



# NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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## CORPS OF ENGINEERS SEEKS COMMENTS ON DROUGHT PLAN CHANGES

**SAVANNAH, Ga.** – The [Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), seeks public comments on a proposal to refine its Drought Contingency Plan for the Savannah River Basin during the most severe drought level. The Corps proposes to reduce outflows from the J. Strom Thurmond Dam from 3,600 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 3,100 cfs from Nov. 1 through Feb. 28 when reservoir levels reach drought Level 4. Comments are due by noon July 14, 2011.

The proposed change, outlined in a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), followed an evaluation of the Savannah District's current Drought Contingency Plan. The plan describes actions to be taken when the Corps three reservoirs on the upper Savannah River – [Thurmond Lake](#), [Russell Lake](#), and [Hartwell Lake](#) – reach the most severe drought level. The study resulted from the 2006 – 2009 severe drought in the basin which set records for low levels in these three reservoirs.

“We reviewed our actions during the recent drought to determine what parts of our Drought Contingency Plan needed refinement,” said [Col. Jeff Hall, Savannah District Commander](#). “This study helped us better understand the options we have and to identify priorities for the water that remains when the reservoirs are extremely low. The proposed change will give us more flexibility to conserve the remaining water in the reservoirs without additional adverse impacts on the environment both upstream and downstream.”

As part of the proposal, the Corps of Engineers would restore outflows to 3,600 cfs at the request of either the State of Georgia or South Carolina.

The Savannah District manages the Savannah River Basin as one system. The three reservoirs work together to provide flood risk management, water supply, water quality, recreation, hydropower, navigation, and environmental stewardship for users throughout the basin in Georgia and South Carolina.

Experts from the Corps of Engineers considered two alternatives in preparing the drafts. The first alternative retained the existing drought contingency plan for Level 4 which maintained 3,600 cfs discharge from the Thurmond Dam. The proposed alternative reduces outflows up to an additional 500 cfs for the coolest months when environmental impacts of further reduction would be insignificant.

They also considered a third, preliminary alternative of limiting outflows to the average inflow. An evaluation quickly eliminated this alternative because of its adverse impacts downstream on threatened and endangered species, water supply and water quality.

The Draft EA and FONSI is available online at <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/planning.html> or by calling 912-652-5690. Comments can be submitted electronically to [CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil](mailto:CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil) or by mail to US Army Corps of Engineers, Attn: PD, Savannah District, P.O. Box 889, Savannah GA 31402-0889. Comments must be received by noon July 14, 2011.

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' [Savannah District](#) manages [three lakes and hydroelectric dams](#) along the Savannah River. It also oversees a multi-billion dollar [military construction](#) program at 12 Army and Air Force installations in Georgia and North Carolina. Corps' projects range from barracks, hospitals and clinics to equipment shops, headquarters buildings and aircraft hangars. The Savannah District also has oversight and maintains additional civil works projects – from the Savannah and Brunswick harbors to the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.