

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**GEORGIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION REQUEST TO CONTINUE
THE TEMPORARY REDUCED MINIMUM WATER QUALITY FLOW IN THE
CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER AT PEACHTREE CREEK UNTIL 31 MAY 2008 FOR
DROUGHT CONTINGENCY WATER MANAGEMENT OPERATION IN THE ACF RIVER
BASIN AND TEMPORARY WAIVER FROM ACF WATER CONTROL PLAN****1. PROPOSED ACTION:**

The proposed action was initiated in the form of a letter dated 25 April 2008 addressed to the Corps Mobile District Commander Colonel Byron Jorns, from Dr. Carol Couch, Director, Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). The proposed action is a continuation, until 31 May 2008, of the previous EPD request for a temporary reduction in the minimum water quality flow in the Chattahoochee River at Peachtree Creek which concluded on 30 April 2008. The Corps is currently operating to meet a minimum instantaneous daily value of 750 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the Chattahoochee River at Peachtree Creek. In February 2008, the EPD requested a reduction in the minimum flow measured at Peachtree Creek below an instantaneous daily value of 750 cfs in order to preserve storage in Lake Lanier. This request was based on EPD analysis demonstrating the reduced flows would not adversely affect water quality or threaten water intakes below Buford Dam. The February request was implemented by the Corps during the months of March and April, and the 25 April 2008 request includes the same reduction in minimum flow measured at Peachtree Creek from an instantaneous daily value of 750 cfs to 650 cfs beginning immediately and continuing until 31 May 2008. The EPD further proposes to continue to use an adaptive management approach regarding the minimum flow as water quality data is collected.

2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**1. "No Action" Alternative (Alternative 1)**

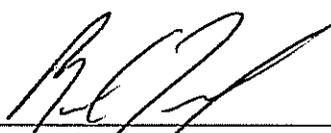
The CEQ regulations require analysis of the "no action" alternative 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14. Based on the nature of the proposed action, "no action" represents "no change" from the current water management practices at Buford Dam, and no change from the existing minimum flow requirements described in the Apalachicola Basin Reservoir Regulation Manual-Appendix B - Buford Dam (1991) would be made. Therefore, under the "no action" alternative, the Corps would continue to make releases from Buford Dam in order to meet the 750 cfs instantaneous minimum daily flow value at Peachtree Creek. This alternative fails to take advantage of the cool weather currently experienced allowing for a reduction on the demand of valuable stored water in Lake Lanier that remains approximately 14 feet below the normal summer pool elevation.

3. FACTORS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING THAT NO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IS REQUIRED:

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was conducted for the 11 February 2008 request and demonstrated that the proposed action will not significantly impact resources in the project area. Supplemental data was gathered to assess the impacts of continuing the reduced minimum water quality flow through 31 May 2008 and upon review was determined to not significantly impact resources in the project area. Resource areas considered in the previous and current request impacts analysis include physical habitat, land use changes, historic and archaeological resources, fishery and wildlife resources, essential fish habitat, threatened and endangered species, recreation, hydrology, water quality and supply, flood control, navigation, hydropower, floodplain and wetland resources, and aesthetics. The proposed action is intended to preserve storage in Lake Lanier by making allowances for increased storage opportunities and/or reductions in the demand of storage in order to provide continued support to project purposes; minimize impacts to municipal and industrial water supply, water quality, and fish and wildlife conservation; and provide greater assurance of future sustained flows for species and other users during a severe multi-year drought, currently being experienced in the ACF basin. The proposed action constitutes a short-term use of man's environment and does not prohibit the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity in the project area.

4. CONCLUSIONS:

An evaluation of the Environmental Assessment completed for the 11 February 2008 request and the updated supplemental data (attached) demonstrates that the reduction in minimum water quality flow measured at Peachtree Creek from an instantaneous daily value of 750 cfs to 650 cfs beginning immediately and continuing until 31 May 2008 would have no long term significant environmental or human impacts. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required.

DATE: 13 May '08

Byron G. Jorns
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander