Enclosure 13

Memorandum for Record
Annual Fish Management Coordination Meeting
12 February 2004

CESAM-PD-EI 17 February 2004
(Revised 12 Mar 04)

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Annual Coordination Meeting, Reservoir Water Management Operations in Support of Fish Management, 12 February 2004, Bainbridge, Georgia

1. On 12 February 2004, representatives of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District (CESAM) and South Atlantic Division (CESAD), attended the Annual Coordination Meeting with representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (AW&FF); Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC); and Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division (GA-DNR-WRD). The purpose of the Annual Coordination Meeting is to discuss priorities for reservoir operations in support of fish spawning activities for the upcoming spring. The Annual Coordination Meeting is included as a requirement in the draft revision to SAM SOP 1130-2-9. A copy of the agenda for the meeting is attached. The following representatives participated in the meeting discussions.

Name	Agency	Phone	Email Address
Jerry Ziewitz	USFWS	850-769-0552, X-223	Jerry_Ziewitz@fws.gov
Mike Newman	AW&FF	334-347-9467	dist6@alaweb.com
Nick Nichols	AW&FF	334-242-3883	nnichols@dcnr.state.al.us
Chris Greene	AW&FF	334-252-3628	cgreene@dcnr.state.al.us
Rick Long	FFWCC	850-487-1645	eric.long@fwc.state.fl.us
Ted Hoehn	FFWCC	850-488-6661	ted.hoehn@fwx.state.fl.us
Charlie Mesing	FFWCC	850-487-1645	Charles.Mesing@fwc.state.fl.us
Brent Hess	GA-DNR-WRD	706-845-4180	Brent_Hess@dnr.state.ga.us
Russ Ober	GA-DNR-WRD	229-430-4256	russ_ober@mail.dnr.state.ga.us
Rob Weller	GA-DNR-WRD	229-430-4256	Rob_Weller@mail.dnr.ga.us
Gary Mauldin	CESAD	404-562-5232	gary.v.maudlin@usace.army.mil
Jerry Fulton	CESAM	770-945-9531	gerald.p.fulton@sam.usace.army.mil
Don Morgan	CESAM	229-662-2001	don.m.morgan@usace.army.mil
Leslie W. Brusse	CESAM	229-662-2001	leslie.w.brusse@usace.army.mil
Joanne Brandt	CESAM	251-690-3260	joanne.u.brandt@sam.usace.army.mil
Matt Lang	CESAM	251-694-3837	matthew.j.lang@sam.usace.army.mil
Memphis Vaughan	CESAM	251-690-2730	memphis.Vaughan.jr@sam.usace.army.mil
Cheryl Hrabovsky	CESAM	251-694-4018	cheryl.l.hrabovsky@sam.usace.army.mil
Amber Houston	CESAM	251-694-4397	Amber.M.Houston@sam.usace.army.mil

2. Non-Water Management Operations at Corps reservoirs. The purpose of this annual coordination meeting is to address reservoir water management operations in support of fish management. However, Jerry Fulton of the Lake Lanier Resource Office noted that there are a number of other fish management efforts and concerns that could also be addressed in this or a

similar forum in order to improve coordination and communications on what we are doing with the State fishery agencies. For instance, the Corps currents releases water from sluice gates at Buford Dam to improve DO and other water quality parameters in release waters downstream for the trout hatchery and fishery on the Chattahoochee River below the dam. There are also actions underway at Buford Dam to improve DO (i.e., turbine venting) so that routine sluice releases can be reduced or discontinued. Jerry also noted that there are over 600 fishing tournaments that occur annually on Lake Lanier, and suggested that it may useful to establish a coordination protocol with the State fishery agency on timing and locations of fish tournaments to reduce possible overfishing/mortality rates or possible other use conflicts. Russ Ober requested that the State fishery agencies be included in planning decisions related to any future closures of public use areas on the Corps reservoirs. Brent Hess also noted that the recent flood debris clean-up activities being completed by a Corps contractor had removed much shoreline fishery habitat; and that earlier coordination with his agency could have provided recommendations for minimizing and/or mitigating impacts to fishery habitat as part of the contract. Some woody material is now being replaced along the shoreline to compensate for impacts to shoreline habitat. Consideration will be given to the appropriate forum or means to incorporate State agency coordination in these other fish and wildlife management operations.

3. Background and Summary of 2003 Fish Spawn Operations. Joanne Brandt gave a summary of previous efforts to update the Mobile District SOP to improve coordination during fish spawn operations, to include the Apalachicola River in the SOP operations, and to establish an Annual Coordination Meeting to plan for the upcoming year's fish spawning operations. Hydrographs were presented to demonstrate the resulting lake levels and river stages produced by a combination of the Corps management actions and the atypically wet season experienced in 2003. During much of the fish spawn operations period, most of the lakes were above the rule curve and water management efforts were directed at flood control operations and attempts to return the lake levels to as close to the rule curve as possible. Apalachicola River stages were maintained at or above a 9-foot Blountstown gage, but with many flood pulses reaching between 18 to 20 feet on the gage during the fish spawn operation period. (Copy of presentation slides attached.)

Most fishery agency staff were pleased with the resulting operations, and anticipate that 2003 was a very good spawn year at the lakes and on the Apalachicola River due to the sustained high water levels. Sampling data to be gathered in the next few weeks will be able to confirm whether this was the case. There were a couple of incidents following flood pulses on Walter F. George Lake that resulted in more significant drawdown than would have been preferred by Georgia fisheries staff, but levels were maintained at or above188.5 and above the rule curve for the entire period. Priorities for water management operations during the 2003 operations period were fish management and flood control; with head limits considerations influencing water management decisions in a few cases. Memphis Vaughan presented summary data on ramping rates experienced on the Apalachicola River in 2003, and discussed several factors that may at times influence or hinder the Corps' ability to meet target drawdown and ramping rates during fish management operations.

These factors include: head limits at Jim Woodruff Dam and the upstream reservoirs (George W. Andrews Dam and Walter F. George Dam); limited storage at JWD; the water level in the upstream reservoirs; travel time for releases from WFG; manually operated gates at JWD that require personnel to be called up at night for changes in releases; rainfall forecasts; and forecasted Flint River flows. (Copy of presentation slides attached).

4. Outlook for 2004 Fish Management Operations. Hydrological indications for 2004 are that it will be a normal to wet spring. January was a very dry month, but recent rainfall within the District in February is putting the lakes in pretty good shape for beginning fish spawn operations. We will continue to closely monitor the hydrological conditions throughout the spawning operations period, as conditions could become drier later this spring. No special priorities for management decisions (e.g. reservoir versus river management priorities) were recommended by the fishery agencies for 2004, based on relatively good spawning conditions during 2003 throughout the ACF basin, and in the other reservoirs.

5. Recommendations for Fish Management Operations in 2004. Jerry Ziewitz presented some graphs that demonstrated the relationship between river stage on the Apalachicola River versus the quantity of spawning habitat available. Below approximately 12,000 to 14,000 cfs flow, almost all of the fish spawning habitat is limited to the river channel itself. Above this flow, increasingly more adjacent floodplain habitat becomes available for spawning. (Copy of presentation slides attached.) Jerry proposed that during periods when water is plentiful within the ACF basin (i.e., reservoirs are at or above the rule curve), that attempts be made to augment flows on the Apalachicola River to maintain minimum flows/stages that would enhance the quantity of spawning habitat available on the river for a minimum 30-day period. Any fall in river stage would eliminate successful spawning at elevations above the lowest stage experienced during the 30-day period. USFWS and FWCC recommended that releases be maintained at a minimum of 18,000 cfs for the month of April (equivalent to an approximate 8-foot Blountstown gage); and a minimum of 14,000 for the month of May (equivalent to an approximate 6-foot Blountstown gage), based on historical hydrological conditions and the floodplain/stage relationship. Jerry noted that this goal should not be obtained at the expense of the reservoirs and that the reservoir levels should not be lowered to achieve this goal; but water could be released to bring the reservoirs to the rule curve and/or to temporarily delay filling by maintaining stable rather than rising reservoir levels. Memphis noted that this may be possible during wetter conditions, but not if we have dry periods or would risk being able to refill the reservoirs. Memphis will investigate ways to determine whether normal to wet conditions are sufficient to allow support of a minimum flow on the Apalachicola River during the spawning operation period. Possible indicators could include total basin inflow; action zones at Lake Lanier, West Point Lake and Walter F. George Lake; average daily inflow by month. It was agreed to try to manage for these minimum river stages in 2004, if hydrological conditions allow, and to coordinate with USFWS and FWCC on alternative lower stages in the event the recommended river stages cannot be maintained.

The proposed fish spawn operations period for Walter F. George Lake recommended by GA-DNR-WRD and included in the draft SOP is 15 Mar – 15 May. AW&FF recommended that operations be scheduled as early in that period as possible, since fish spawn typically occurs earlier in the shallow water areas located on the Alabama side of the lake.

The proposed fish spawn operations period for West Point Lake is 01 April – 01 June. GA-DNR-WRD recommends that operations be scheduled as early in April as possible.

Memphis noted that keeping the staggered operations periods as they are is preferable to scheduling several to occur at the same time, due to possible conflicts with competing water management goals on a system-wide basis. Efforts would likely be directed to complete fish spawn operations as soon as possible on Lake Seminole and Walter F. George Lake so that there will be more flexibility in managing for river stages on the Apalachicola River.

Jerry Fulton noted that at Lake Lanier, releases in support of DO levels on the Chattahoochee River below Buford Dam would likely have higher priority over any releases to maintain river levels in support of fish spawn on the Chattahoochee River. Such actions would be coordinated with the GA-DNR-WRD staff responsible for Lake Lanier.

Coordination during 2004 will include the above recommendations as much as possible. Weekly updates will be forwarded to the agency POCs following the weekly Wednesday water management meetings. In the event there are conditions that would deviate from the management goals or alternative operations are proposed due to possible conflicts with other project purposes, then email or telephone coordination will be completed with the appropriate fish management agencies in accordance with the language in the draft revision to the SOP.

