

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
South Atlantic Division, Corps of Engineers
Room 9M15, 60 Forsyth Street, S. W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8801

CESAD-CM-OC

Regulation
No. 1130-2-16

30 March 2001

Project Operation
LAKE REGULATION AND COORDINATION FOR FISH
MANAGEMENT PURPOSES

Supplementation of this regulation is permitted.
Furnish one copy of each supplement to CESAD-CM-OC.

1. Purpose. This regulation provides policy for administration of a water management program to balance the multiple resource management responsibilities of water resource projects during the fish-spawning season. This policy will establish priority for water level management to aid fish spawning for the purpose of maintaining balanced fish populations on Corps water resources projects within the South Atlantic Division. Stable lake levels should be maintained for approximately 4 to 6 weeks each spring. Under adverse conditions such as flood or drought, stable lake levels may not be possible. All other management responsibilities should be scheduled outside of the fish-spawning window.

2. Applicability. This regulation is applicable to the following lakes in the South Atlantic Division:

- a. Allatoona
- b. B. Everett Jordan
- c. Falls
- d. Hartwell
- e. J. Strom Thurmond
- f. John H. Kerr
- g. Okatibbee
- h. Philpott

* This regulation supersedes DR 1130-2-16, 1 April 1993.

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- i. Richard B. Russell
- j. Seminole
- k. Sidney Lanier
- l. Walter F. George
- m. West Point
- n. W. Kerr Scott

3. References

- a. Required. ER 1130-2-540, Chapter 2, Natural Resources Stewardship
- b. Related. ER 1130-2-550, Chapter 3, Project Master Plans and Operational Management Plans. EO 12962, Recreational Fisheries, 7 June 1995

4. Responsibilities

- a. District Engineer. The District Engineer is responsible for the required coordination among Water Management Personnel and Operations Personnel in preventing water level drawdowns during the fish spawning season.
- b. District Water Management and Operations Personnel. Water Management Personnel will give advance notice to Operations Personnel and the District Public Affairs Officer of any proposed water management action that may be perceived by the public and/or other stakeholders as detrimental to fish spawning success. Operations Personnel will immediately advise South Atlantic Division Operations Personnel and, within 24 hours of notification, advise state, federal, and local fish and wildlife and environmental groups, as applicable, of these proposed actions.
- c. District Public Affairs Officer. The District Public Affairs Officer will, within 24 hours of notification, through press releases or other necessary means advise the news media of specific water management actions that are potentially detrimental to the fish spawn. Reasons for the specific water management action should be clearly explained.

5. Procedures

- a. General. ER 1130-2-540 provides guidance for programs and activities related to environmental stewardship and the management of natural resources. The program objectives include management of natural resources on Corps of Engineers administered land and water in accordance with ecosystem management principles, to ensure their continued availability. Stewardship through natural resources management ensures the conservation, preservation or protection of natural resources for present and future generations. Maintaining stable water levels during the spring fish-spawning season is primarily targeted at largemouth bass. Largemouth bass are the primary predator in

southeastern reservoirs and achieving successful spawns is necessary to maintain desirable fish populations. Following the second or third year of poor or unsuccessful spawning, forage fish may become overpopulated creating species imbalance and resultant poor sport fishing due to the decrease in the number of largemouth bass growing into the larger, harvestable size classes.

b. Water Temperatures. Largemouth bass spawn during spring when water temperatures increase to approximately 65 degrees (18 degrees Celsius). Water temperature monitoring should begin during early spring as the lake water reaches 60 degrees Fahrenheit (16 degrees Celsius). The spawning period is best defined using water temperature data coupled with observation data provided by fishery professionals. However, if water temperature data is the only information available, the spawning period should be defined as beginning when water temperatures reach 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 degrees Celsius) until three (3) weeks after water temperatures reach 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees Celsius). Water temperatures should be taken each day throughout this period. The temperature readings should be taken in a sunny cove between 1000 and 1630 hours by submersing the thermometer six (6) inches deep where the water is approximately three (3) to five (5) feet deep.

c. Fish Spawning Observation. Water temperature data used for determining the spawning season will be supplemented with observation data provided by fishery professionals. Largemouth bass can often be observed on their nests during the spawning season. If lake conditions (water clarity, etc.) allow, qualified Project Natural Resources Management personnel or state fishery biologists may conduct visual surveys or fish sampling to determine when spawning begins or ends.

d. Lake Level Management. Project Natural Resources Management personnel, in cooperation with fishery personnel of the applicable state fishery agency, will advise District Water Management personnel of the beginning and ending of the spawning season. The District will have final authority in selecting an operational window to support the largemouth bass spawn. This operational window should be timed to coincide with the peak spawning period and should provide stable lake levels to prevent the stranding of eggs and abandonment of nests. Raising the water level a few feet during the spawning season does not impact bass spawning unless the water level is then lowered more than six (6) inches. Throughout the spawning season, water levels should never be lowered more than six (6) inches below the highest lake elevation recorded during the operational spawning window. If the high water level exceeds the normal summer pool elevation at the end of the spawning window, efforts must be made to adjust lake levels down to normal summer or conservation pool to prevent loss of shoreline vegetation. Loss of shoreline vegetation causes increased erosion, which reduces future spawning habitat.

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e. Special Management Considerations. Special management considerations may be required to fulfill specific stewardship objectives. Each District may implement modifications to water management during the spawning season when fish species other than largemouth bass are identified by state resources agencies as being a higher priority. When adopting special management considerations, individual water management plans should be developed in consultation with state fishery agencies on an annual basis.

f. Exceptions

(1) An exception to lake level management in paragraph 5.d. above may be made for the John H. Kerr Reservoir during years when downstream flows are supplemented for striped bass management providing storage for this purpose remains in the reservoir. Preference may be given to releases for maintaining the striped bass fishery downstream from the dam over that of largemouth bass spawning in the John H. Kerr Reservoir.

(2) An exception to the lake level management in paragraph 5.d. above may be made for Richard B. Russell Lake in order to maintain a minimum net head of 145 feet to provide designed hydropower capacity output.

6. Documentation. The actions required to implement this policy should be included in the Water Control Manual and the Project's Operational Management Plan (OMP).

FOR THE COMMANDER:



TERRY R. YOUNGBLUTH
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Deputy Commander