

RECORD OF DECISION
ALABAMA-COOSA-TALLAPOOSA RIVER BASIN
MASTER WATER CONTROL MANUAL
REVIEW AND UPDATE

I have reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT) River Basin Master Water Control Manual (WCM) review and update (October 2014); related documentation and studies performed in support of the WCM update; and comments and correspondence received in response to the public coordination of these documents. I find the Proposed Action Alternative (PAA) water control plan (also referred to as Alternative Plan G), as described in the Final EIS and in this Record of Decision, is consistent with all statutory and regulatory requirements, including applicable environmental statutes, executive orders, and regulations; provides for the congressionally authorized purposes of the ACT Basin projects; and is in the public interest. I therefore approve the Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative Plan G) for implementation as the new ACT River Basin Master WCM.

Description of the Authorized Projects

Federal projects in the ACT River Basin project were authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 1945 (P.L. 79-14) for navigation, flood risk management, power development, and other purposes. The ACT River Basin includes five USACE dam and reservoir projects: Carters Dam and Lake (including the downstream Carters Reregulation Dam), Georgia; Allatoona Dam and Lake, Georgia; Robert F. Henry Lock and Dam (R.E. "Bob" Woodruff Lake), Alabama; Millers Ferry Lock and Dam (William "Bill" Dannelly Lake), Alabama; and Claiborne Lock and Dam and Lake, Alabama.

The River and Harbor Act of 1945 was modified by P.L. 83-436 in June 1954, suspending the authorization for federal hydropower development and authorizing private interests (Alabama Power Company [APC]) to construct a series of dams on the Coosa River for hydropower generation subject to licensing under the Federal Power Act. Subsequently, the River and Harbor Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-789) suspended the authorization for federal power development at the Crooked Creek site on the Tallapoosa River in Randolph County, Alabama, allowing development of a project at this site by APC for hydropower generation subject to licensing under the Federal Power Act. These laws enabling non-Federal hydropower development by APC in the ACT River Basin stipulate that the licenses must require the provision of flood risk management storage and further state that the projects will be operated for flood risk management and navigation in accordance with reasonable rules and regulations of the Secretary of the Army. Four APC projects in the basin are subject to those provisions: Weiss Lake, H. Neely Henry Lake, and Logan Martin Lake on the Coosa River, and R.L. Harris Lake (locally known as Lake Wedowee) on the Tallapoosa River. Therefore, WCMs are required for each of these four APC projects, and their operations in support of flood risk management and navigation are included in the ACT River Basin Master WCM.

The updated Master WCM and individual project WCMs will replace the current versions and will address the basin-wide management of the water resources. During development of the WCM updates, USACE determined that APC had obtained flood easements to support flood risk management operations at Logan Martin Lake and Weiss Lake pursuant to their original license under the Federal Power Act. These easement elevations are below the maximum flood surcharge elevations contained in their current Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license and WCMs. APC has proposed new flood operations that would ensure that surcharge operations do not exceed these elevations, which will require a flood study that exceeds the scope of this proposed action. Therefore, completion of updates to the Logan Martin and Weiss WCMs have been deferred pending the completion of the necessary studies to determine if the revised flood risk management protocols are acceptable. There are no proposed changes

to flood operations at H. Neely Henry Lake, and R.L. Harris Lake. Therefore, WCM updates for those projects are included in this proposed action.

The ACT River Basin projects as described above operate as an integrated system providing for flood risk management, navigation, hydropower, water supply, water quality, recreation, and fish and wildlife conservation. USACE does not assign priorities to these project purposes, although operational priorities may exist under certain circumstances (e.g., flood risk management temporarily takes precedence during significant flood events). USACE, in consultation with stakeholders and other agencies, considers all of the authorized purposes when making water management decisions in the basin to best serve the needs of the people. For the Master WCM update and Final EIS, USACE took a balanced approach and recognized there may be occasions where conflicts exist between the individual authorized purposes. The updated Master Manual describes the water control plan and the objectives for the integrated regulation of the ACT River Basin system by providing guidance for the regulation of the reservoir projects in the basin.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

The recommended water management plan includes the following features:

