



# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mississippi Field Office  
6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite A  
Jackson, Mississippi 39213

July 5, 2016

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
2016-I-0572

Mr. Hugh Carr  
Environmental Specialist  
NASA Environmental Office  
Stennis Space Center, Mississippi 39529-6000

Dear Mr. Carr:

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the information in your May 2016, Threatened and Endangered Species Surveys on Stennis Space Center (SSC), Hancock County, Mississippi. Our comments are submitted in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (87 Stat. 884 as amended; 16 U.S. Code 1531 et seq.).

In previous correspondence the Service has stated that the following federally listed species or their habitats could be found on SSC:

**Louisiana black bear** (*Ursus a. luteolus*) - threatened  
**gopher tortoise** (*Gopherus polyphemus*) - threatened  
**black pine snake** (*Pituophis melanoleucus ssp. lodingi*) - candidate species  
**Louisiana quillwort** (*Isoetes louisianensis*) - endangered  
**ringed map turtle** (*Graptemys oculifera*) - threatened  
**Gulf sturgeon** (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*) - threatened/critical habitat  
**piping plover** (*Charadrius melodus*) - threatened/critical habitat  
**inflated heelsplitter mussel** (*Potamilus inflatus*) - threatened  
**bald eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) - Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

Due to the potential for occurrence of the above-listed species on SSC properties, the Service has historically recommended surveys for these species in areas with suitable soils and/or appropriate habitats before beginning any earth disturbing activities. Since the last review, the federal listing status of several species has changed. The Louisiana black bear has


been delisted. The black pine snake federal listing status has been changed from a candidate species to a threatened species. Further, the Red knot received a federal listing status of threatened in early 2016.

From 2014-2016, surveys for the above species were conducted by Mississippi State University on lands within the Fee Area of SSC and NASA landholdings within the acoustical buffer area. Although areas of medium to marginal habitat were observed, no individuals were found. Therefore, your agency has determined that ongoing activities within SSC are not likely to adversely affect any federally listed species.

Based on the survey information, the Service concurs with that finding. However, due to the mobility of many of these species, the Service recommends that additional surveys be conducted each year in areas of suitable habitat prior to commencement of any ground disturbing activities. If evidence of any listed species is found, this office must be notified immediately.

If you have any questions, you may contact Paul Necaie in our office, telephone (228) 493-6631.

Sincerely,



Stephen Ricks  
Field Supervisor