To the Auburn Community,

We are writing to address the recent concerns surrounding the bald eagle nest at the Heritage Ridge Development Project in Lee County. We understand the deep emotional connection that many in the community have with these birds, and we want to provide clarity about the situation.

The recovery of the bald eagle population in Alabama is a conservation success story. Bald eagles are found statewide and utilize nesting and other habitat resources in each of Alabama's 67 counties. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) holds the regulatory authority to approve and issue permits for the take of bald eagles and/or their nests and nest sites. Such actions are not expected to have a negative impact on the bald eagle population.

On October 30, 2024, the (USFWS)issued a Specific Eagle Nest Take permit to Hughston Homes for the removal of the bald eagle nest at their project site. We granted this permit stipulating they:

- cannot remove the nest if viable eggs or young are present.
- confirm that the nest was free of eggs or young prior to removal.
- must adjust the timing of their activities to minimize the effects on the eagles.
- remove the nest as soon as possible, before the eagles return for breeding.

Additionally, the permit mandates a compensatory mitigation payment to the state. In this case, the mitigation payment of $35,000 was directed to the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division for future monitoring and management of eagles in Alabama.

We take your concerns seriously. We are conducting a review to ensure the conditions of the permit were followed by the permit holder. We will provide updates if new information becomes available. For further question or additional information please call 1-800-344-9453.

Thank you for your commitment to bald eagle conservation.

Sincerely,

Rafael Gonzales

Acting Assistant Regional Director

Migratory Birds and Science Applications

Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service