

The Honorable John Lewis
343 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative Lewis,

For the past four years the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been trying to close the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery. The Chattahoochee Forest hatchery is a trout mitigation hatchery and is a vital part of a network of National Fish Hatcheries that have been stocking fish for more than 60 years in waters impacted by Federal dams constructed by the Corps of Engineers (COE). This network of National Fish Hatcheries include Chattahoochee Forest NFH, GA; Dale Hollow NFH, TN; Erwin NFH, TN; Greers Ferry NFH, AR; Norfolk NFH, AR, and Wolf Creek NFH, KY. All of these hatcheries have been proposed for closure during the past four years.

These hatcheries stock over 7 million fish and provide an economic output to local communities that exceed \$310 million – a return of \$73 for every Federal dollar spent on one of the hatcheries. These hatcheries have also created more than 3,500 jobs in local communities.

The Service wants the COE to pay for both the operation and maintenance costs of these hatcheries. The COE wants to reimburse the Service for both the operation and maintenance costs of the hatcheries. However, the Service has only been requesting the operation monies for the hatcheries from the COE. The Service has never requested any maintenance monies for any of these hatcheries from the COE. Yet the Service continues to try and close these hatcheries because the COE is not fully funding the maintenance costs of the hatcheries.

For the past four years the House and Senate appropriation committees have supported all of the mitigation hatcheries by insuring that full operation and maintenance monies for the hatcheries were available to the Service. We would greatly appreciate it if you would work with Service and the House and Senate appropriations committees to insure the following:

- Insure that the Service requests full reimbursement of operation and maintenance monies for these hatcheries from the COE.
- Insure that the full reimbursement of operation and maintenance monies from the COE to the Service is a minimum of \$6.1 million annually.
- Insure that the agreement between the Service and the COE contains appropriate language for any funding adjustments needed to keep these hatcheries open well into the future.
- Insure that the Service fully funds the operations and maintenance of these hatcheries until a signed agreement between the Service and the COE is in place.

We greatly appreciate your assistance in supporting the continued operation and maintenance of these hatcheries for all of the citizens in your State.

Sincerely,