



Friends of the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery  
4730 Rock Creek Road  
Suches, GA 30572

February 25, 2011

U.S. Dept. of the Interior  
Secretary, Ken Salazar  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As background, our Friends Group is made up of 82 members and is located in the north Georgia mountains. We support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery. We have recently been made aware of the fact that the President's 2012 budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contains a net increase of nearly \$48 million dollars, but decreases the National Fish Hatchery Operations by \$6.29 million dollars. The Chattahoochee Forest Fish Hatchery happens to be one of the nine facilities recommended to be closed, or at best, severely cut in funding by this proposed budget. Acting Director Rowan Gould states, "In these hard economic times the Service recognizes budget requests are very challenging and difficult choices have to be made." He goes on to say that "The investments considered for this budget will support the Service's mission to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people". We believe that a cut in the fish hatchery system does not support his statement. In the justification for the \$6.29 million decrease for fish hatcheries, the President's budget stated that "the states depend on these fish to stock fisheries that provide economic benefits to area communities". Even though the concept behind decreasing the funding for these facilities is to recover funding from various other agencies, this does not justify a cut in the base funding for hatcheries. By cutting the base funding, you are crippling or destroying a very viable program. In many cases, you are crippling communities and entire states of any benefits from trout fishing, as well as other recreational fishing opportunities provided by other facilities within the National Fish Hatchery System.

The Chattahoochee Forest NFH Friends Group intends to rally the local, county and state governments, the hundreds of local Trout Unlimited members, Senators, Congressmen and other interested parties, to help us with our cause. We are meeting this weekend with around 500 members of Trout Unlimited and with the local Chambers of Commerce. **Our cause is this: to return the “fish” back to the Fish and Wildlife Service, and to restore base funding to these nine federal hatcheries in the amount of \$6.3 million dollars.** The facts that we have are: The nine facilities whose budgets will be cut or eliminated, in 2009, produced 12,786,600 fish and 15,924,000 eyed eggs, which directly supported 3,500 jobs and nearly \$325 million in total economic benefit to local and state economies from Service operated mitigation facilities”. I feel certain that the majority of the programs that are slated to receive millions in increase in the 2012 budget do not provide these types of benefits. Again, Mr. Gould has said that he desires to “support the Service’s mission to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people”. His budget decisions do not support his statement.

As we prepare for our town hall meetings and meeting with Congress and Senate, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

- 1) Why is the funding for fish hatcheries being cut when the Service has asked for an overall \$47.8 million dollar increase?
- 2) What happens to these facilities and staff should full reimbursement from other responsible parties not be forthcoming? The \$3.8 million is clearly not enough. Why did you not seek full reimbursement?
- 3) Does the Service realize that cutting the budget for these hatcheries will impact every state in the Southeast? More than 3,500 jobs and nearly \$325 million in total economic benefits to local and state economies, not to mention that the total recreational trout populations in most states will be impacted. Trout fishing is an institution and a way of life here in the Southeast. Does this administration really want to be responsible for this?
- 4) Why does the Fish and Wildlife Service perceive fish hatcheries as such low budgeting priorities? Who makes those decisions?
- 5) What are some of the other increases (Adaptive Science and Cooperative Landscape) and what are they going to provide to the American public? What are the economic and resource advantages to these programs? Are you not already a “science” based agency? Why do you need more than \$10 million dollars to “cooperate” with partners? Why can’t money be taken from these increases and put into the fish hatchery system? These are hard ideas to sell to the taxpayers. Especially at the tune of an ADDITIONAL \$17.4 million dollars in the Service budget request.

Please respond to the following address:

Marilyn Parrott, President  
Friends of the Chattahoochee Forest NFH  
2138 Lamp Light Drive  
Marietta, GA 30062

We will be posting your prompt response on our website, local Chambers of Commerce websites, as well as Trout Unlimited websites throughout the Southeast. We are getting these questions posed to us by various television stations, newspapers, magazines, concerned citizens and Congressional staff. It will be very nice to be able to provide them with answers.

Again, we appreciate your willingness to provide answers to the above questions and to support us in our cause.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Parrott  
President

cc: Mr. Dan Ashe, Acting Director, USFWS, Washington, DC  
Mr. Rowan Gould, USFWS, Washington, DC  
Mr. Bryan Arroyo, USFWS, Washington, DC