The Corps' water management website home page contains a link to a table containing information on the status of fish spawn operations. This table will be updated for the 2004 fish spawn operations. [The website address is: http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/; click on Water Levels; and then click on Fish Spawn Status.]

6. Recommendations for Final Language in Revised SOP. The revised SOP must be approved at the South Atlantic Division Office before it can be finalized and formally implemented. CESAD had recommended consideration of a revision to the Division Regulation rather than granting a waiver to approve the Mobile District SOP (a waiver would be required to eliminate temperature monitoring as the determiner of the fish spawn operation period rather than operating during established timeframes). Mobile District had consulted with Savannah District, who prefers to maintain their operations based on temperature monitoring. Therefore, Gary Mauldin said that CESAM will likely approve the SOP under a waiver. Joanne suggested a change in wording as discussed during the 2003 annual coordination meeting, which would define the river management goal of providing relatively stable or gradually declining river stages (no more than ½ foot drop per

day), as distinguished from the reservoir goal of providing stable or rising lake levels (no more than ½ foot drawdown during the fish spawn operations period). USFWS agreed the proposed change in wording would be appropriate.

A copy of the proposed final draft language for the revised SOP is attached. Agency comments should be provided NLT than 1 March 2004. The revised SOP would then be finalized and forwarded to CESAD for approval.

7. Update to Agency POC s for 2004. Attached is the updated POC list which will be used for agency coordination during 2004. Any additional updates or changes should be provided to Mobile District as soon as possible. Mobile District POC for agency coordination during fish spawn operations is Matt Lang, (251) 694-3837, Email: matthew.j.lang@sam.usace.army.mil.

/s/

JOANNE BRANDT
Compliance Manager
Inland Environment Team

Enclosures
Agenda
3 Presentations (Brandt/Vaughan/Ziewitz)
Updated POC list
Revised Draft SOP 1130-2-9

Copies furnished:
Jerry Ziewitz/Gail Carmody/USFWS/Panama City, FL
Alice Palmer/Sandra Tucker/USFWS/Athens, GA
Larry Goldman/USFWS/Daphne, AL
Ray Aycock/USFWS/Jackson, MS
Mike Newman/Nick Nichols/Chris Greene/Damon Abernethy/Jon Hornsby/AW&FF
Rick Long/Ted Hoehn/Charlie Mesing/FFWCC
Brent Hess/Russ Ober/Rob Weller/Wayne Probst/Reggie Weaver/Jeff Durniak/Les Ager/David Partridge/GA-DNR-WRD
Gary Mauldin/CESAD-CM-PE
Chris Smith/CESAD-MT-E
Jonathon Davis/CESAD-CM-OC
Jerry Fulton/Pat Taylor/Irwin Topper/CESAM-OP-SL
Don Morgan/Bill Bond/Les Brusse/CESAM-OP-LS
Eddie Sosebee/Ron Puhr/CESAM-OP-AC-WFG
Mike Treherne/Bob Chitwood/CESAM-OP-WP
Eric Petersen/CESAM-OP-AL
Jack Huntley/CESAM-OP-OL

CESAM-PD-EI 17 February 2004
SUBJECT: Annual Coordination Meeting, Reservoir Water Management Operations in Support of Fish Management, 12 February 2004, Bainbridge, Georgia

Memphis Vaughan/Cheryl Hrabovsky/Bob Allen/Charlie Yanny/Amber Houston/ CESAM-EN-HW
Matt Lang/Diane Findley/CESAM-PD-EI
Ken Day/CESAM-OP-TR
John Anderson/CESAM-OP-T
Paul Bradley/CESAM-OP-TN
Carl Dyess/CESAM-OP-D
Terry Jangula/CESAM-OP-GE
Leon Cromartie/CESAM-OP-TH
Pat Robbins/CESAM-DX
Janet Shelby/CESAM-PA

Annual Coordination Meeting
Reservoir Operations in Support of Fish Management
12 February 2004
1:00 p.m. EST

AGENDA

Introductions

Background on Proposed Revision/Update to Mobile District SOP

Summary of Fish Spawn Operations in 2003

Outlook for 2004

- Anticipated Hydrological Conditions
- Fish Management Concerns

Recommendations for Fish Management Operations in 2004

Recommendations for Final Language in Revised SOP

Update Agency POCs for 2004

Other Discussion ???

ADJOURN

Annual Coordination Meeting Water Management Operations in Support of Fish Management

12 February 2004

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State Fishery Agencies

Update/Revision of Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, Fish Spawn Policy

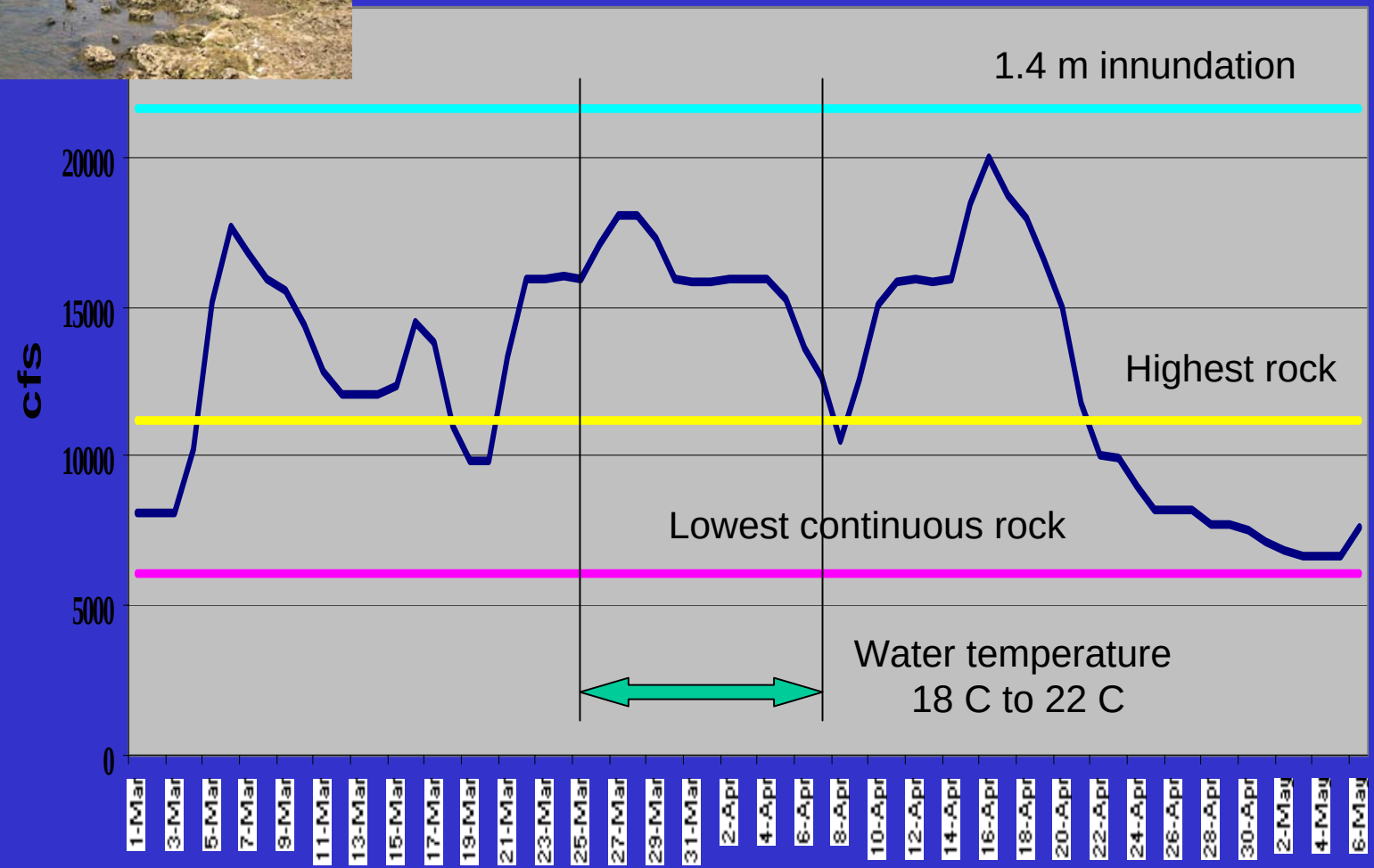
- Corps SAD Division Regulation for Reservoir Operations for Fish Management Purposes
- Mobile District SOP 1130-2-9 implements the Division regulation
  - Reservoirs held stable or rising during fish spawn
  - Levels may fall no more than 6 inches during 4 to 6 week spawning period
- Mobile District does a very good job operating to assist reservoir fish spawn
- However, fish spawn on the Apalachicola River has been impacted by adverse fluctuations in flow or sustained low flows during drought conditions


Exposed Redbreast nests Spring 2000 & 2002. (photo 4/25/02, stage 3.94/8174 cfs)


APR 27 2003


APR 27 2003

Woodruff Discharge 3/1 to 5/6 2002



Background: Corps met with USFWS and FWCC in Aug 2002

- Identified Apalachicola River fishery needs related to flows
- Identified water management operational constraints and conflicts with reservoir fishery needs
- USFWS agreed to facilitate discussions with fishery biologists from all States (AL, FL, GA) to balance reservoir and riverine needs.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve interagency communications
- Balance impacts/benefits of fish spawn operations on reservoir and riverine habitats
- Develop new coordination protocol and update/revise SAM SOP 1130-2-9 (project operations) for “sharing” impacts to fish during low flow periods

Alternatives Considered

- Include Apalachicola River spawning needs in water management considerations
- Replace temperature monitoring with 8-week spawning period for each project
- Attempt to provide 4 to 6 weeks of stable or rising levels during spawning period
- Provide more flexibility in water management operations in order to balance reservoir and riverine needs
- Include fish management agencies in water management decisions to balance system impacts

Status of Update/Revision to SOP

- 24 Sep 02 — USFWS facilitated meeting with Corps and State agencies
- 27 Nov 02 — Strawman update to SAM SOP forwarded for agency review
- 4 Dec 02 — Follow-on facilitated workshop to discuss SOP with agencies
- 20 Feb 03 — Pre-spawning agency meeting to work out details of SOP and discuss operations in Spring 2003
- 12 Feb 04 — Finalize SOP Language !!

