December 19, 2003

Mr. Richard Gooch
Regional Candidate Conservation Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1875 Century Blvd., Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Mr. Gooch:

You will find enclosed a summary of the conservation actions conducted during 2003 for the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the Robust Redhorse, *Moxostoma robustum*, Ocmulgee River, Georgia, as described in Agreement Number 1448-40181-01-K-005.

This report summarizes activities conducted during 2003 in fulfilling the first phase of the CCAA. Specific activities addressed include stocking the project site (Conservation Action 1), studying the movement of introduced juvenile robust redhorse (Conservation Action 2) and, monitoring the abundance and distribution of introduced robust redhorse (Conservation Action 3). Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Georgia Power have implemented Conservation Actions 2 and 3 under this agreement.

Please contact me at 404-799-2112 if you have further questions regarding this report.

Sincerely,

Mike Nichols
Environmental Laboratory Manager
Georgia Power Company

MCN/mcn

December 19, 2003
CCAA 2003 progress report
1448-40181-01-12-005

XC:
With 2003 progress report and attachments
Jimmy Evans, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Sandy Tucker, US Fish and Wildlife Service (Athens)
Greg Looney, Chairman Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee
Eileen Moorehead, Troutman Sanders
With 2003 progress report
John Biagi, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Mike Harris, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Chris Hobson, Georgia Power
Chris Womack, Georgia Power
Jimmy Helms, Georgia Power
Wanda Greene, Georgia Power

2003 Progress Report: Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the Robust Redhorse, *Moxostoma robustum*, Ocmulgee River, Georgia

Agreement Number 1448-40181-01-K-005

This report summarizes activities conducted during 2003 in fulfilling the first phase of the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the Ocmulgee River (CCAA) for the robust redhorse, Ocmulgee River, Georgia. Specific activities addressed include stocking the project site (Conservation Action 1), studying the movement of introduced juvenile robust redhorse (Conservation Action 2) and monitoring the abundance and distribution of introduced robust redhorse (Conservation Action 3).

Conservation Action 1. *Georgia DNR will stock the Project Site with approximately 4,000 hatchery-reared robust redhorse fingerlings each year for five years.*

Efforts were made at two times to collect spawning robust redhorse from the Oconee River, May 5-6, 2003 and June 3-4, 2003. River flows exceed 8000 cfs during the intervening period. Three male robust redhorse were collected and no spawning females. No propagation was conducted as a result. Therefore, no young of year fish were available for introduction during 2003. A total of 6692 individuals from six year classes (years 1997 through 2002) were introduced in 2002.

As provided for in Conservation Acton 1 and the adaptive management section of the agreement, we recommended and the Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee Excom concurred with shifting the schedule back one year for stocking and initiating the second telemetry study.

Conservation Action 2. *Georgia Power will fund two surveys, one in year 1 (2002) and one in year 3 (2004) on the movement of introduced juvenile robust redhorse.*

Two telemetry studies have been completed, tracking a total of 58 telemetered fish. One study, completed in 2002, was conducted by Dr. Byron Freeman using sonic transmitters and stationary monitors. Approximately 61% of the introduced fish with telemetry remained above Juliette Dam, and the remainder traveled downstream but appeared to remain above the confluence with the Oconee River. The second study was conducted by Dr. Cecil Jennings using radiotelemetry and periodically tracking individual fish throughout the study reach. Approximately 66% of the introduced fish with radio-telemetry remained above Juliette Dam and the remainder traveled downstream of Juliette Dam. The furthest distance traveled downstream was 115 km. A final report for this study was completed in 2003 and is attached (C. A. Jennings and D. C. Shepard, 2003. Movement and habitat use of hatchery-reared juvenile robust redhorse *Moxostoma robustum* released in the Ocmulgee River, GA).

The first of two telemetry studies under Conservation Action 2 has been completed. These complementary studies indicate a significant fraction of introduced robust redhorse stay within the project bounds (Lloyd Shoals Dam to Juliette Dam). These studies were budgeted for $75,000 under the CCAA schedule and expenditures totaled of $123,643 with the completion of these projects. This meets the requirement and schedule for Conservation Action 2 of the CCAA.

The next telemetry study is dependent upon the availability of fish with sufficient size and is scheduled for 2005.

Conservation Action 3. *Georgia Power will conduct or fund six surveys in order to monitor abundance and distribution of juvenile and adult robust redhorse within Project Site.*

Electro-fishing surveys were conducted October 27-28 and November 3, 2003 for accessible reaches of the Ocmulgee River from Lloyd Shoals Dam downstream to Juliette, Georgia. Georgia Power sampled two reaches, above Highway 16 bridge to Lloyd Shoals Dam (3 introduced robust redhorse collected), and below Highway 83 bridge (no robust redhorse collected) for a total of 367 minutes pedal time. Dr. Cecil Jennings surveyed the reach from Highway 83 bridge upstream to the lower end of 40 Acre Island (no robust redhorse collected) for a total of 310 minutes pedal time. The sampling time per mile (0.58 hours per river mile) meets the suggested minimum sampling effort of 0.3 hours pedal time per river mile recommended in the Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee Policies (adopted October 18, 2002).

Additionally, the Georgia DNR sampled two reaches downstream of Juliette, Georgia, at Echeconnee Creek and above James Dykes Memorial Park, and collected three introduced robust redhorse during a total of about 250 minutes of electrofishing pedal time.

We have completed the first of five status surveys under Conservation Action 3 and collected a total of six introduced robust redhorse. This meets the requirement and schedule for Conservation Action 3 of the CCAA.

Mike Nichols
Environmental Laboratory Manager
Georgia Power Company