- A drought management plan referred to as the APC Drought Operations Plan with operational enhancements recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The enhancements are laid out in Section 4.2.2.7 of the EIS.
- Provisions for seasonal navigation releases, coupled with seasonal maintenance dredging, to support commercial navigation in the Alabama River for a 9.0-foot or 7.5-foot channel depth as long as sufficient basin inflow above the APC projects (Jordan on the Coosa River and Thurlow on the Tallapoosa River) is available.
- Continued operation of APC projects on the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers under their respective current FERC licenses with specific operational requirements. Following public coordination of the Draft EIS for the ACT River Basin Master WCM update, FERC issued a new license for the APC Coosa River projects in June 2013, including approval of a revised guide curve for the H. Neely Henry project that had been used on an interim basis under a variance from FERC since 2001.
- Continued operation of Allatoona Dam to provide for a 240 cubic feet per second (cfs) minimum flow immediately downstream of the dam.
- A revised guide curve at Allatoona Lake to implement a phased fall drawdown period from early September through December.
- Revised action zones at Allatoona Lake shaped to mimic the seasonal demands for hydropower.
- Modifications to the hydropower schedule at Allatoona Dam to provide greater operational flexibility to meet power demands while conserving storage.
- Continued operation of Carters Reregulation Dam to provide a minimum flow of 240 cfs.
- Establishment of two action zones at Carters Lake to manage downstream releases. When Carters Lake is in Action Zone 1, minimum flow releases at Carters Reregulation Dam would be equal to the seasonal minimum flow. Those minimum flow releases are based on the mean monthly flow upstream of Carters Lake. If Carters Lake elevation drops into Action Zone 2, minimum flow releases from the Carters Reregulation Dam would be 240 cfs.
- Continued withdrawal of water from Allatoona Lake by the city of Cartersville, Georgia and the Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority (CCMWA) under existing water supply storage agreements.
- Continued withdrawal of water from Carters Lake by the city of Chatsworth under an existing water supply storage agreement.
- Continued management of fish spawning operations at Allatoona Lake as outlined in South Atlantic Division Regulation PDS-O-1, 31 May 2010, Lake Regulation and Coordination for Fish

Management Purposes. Continued migratory fish passage operations at Claiborne Lock and Dam and Millers Ferry Lock and Dam.

Based upon specific operational challenges identified by USACE, both from project-specific and system-wide perspectives, as well as extensive stakeholder input through the National Environmental Policy Act scoping process, objectives and screening criteria were developed for the Master WCM update process. Numerous potential water management measures were identified for possible consideration in the updated Master WCM. USACE considered each measure individually and determined whether it passed the established screening criteria. Measures failing to pass the screening criteria were eliminated from further consideration. Measures carried forward for further evaluation were refined, if required, and then combined to form basin-wide alternative plans. In addition to a “no action” alternative, reflecting current operations, eleven other water management alternatives were developed and considered in the EIS, and three of those eleven other alternatives were evaluated in detail along with “no action.” The EIS fully describes all alternatives, including the three detailed alternatives carried forward.

Environmental Effects Analysis

The HEC-ResSim and HEC-5Q models were used to simulate the effects of the alternative plans, providing data outputs (HEC-ResSim: hydropower generation, reservoir levels, river flows and stages; HEC-5Q: water quality) across the entire hydrologic period of record (1939-2011), which were then evaluated in terms of project and watershed criteria (channel availability, generation and capacity, reservoir recreation impact levels, and other authorized purposes, intended benefits, and existing uses in the system). The PAA consists of the combination of water management measures that are expected to meet the objectives and best balance system operations.

Impacts on the human and natural environment associated with the recommended water management plan compared to current operations (No Action Alternative) were found to be negligible to minor. Accordingly, no specific separable measures were determined to be necessary to mitigate adverse effects to fish and wildlife resources or any other adverse environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Final Agency Action

This Record of Decision is a final agency action for the limited purposes of the Proposed Action Alternative. No final agency action is being taken in this Record of Decision with respect to future water supply uses to the extent that any withdrawals are in excess of the 1963 contract amounts at Allatoona Lake.

Statement of Decision

Based on the foregoing, I hereby adopt the Proposed Action Alternative for the update of the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa River Basin Master Manual for immediate implementation. Periodic review of the water control plan will provide opportunities to make adjustments as conditions in the basin may change. Appropriate public coordination to satisfy environmental, economic and technical issues will occur prior to any modifications. The public will best be served by implementation of the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa River Basin Master Water Control Manual update set forth in this Record of Decision.

04 MAY 2015

Date



C. David Turner
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