Elements of the “Strawman” SOP

- Establish dates for Spawning Periods for each reservoir project and the Apalachicola River
- Discontinue temperature monitoring
- Operate to provide relative stable or rising lake levels for approximately 4 to 6 weeks during spawning period
- Operate to provide relative stable or gradually declining (less than ½ foot/day) on Apalachicola River during spawning period
- Coordination meeting each February to set priorities for operations during upcoming spring – improve communications during spawning periods

Proposed Fish Spawn Operation Dates*

• Allatoona Lake	15 Mar – 15 May
• Okatibbee Lake	01 Apr – 01 Jun
• Lake Seminole	01 Mar – 01 May
• Walter F. George Lake	15 Mar – 15 May
• West Point Lake	01 Apr – 01 Jun
• Lake Sidney Lanier	01 Apr – 01 Jun
• Apalachicola River	01 Apr – 01 Jun

* Fish Spawn Operations would be scheduled for an approximately 4 to 6 week timeframe during the established spawning periods

http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/

Click on Water Levels; Click on Fish Spawn Status

2003 FISH SPAWN

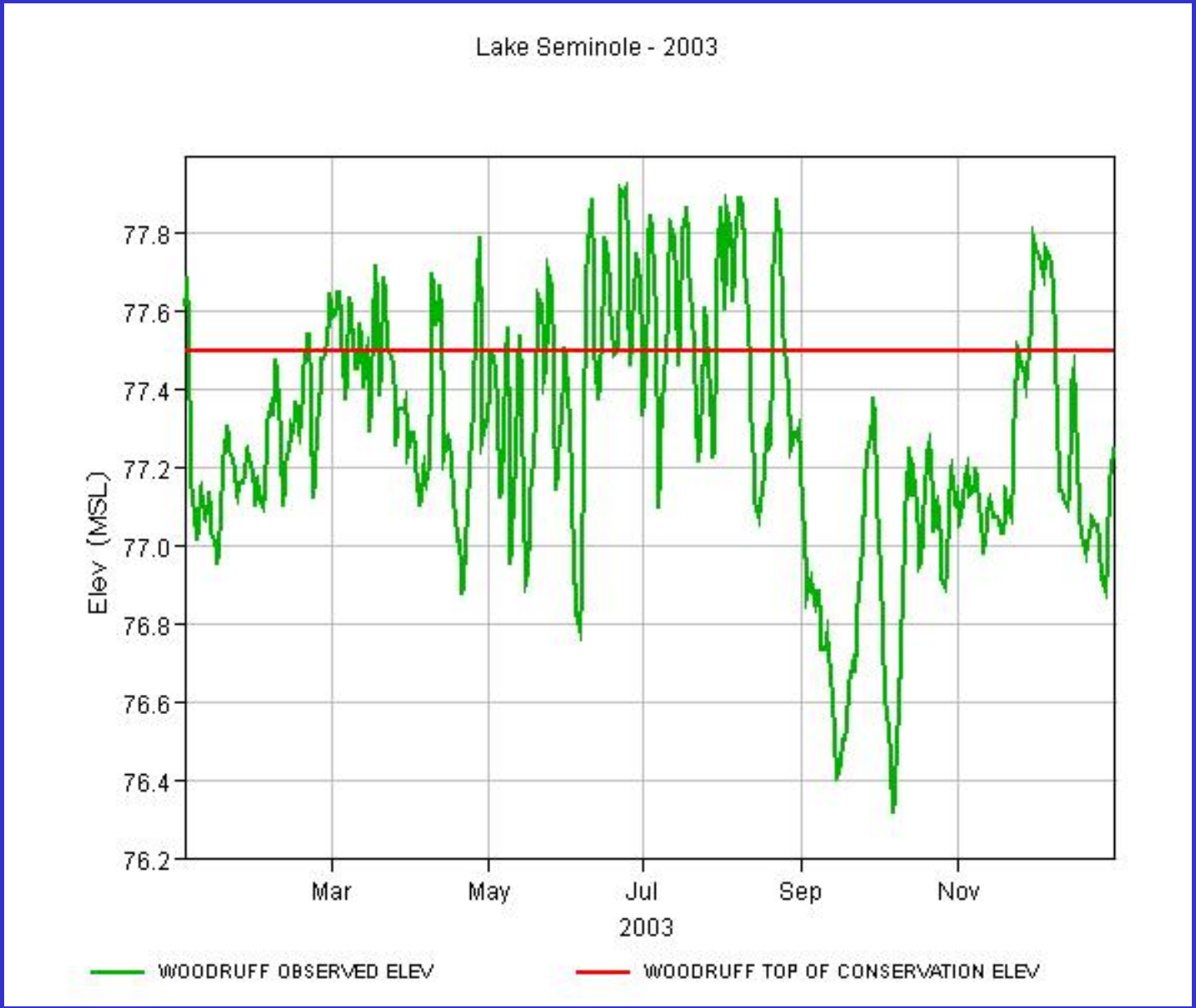
PROJECT	STARTING DATE	STARTING ELEVATION	CRITICAL ELEVATION	ENDING DATE *	EXPECTED START DATE/ CURRENT STATUS
LANIER	01-Apr	1071.8	1071.3	29-Apr	Extended to 5/7
WEST POINT	01-Apr	632.10	631.6	29-Apr	Extended to 5/7
GEORGE	15-Mar	188.5	188.0	12-Apr	Completed
SEMINOLE	05-Mar	77.5	77.0	02-Apr	Completed
APALACHICOLA RIVER	02-Apr	11.0	1/2 drop/day**	30-Apr	Extended to 5/7
ALLATOONA	24-Mar	835	834.5	21-Apr	Extended to 5/7
OKATIBBEE	28-Mar	342.2	341.7	25-Apr	Extended to 5/7

*Ending date indicates the 4 week minimal period that the lakes and river will be operated for spawn.

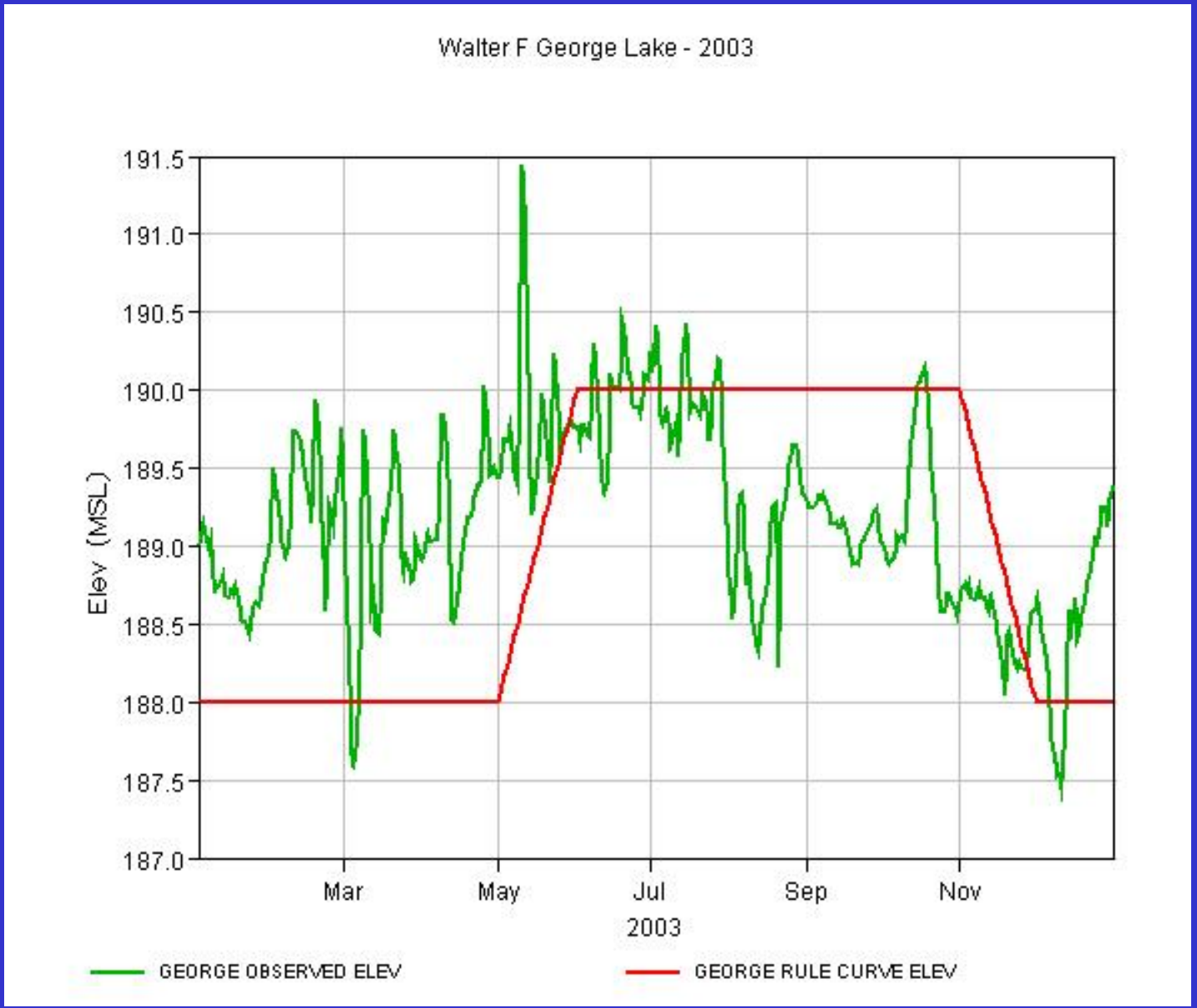
**When releases of 20,000 cfs or lower are made from Woodruff Dam, the target reduction of stages at the Blountstown gage will be 1/2 foot per day. At higher flows, the daily rate of reduction in the stage may be higher.

