

Questions and Answers Concerning the FONSI on Flow Reductions From Thurmond Dam

- Q1: How did you reach the conclusion that there would be no significant impacts? What did you review or research to reach this conclusion?
- A1: First we examined the proposal sent to us by the states of Georgia and South Carolina. The states had previously conducted modeling on flow reductions. We also conducted some modeling using our data. We also consulted with other federal resource agencies and reviewed comments from them. This led our specialists to the conclusion that there would be no significant impact to the environment caused by a reduction in outflows from 3,600 cfs to 3,100 cfs for the months of November 2008 through January 2009.**
- Q2: What major stakeholders on the Savannah River commented on the proposal to reduce flows from 3,600 cfs to 3,100 cfs?
- A2: We received comments from state and federal resource agencies which oversee various aspects of the environment. We also received comments from communities which draw from and/or discharge into the river system. Some of the Native American tribes also commented.**
- Q3: Were there any major objections to the proposal? By whom?
- A3: Some agencies cautioned that reducing the flow might have a negative impact and asked us to monitor the situation closely during flow reduction. We plan to use adaptive management so that we can increase the outflows quickly should that become necessary. *[If pressed: The Fish and Wildlife Service cautioned that the proposal was premature – that 3,600 cfs outflows would not deplete the reservoirs before the end of the drought. The NOAA Fisheries Service warned that extending the reduction into February might have a negative impact on shortnose sturgeon spawning. They left open the option of receiving more information on that possible impact before agreeing to extend the reduction through February.]***
- Q4: Why will this reduction only be for December and January? Initially you said through February. Why not year round?
- A4: The states of Georgia and South Carolina initially asked for a reduction from October 2008 through February 2009. The environmental assessment could not be completed and the reduction made before December. Keeping the flow low through February may have a negative impact on spawning for the shortnose sturgeon below Thurmond Dam. If subsequent observations indicate no significant impact to spawning, the reduction might continue through February 2009. Beginning in March 2009 potential impacts to spawning habitat would no longer be minor. After spawning season, water temperatures will rise enough to make flow reductions impractical due to low dissolved oxygen at the higher natural temperatures. Low DO can have a very negative impact on aquatic life.**
- Q5: What happens if you discover unanticipated negative impacts from the lower flow?
- A5: Specialists from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, other state and federal agencies, and the private sector, will all monitor the reduced flow for signs of**

unanticipated negative impacts. Under our adaptive management process we will be able to increase outflows should that become necessary.

Q6: Have you calculated the economic impacts of the low reservoir levels?

A6: We are currently working toward a study of economic impacts of low reservoir levels at Lake Hartwell in cooperation with local governments around that reservoir. Other studies will be needed throughout the basin to get a more complete assessment of these impacts.