



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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June 12, 2013

Walton County Board of Commissioners
P.O. Box 1355
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

Dear Commissioners:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) would like to express its support for the protection and conservation of the Coastal Dune Lakes in south Walton County, Florida by replacing the existing culverts with bridge structures. These lakes have been identified as globally rare and imperiled (S1/G2) by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory with a few hundred in existence world wide. Dune lakes only occur along the Florida panhandle, South Carolina and Northwest Pacific Coast of the United States.

Protection and conservation of the Coastal Dune Lakes will provide excellent opportunities for public fishing, paddling, aesthetics, and scientific research. Currently, the Service has been conducting restoration on Oyster Lake in Walton County to hydraulically improve saltwater interchange and restore aquatic flora and fauna. This includes documenting long-term recovery of fish, invertebrates, plants and sediments during the transformation from a freshwater to saltwater environment. The intrinsic value of these dune lakes is essential to the overall management and reduction of threats to the lake ecosystems.

The Service would like to express that conservation is needed for coastal dune lakes along the Florida Panhandle and restoration is a priority for the Service. Thank you for considering this partnership and if you have any questions, please contact Mr. Chris Metcalf, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Coordinator, at ext. 224.

Sincerely,

Dr. Donald W. Imm
Project Leader