Return to Water Management Main Page

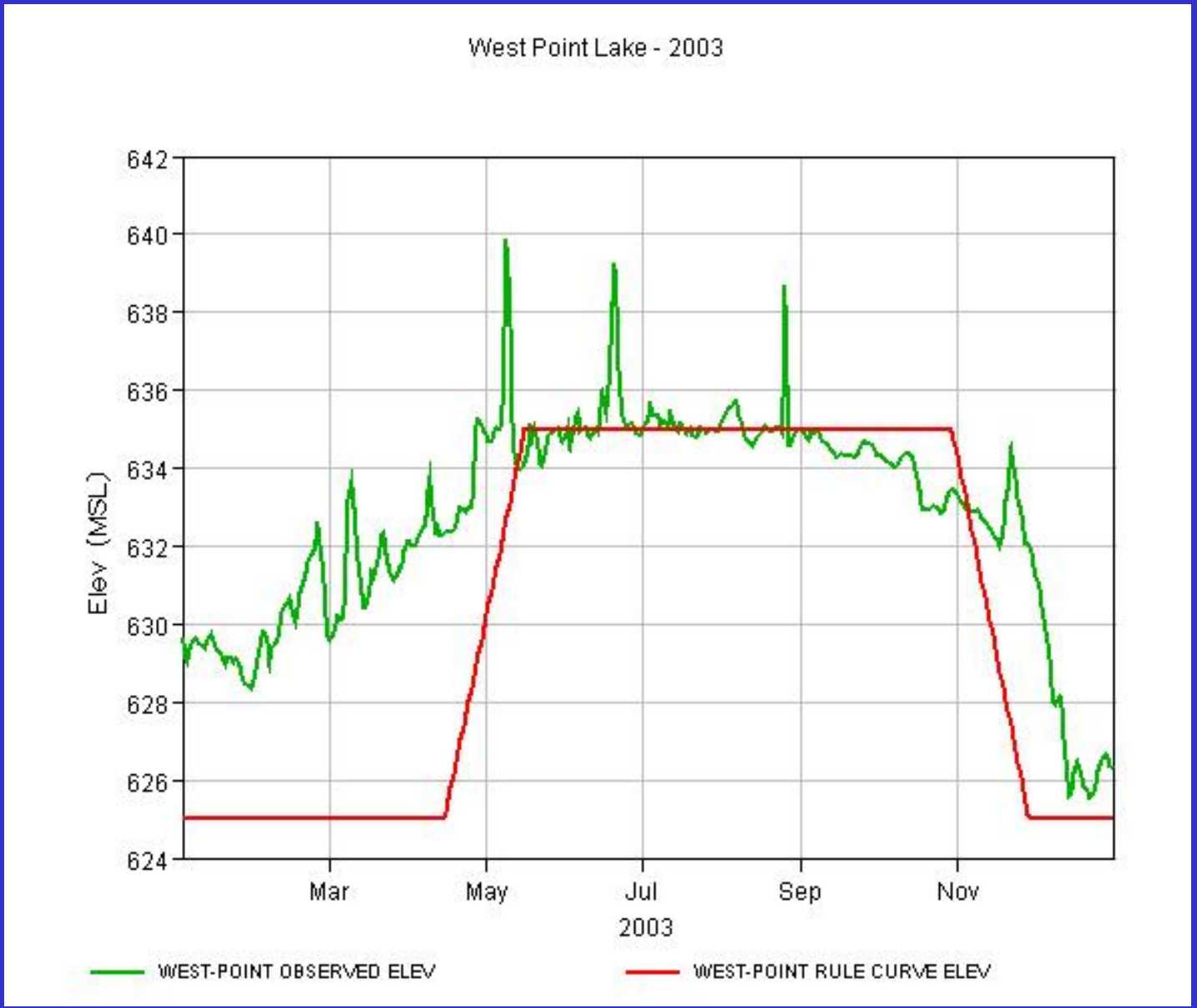
Spawning Period: 01 March – 01 May



Spawning Period: 15 March – 15 May



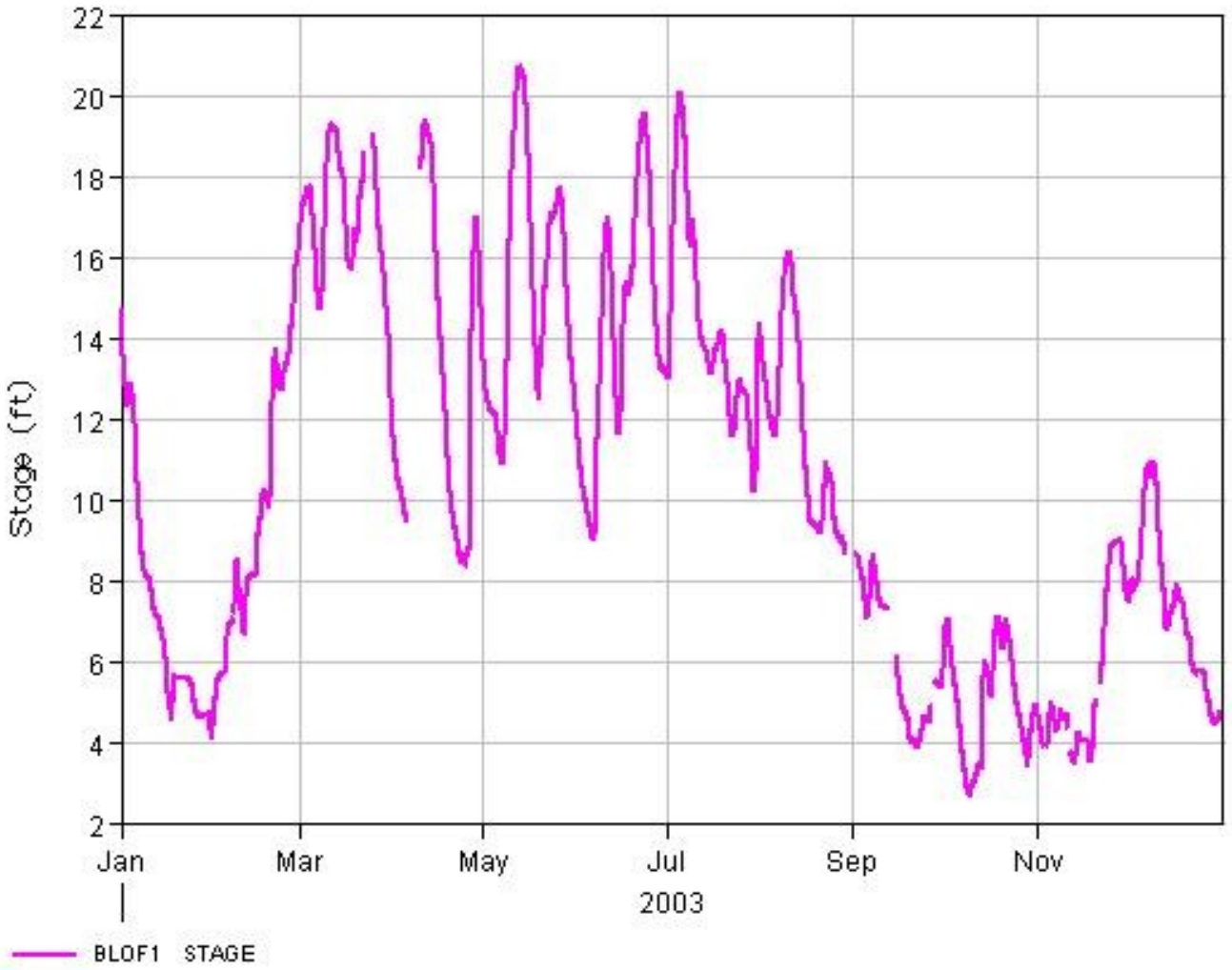
Spawning Period: 01 April – 01 June



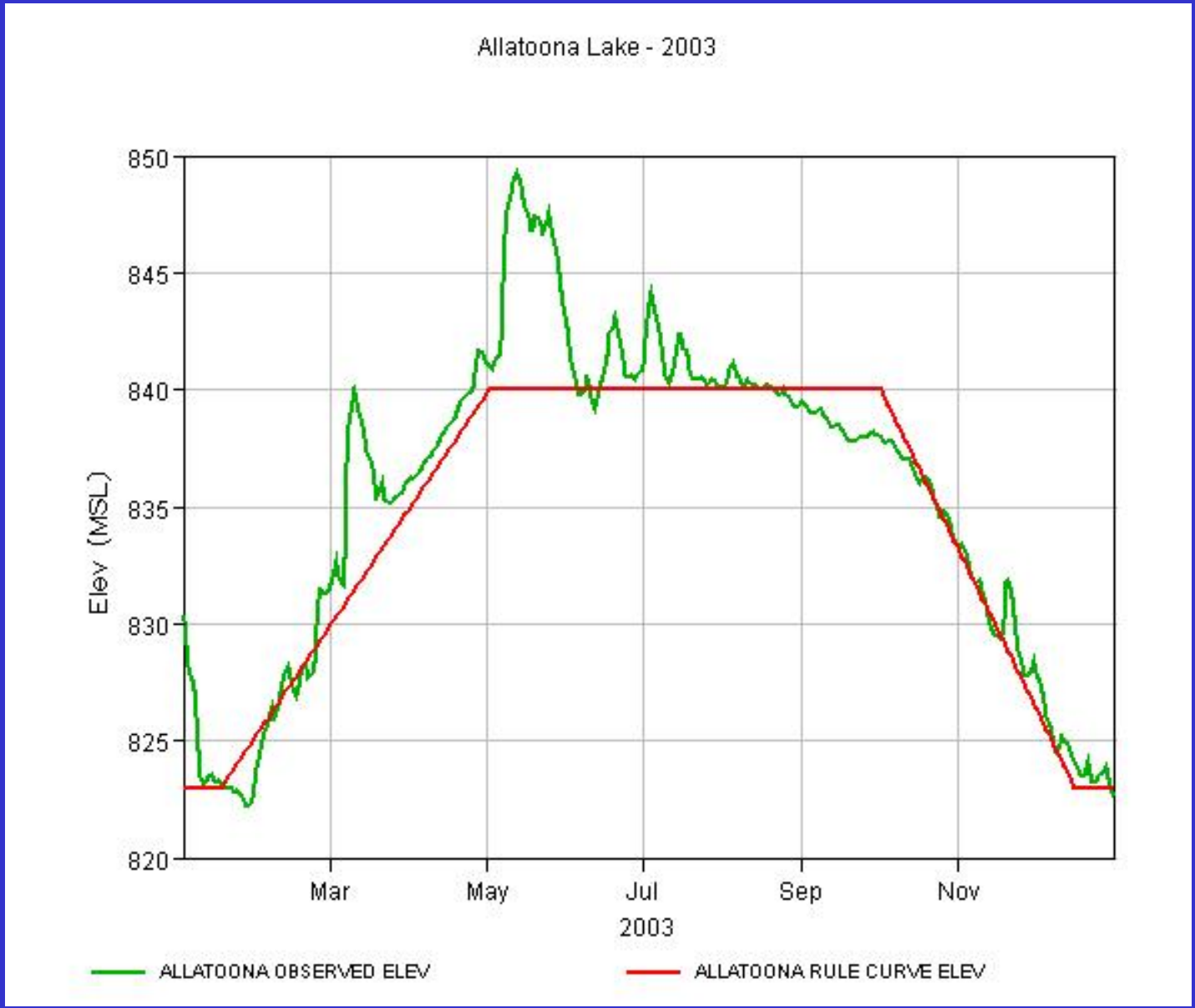
Spawning Period: 01 April – 01 June

Spawning Period: 01 April – 01 June

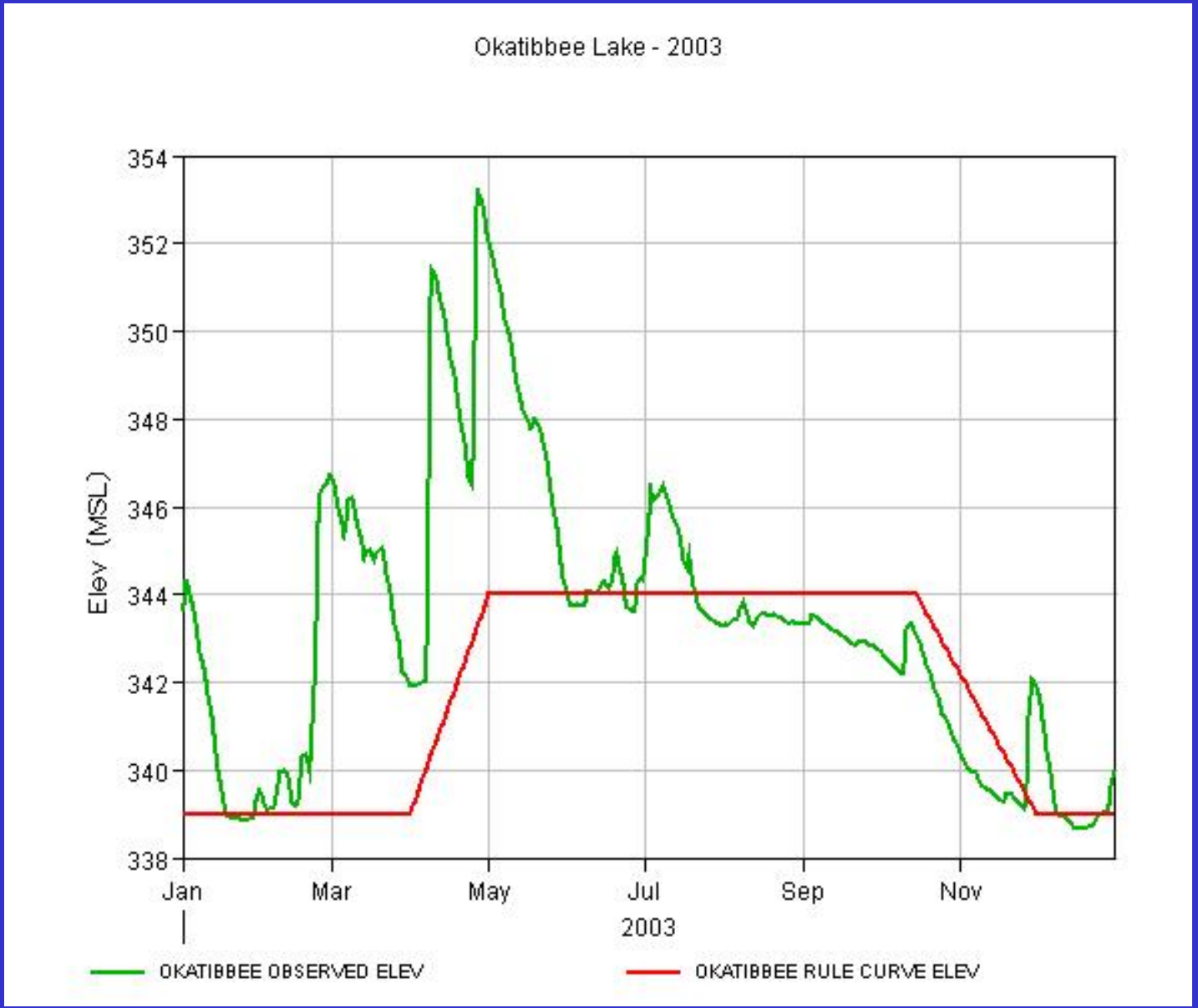
Apalachicola River at Blountstown



Spawning Period: 15 March – 15 May



Spawning Period: 1 April – 1 June



2003 Stepdown Operations at Blountstown Gage

	Number of Days Exceeding Drawdown		
	-0.5 ft	-1.0 ft	-1.5 ft
Entire Year	105 Days	41 Days	14 Days
Blountstown <9 ft	35 Days	3 Days	0 Days

Things to Consider During Stepdown Operations

- Head Limits at Woodruff Dam and upstream dams (Andrews & George)
- Limited Storage at Woodruff Dam
- Level of Upstream Reservoirs
- Travel time of Releases from George Dam
- Manually operated gates that require personnel to be called out at night
- Rainfall Forecasts
- Flint River Flows

