated with the bypass project would jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

We must also reiterate that, as stated in our previous letter, any route adjustments required to address environmental impacts must be south of the conceptually approved route. Please be advised that we recently reviewed our original mission impact analysis, and reconfirmed that any route movement north would significantly impact Eglin's current and future mission capabilities. Therefore, any requested route adjustments to the north could not be supported.

We recommend you continue collaboration with USFWS to develop innovative solutions that will avoid negative impacts to our mission and any listed species.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Arnold".

ROBERT J. ARNOLD
Chairman

cc: USFWS