Target Flows for US Fish and Wildlife

- 18,000 cfs for April, 12,000 cfs for May

Concerns

April and May are months that conditions are transitioning from wet to dry

Determining when a dry period is in effect

Lakes are in refill mode

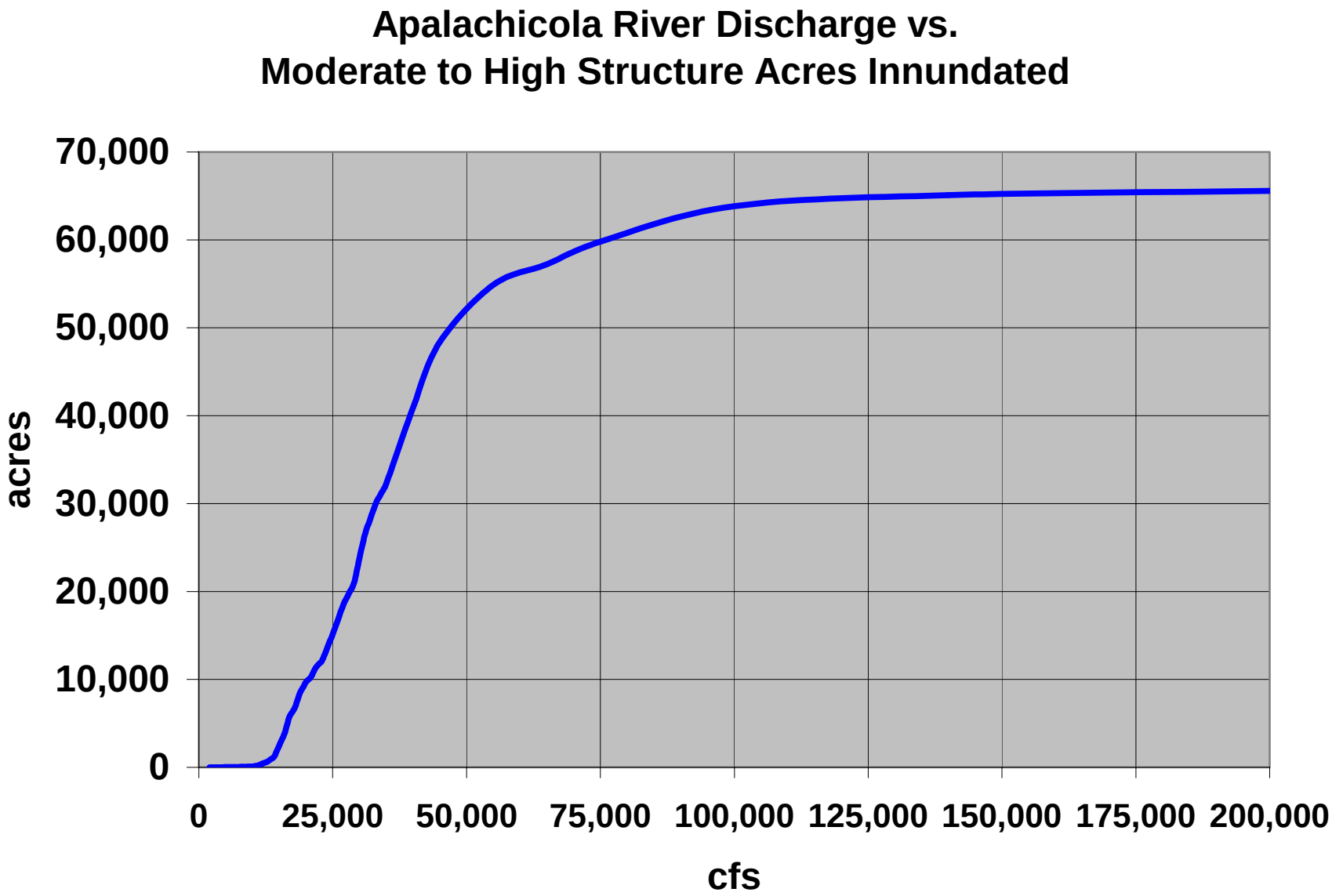
Target Flows for US Fish and Wildlife

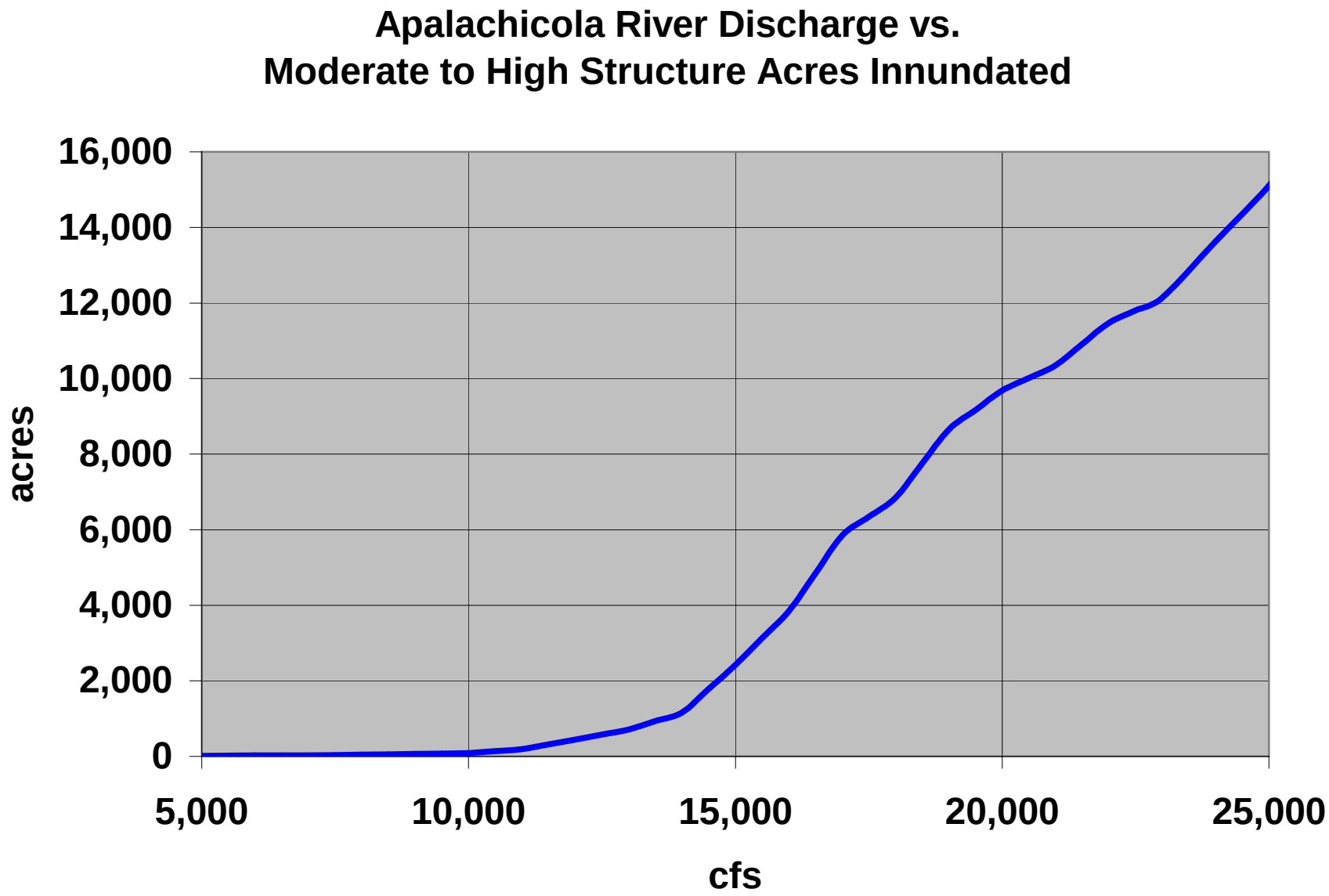
Possible Indicators

Total Basin Inflow

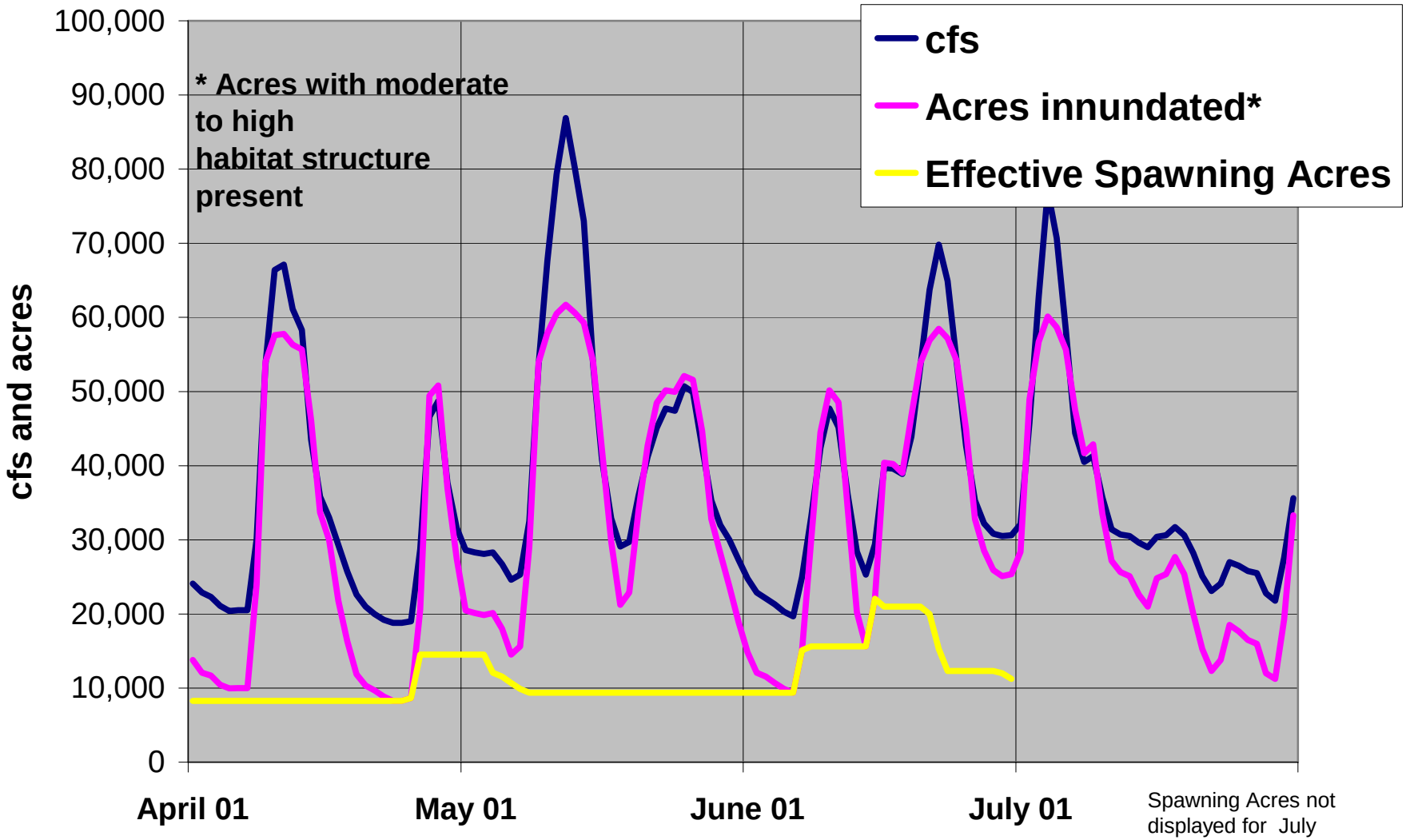
Action Zones at Lanier, West Point & George

Average Daily Inflow by Month

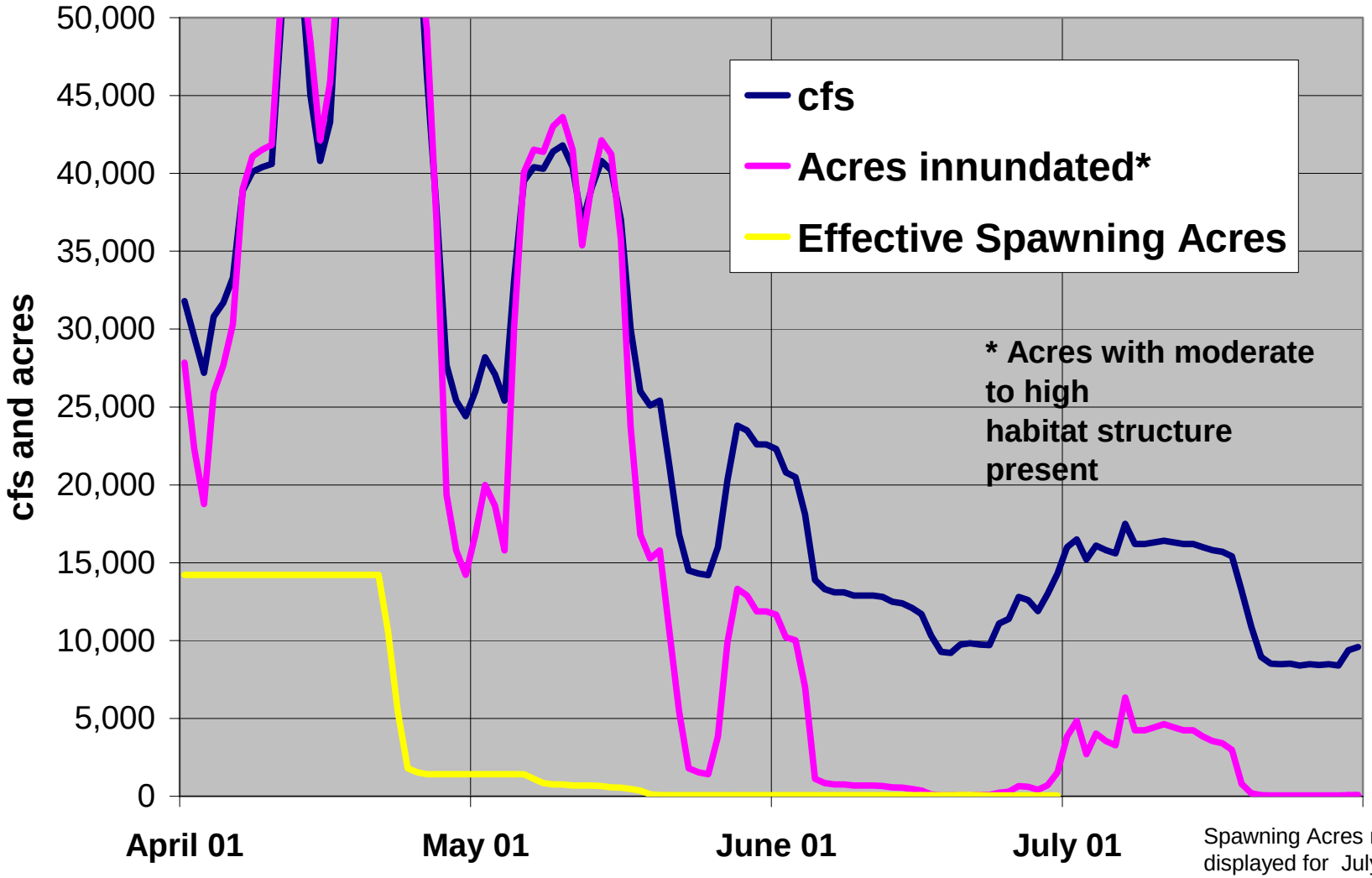

Apalachicola River Discharge vs.
Moderate to High Structure Acres Innundated
70,000
60,000
50,000
40,000
30,000
20,000
10,000
0
acres
0
25,000
50,000
75,000
100,000
125,000
150,000
175,000
200,000
cfs

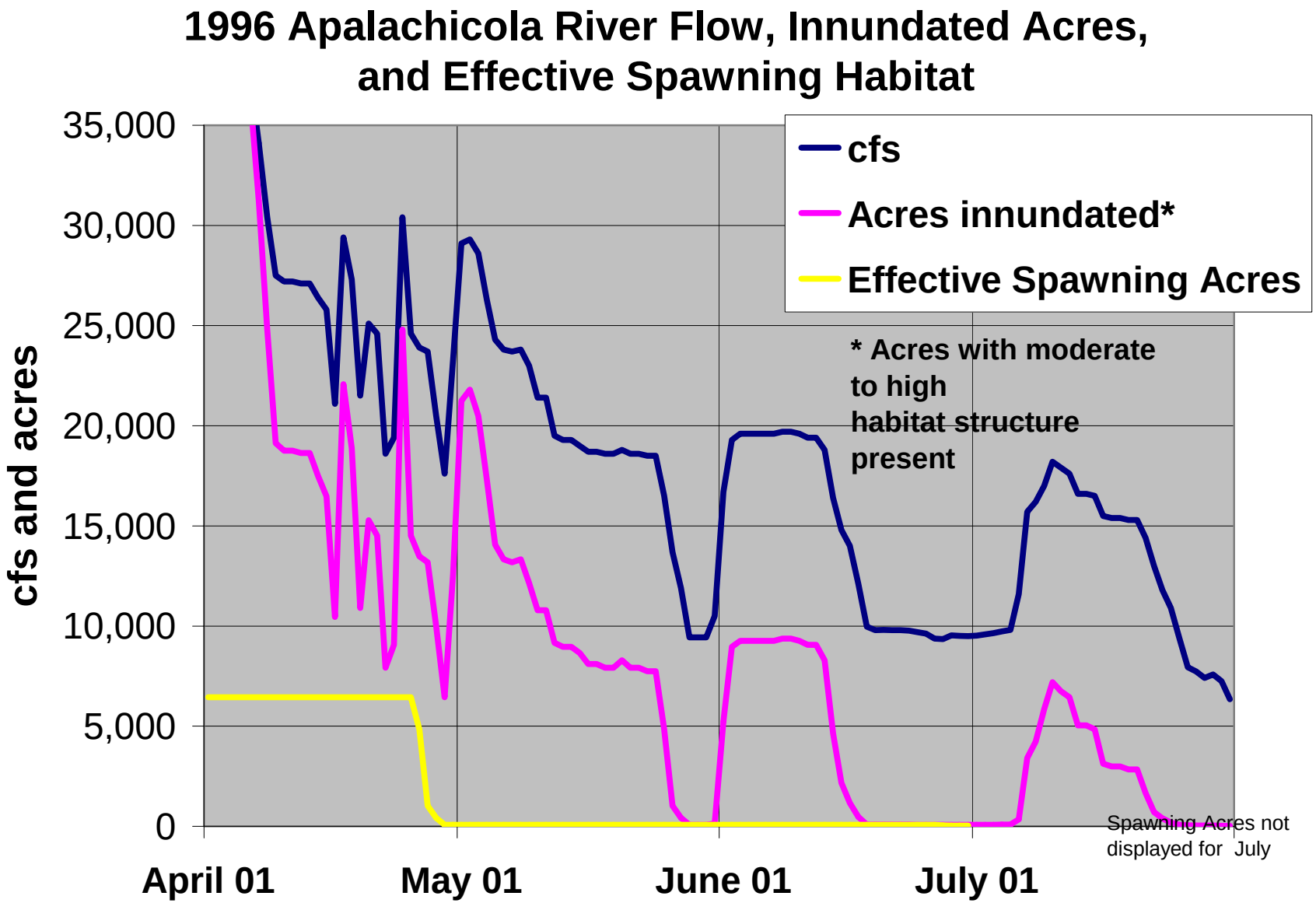

Apalachicola River Discharge vs.
Moderate to High Structure Acres Innundated
16,000
14,000
12,000
10,000
8,000
6,000
4,000
2,000
0
acres
5,000
10,000
15,000
20,000
25,000
cfs

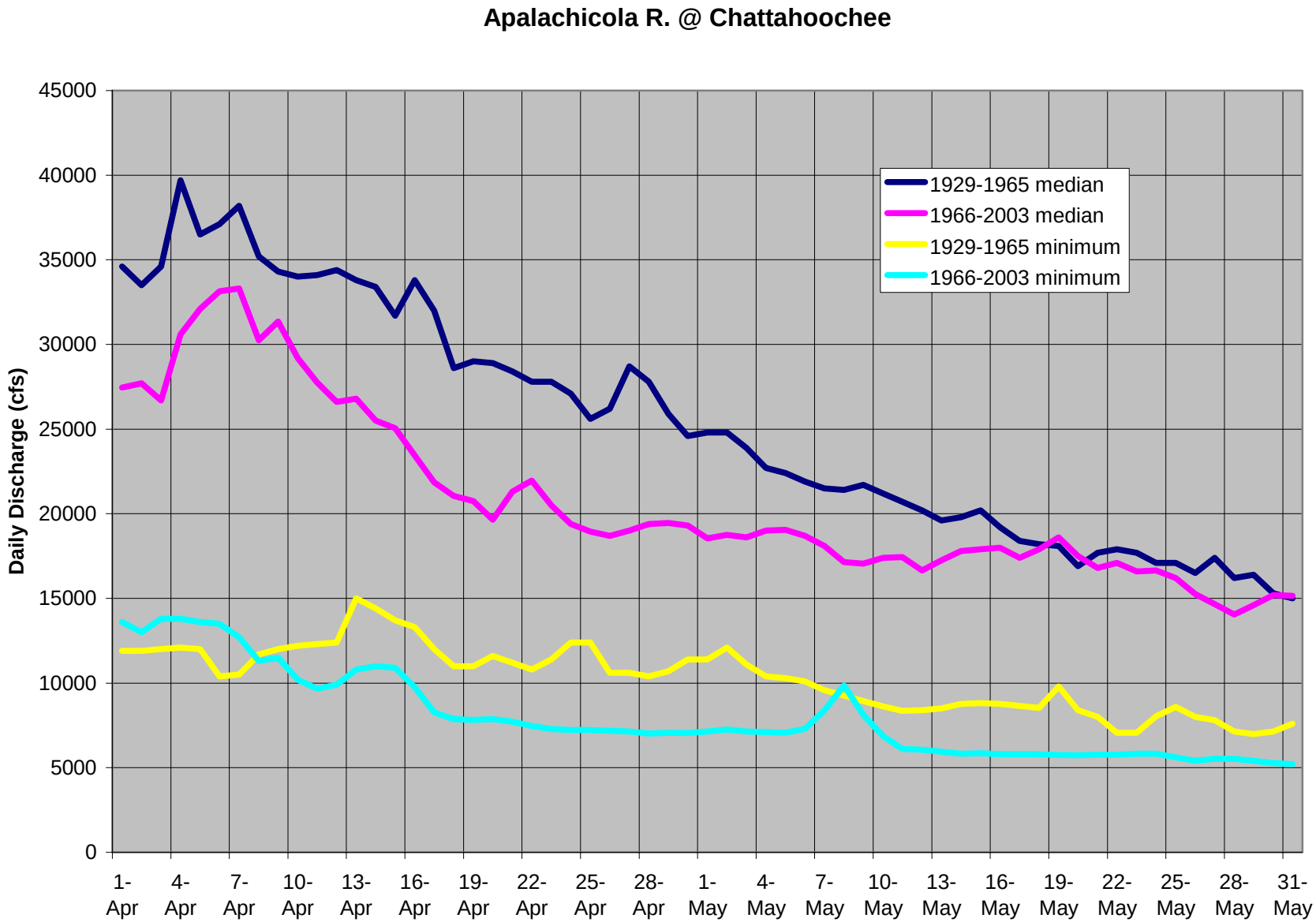
2003 Apalachicola River Flow, Innundated Acres, and Effective Spawning Habitat



1998 Apalachicola River Flow, Innundated Acres, and Effective Spawning Habitat




1996 Apalachicola River Flow, Innundated Acres, and Effective Spawning Habitat
cfs and acres
35,000
30,000
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
April 01
May 01
June 01
July 01
cfs
Acres innundated*
Effective Spawning Acres
* Acres with moderate to high habitat structure present
Spawning Acres not displayed for July


Apalachicola R. @ Chattahoochee
Daily Discharge (cfs)
45000
40000
35000
30000
25000
20000
15000
10000
5000
0
1929-1965 median
1966-2003 median
1929-1965 minimum
1966-2003 minimum
1-Apr
4-Apr
7-Apr
10-Apr
13-Apr
16-Apr
19-Apr
22-Apr
25-Apr
28-Apr
1-May
4-May
7-May
10-May
13-May
16-May
19-May
22-May
25-May
28-May
31-May

Points of Contact for Fish Management Operations Coordination
SAM SOP 1130-2-9

Allatoona:	Georgia contact:	Wayne Probst	Phone: 706-624-1161 Email: wayne_probst@mail.dnr.state.ga.us
	USFWS contacts:	Alice Palmer	Phone: (706) 613-9493 , Ext. 26 Email: alice_palmer@fws.gov
		Larry Goldman	Phone: 251-441-5181 Email: larry_goldman@fws.gov
Okatibbee:	Mississippi contact	Tom Holman	Phone: 601-859-3521 Email: tcubedh@aol.com
	USFWS contact:	Ray Aycock	Phone: 601-321-1122 Email: ray_aycock@fws.gov?
Lanier:	Georgia contact:	Reggie Weaver	Phone: 770-535-5498 Email: reggie_weaver@mail.dnr.state.ga.us
		Jeff Durniak	Phone: 770-535-5498 Email: jeff_durniak@mail.dnr.state.ga.us
	USFWS contacts:	Alice Palmer	Phone: (706) 613-9493 , Ext. 26 Email: alice_palmer@fws.gov
		Jerry Ziewitz	Phone: 850-769-0552, Ext. 223 Email: jerry_ziewitz@fws.gov
West Point:	Georgia contact:	Les Ager	Phone: 478-825-6151 Email: lager@cstel.net
		Brent Hess	Phone: 706-845-4180 Email: brent_hess@mail.dnr.state.ga.us
		Jimmy Evans	Phone: 478-825-6151 Email: jimmyevans@cstel.net
	Alabama contact:	Chris Greene	Phone: 334-242-3628 Email: cgreene@dcnr.state.al.us
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Mobile District, Corps of Engineers
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Project Operations
~~LAKE~~ RESERVOIR REGULATIONS AND COORDINATION FOR FISH MANAGEMENT PURPOSES

1. Purpose. To provide a standing operating procedure (SOP) to be followed by ~~OP-TR, PD-EI, EN-HW, PA~~Mobile District staff and selected ~~Mobile District~~ Operations Division field offices to implement South Atlantic Division Regulation DR 1130-2-16, Project Operations, Lake Regulation and Coordination for Fish Management Purposes, dated 30 March 2001. South Atlantic Division DR 1130-2-16 primarily targets largemouth bass with special management considerations allowed to fulfill specific stewardship objectives identified by the sState fisheries agencies. Management considerations for the Apalachicola River below Jim Woodruff Dam for Gulf sturgeon and sunfish spawning as well as forage fish (shad) within the lakes have also been identified by sState fishery agencies for operational management considerations. This SOP removes the requirement for temperature monitoring to identify peak fish spawning activities and instead identifies designated periods of time within which fish spawn operations will be conducted at specific projects. ~~-~~The SOP also establishes protocols for coordination between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), State fisheries personnel, and the Corps. The SOP provides for development of an annual plan for special water management operations by the Corps, in coordination with the FWS and the State fisheries agencies, that would balance impacts and benefits to both reservoir and riverine fisheries during the spring fish spawning period. This SOP is intended to benefit multiple sport fish and forage fish species having similar spawning habits. In most water years it will not be possible to hold both reservoir levels and river stages at a steady or rising level for the entire spawning period, especially when upstream reservoirs and/or the Apalachicola River spawning periods overlap. Droughts and floods within the basin also present specific water management challenges. During the spawning period applicable to each water body (paragraph 4(c)), the Corps shall operate for generally stable or rising ~~lake~~ reservoir levels ~~and river levels~~, in accordance with the guidance of DR 1130-2-16, and generally stable or gradually declining river stages on the Apalachicola River, for ~~an~~ approximately 4 to 6 weeks ~~period~~ during the designated spawning period for the specified project area. Generally stable or rising levels are defined as not lowering the reservoir ~~lake or river~~ levels by more than 6 inches, with the base elevation generally adjusted upward as levels rise due to increased inflows or refilling of the reservoir. Generally stable or gradually declining river stages are defined as ramping down of ½ foot per day or less. When ~~this~~ these management goals are~~is~~ not possible, ~~-imposes~~ an unreasonable compromise to other project purposes, or would conflict with other fish management concerns within the basin, the Corps shall consult

with the State fishery agencies and the FWS on balancing of needs within the system and minimizing the impacts of fluctuating ~~lake~~ reservoir or river levels. Modifications to fish spawn operations could include readjusting the base elevation for fish spawn operation purposes at a particular project, allowing a rapid lowering in elevation back to the base elevation or a readjusted elevation following a flood event, or other operational adjustments recommended by the interagency team to minimize impacts and/or enhance system-wide benefits. The Corps shall also consult with the State fishery agencies and the FWS on water management operations that would minimize fishery impacts and balance needs throughout the system for the remaining portions of the fish spawn periods. The Corps shall schedule management responsibilities that conflict with operating for stable or rising ~~lake~~ reservoir levels or relatively stable river stages outside the fish spawning period to the extent practicable, consistent with other applicable laws and regulations.

2. Applicability. This SOP applies to the operation of Allatoona Lake, Lake Seminole, Okatibbee Lake, Lake Sidney Lanier, Walter F. George Lake, West Point Lake, and the Apalachicola River. Mobile District staffs in OP, PD-EI, EN-HW, and PA are involved in the successful implementation of this SOP.

3. References.

a. Required. ER 1130-2-540, Chapter 2, Natural Resources Stewardship.

b. Required, DR 1130-2-16, Lake Regulation and Coordination for Fish Management Purposes.

c. Related. DR 1130-2-18, Preparation of Operational Management Plan at Civil Works Water Resources Projects.

d. Related. ER 1130-2-550, Chapter 3, Project Master Plans and Operational Management Plans. EO12962, Recreational Fisheries, 7 June 1995.

4. Procedures.

a. OP-TR will forward a memorandum to appropriate field offices during February each year to inform project staffs of any changes in reporting procedures and to alert them to the upcoming spawning season.

b. In February of each year OP-TR, PD-EI, and EN-HW will meet with the fisheries biologists from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and the FWS to discuss projected spring and summer trends, anticipated hydrological conditions within the basin, success of the past year's fish spawn, and ways to balance fisheries priorities between ~~lake~~ reservoir and river systems during the upcoming spawning season. An imbalance of prey and forage fish could occur following the second or third year of poor or unsuccessful spawning and recruitment, leading to poor sport fishing. Areas where the

spawns were recently unsuccessful should be given higher priority for fish management operations under low water conditions.

c. The periods in which the Corps shall operate the reservoirs to achieve the purpose of this SOP are as follows:

Water Body	Principal Fish Spawning Period for Operational Consideration
Allatoona Lake	15 March – 15 May
Lake Seminole	01 March – 01 May
Okatibbee Lake	01 April – 01 June ~~??[Based on previous temperature data]~~
Lake Sidney Lanier	01 April – 01 June
Walter F. George Lake	15 March – 15 May
West Point Lake	01 April – 01 June
Apalachicola River	01 April – 01 June

d. Project personnel shall contact local State fisheries management personnel prior to the initiation of the identified spawning period and keep in close contact with them throughout the spawning period. Information regarding the actual progress of fish spawn (i.e., has started, is in progress, is in peak, or has ended) should be relayed by project personnel to the Mobile District Office through OP-TR, and reported to EN-HW and PD—EI during the weekly water management meetings.

e. EN-HW will consider hydrologic conditions within the basin, recommendations from the State fisheries management agencies and FWS, and status of fish spawn at other locations within the basin to schedule fish spawn operations for each project area (reservoir or river system) within the basin. The goal will be to provide generally stable or rising levels on the reservoirs or generally stable and/or gradually declining river stages on the Apalachicola River for ~~an~~ approximately 4 to 6 weeks ~~period~~ during the spawning period identified for each water body. Efforts to minimize fishery impacts and balance fishery resource and other project needs within the basin during the remaining portions of the spawning periods will also consider recommendations from the State fishery management agencies and FWS. A summary of the status of fish spawn operations at each project (including date and elevation at initiation and completion of fish spawn operations) will be posted on the Mobile District Water Management website.

f. EN-HW will notify the PA office when fish spawning season begins and will invite PA to specific weekly water management meetings when important decisions having public impact are likely to be made. PA will advise the news media within 24 hours of notification of any specific water management actions that are potentially detrimental to the fish spawn, including an explanation of the reasons for the water management actions.

g. OP-TR will maintain an updated list of State and FWS fisheries biologists for the lake and river projects. OP-TR personnel will attend weekly water management meetings during the spawning period relay pertinent information relating to the status of

fish spawn or other fish management concerns to EN-HW, PD-EI and PA, and send weekly, either by e-mail or telephone, water conditions data to appropriate state and FWS fisheries personnel. OP-TR and PD-EI will consult telephonically with State and FWS fisheries personnel as necessary. Any significant decisions based on the weekly water management meetings will also be relayed telephonically or by email to State fisheries personnel, FWS, project personnel, and CESAD-CM-OC personnel by OP-TR. PD-EI will advise any environmental groups or other interested stakeholder groups of the proposed action. At the conclusion of the spawning period, OP-TR will forward a summary report of the annual fish spawn operations to State fisheries management agencies, FWS, and CESAD-CM-OC, with a copy to PD-EI.

j. OP-TR, EN-HW, PD-EI and PA will coordinate directly with each other or call additional meetings as the need arises.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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