



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

SAVANNAH DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 889  
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31402-0889

Mobile/Savannah  
Planning Center

**JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District,**  
**and the**  
**Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division,**  
**and the**  
**South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control**  
**Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for a temporary deviation to the US Army Corps of Engineers' Savannah River Basin Drought Contingency Plan on the Savannah River in Georgia and South Carolina, in response to the continued drought conditions.

Notice of the following is hereby given:

- a. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, notice is hereby given that the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District proposes a temporary deviation to the March 1989 Savannah River Basin Drought Contingency Plan, as revised.
- b. The Savannah District announces the availability to the public of a Draft EA and Draft FONSI concerning the action. Copies of the Draft EA and unsigned FONSI can be obtained from the following website: [www.sas.usace.army.mil](http://www.sas.usace.army.mil), by emailing Mr. William Bailey at following address: [william.g.bailey@usace.army.mil](mailto:william.g.bailey@usace.army.mil).
- c. Written statements regarding the Draft EA and FONSI for the proposed action will be received at the Savannah District Office until

**12 O'CLOCK NOON, OCTOBER 31, 2009**

from those interested in the activity and whose interests may be affected by the proposed action.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The proposed action is a temporary revision to the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) 1989 Savannah River Basin Drought Contingency Plan. The revision would be a reduction in the minimum daily average discharge from the J. Strom Thurmond reservoir from 3,600 to 3,100 cubic feet per second (cfs) during the fall/winter months for the duration of the present drought. The reduction would begin in the fall (mid-September) when dissolved oxygen levels in the harbor exceed Water Quality standards as measured at the USGS gage at the Corps of Engineers' Depot (#0219897730). The reduction in flow would continue until one of the following conditions occurred:

1. arrival of the first Shortnose sturgeon at the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, or
2. water temperature at USGS gage at the NSBL&D (#02197000) reaches 11 degrees C after February 1.

This change would preserve water in the Corps reservoirs and delay the time at which those reservoirs would reach the bottom of their conservation storage. The Corps would restore the discharges from the Thurmond reservoir up to the present 3,600 cfs per day daily average if requested by either the State of Georgia or South Carolina.

The US Army Corps of Engineers operates its three multi-purpose projects on the Savannah River (Hartwell, Richard B. Russell, and J. Strom Thurmond) as a three-lake system. The most recent drought has reduced the volume of conservation storage in those three lakes. As a result of declines in the conservation storage and concerns that Level 4 drought conditions may be reached if the drought continues, Savannah District is considering reducing discharges from the Thurmond Reservoir during the fall/winter months when the projects are in a Level 3 drought condition. Alternatives considered included the following:

- (A) No Action,
  - (B) Reducing discharges during the fall/winter months from 3,600 to 3,100 cubic feet per second (cfs) (Alternative 1), and
  - (C) Reducing discharges during the fall/winter months from 3,600 to 2,600 cfs (Alternative 2).
- The tentatively recommended plan is Alternative 1.

## **AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA:**

**Coastal Zone Consistency:** Savannah District has evaluated the proposed project and believes it is consistent with the Georgia Coastal Zone Management Program to the maximum extent practicable. The District will submit its evaluation to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division in Brunswick, Georgia, who administers that program. The State will review the proposed action and determine whether it concurs that the proposed project is consistent with the State's Coastal Zone Management Program to the maximum extent practicable. Any person who desires to comment or object to Georgia Coastal Zone Management Consistency Certification must do so in writing within 10 days of the date of this notice to the Federal Consistency Coordinator, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division, Suite 300, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, Georgia 31520-8687 and state the reasons or basis for the objections.

## **AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED FROM THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA:**

**Coastal Zone Consistency:** Savannah District has evaluated the proposed project and believes it is consistent with the South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Program to the maximum extent practicable. The District will submit its evaluation to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management in Charleston, South Carolina, who administers that program. The State will review the proposed action and determine whether it concurs that the proposed project is consistent with the State's Coastal Zone Management Program to the maximum extent practicable. Any person who desires to comment or object to South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Consistency Certification must do so in writing within 10 days of the date of this notice to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management; 1362 McMillan Avenue; Suite 400, Charleston, South Carolina 29405 and state the reasons or basis for the objections.

## **DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:**

**Environmental Assessment:** Savannah District has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and found that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required for this action. The Draft EA is being coordinated concurrently with this Notice to Federal and State natural resource agencies for review and comment. No wetlands would be filled, but riparian wetlands could be temporarily impacted by reduced river flows. No discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the US is included in the proposed action, so no evaluation is required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

**Threatened and Endangered Species:** The District reviewed the most recent information on Federally-listed endangered or threatened species and determined that the proposed action may effect, but is not likely to affect shortnose sturgeon, manatee, and wood stork. This proposed action is being coordinated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

**Cultural Resources:** In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (P.L. 89-655, as amended) and 36 CFR, Part 800, Savannah District has evaluated the proposed action's potential effect upon historic properties. The District has determined the proposed action will have no adverse effect upon historic properties and has initiated consultation with the Georgia and South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officers and eighteen Native American Tribes.

**Essential Fish Habitat:** Savannah District evaluated the proposal's potential effects on Essential Fish Habitat. The project's effects would be of relatively short duration. As a result, the District believes the proposed action would not produce long term effects on these valuable coastal habitats that warrant mitigation. The District is coordinating the proposed action with the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

**Coastal Zone Consistency:** Savannah District evaluated compliance of the proposed action with both the Georgia and South Carolina Coastal Management Programs (CMP). The District believes that the proposed action is consistent with the CMPs to the maximum extent practicable. The District will submit the EA to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division in Brunswick, Georgia and to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management in Charleston, South Carolina.

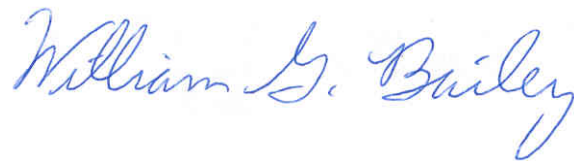
**Public Interest Review:** The decision whether to proceed with the project as proposed will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both the protection and use of important resources. The benefits which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof. Among these are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife, flood hazards, flood plains, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion/accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership, environmental justice, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

**Consideration of Public Comments:** The US Army Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the US Army Corps of Engineers in its deliberations on this action. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts to endangered species, wetlands, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, socioeconomic effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

**Comment Period:** Anyone wishing to comment to the Corps on this proposed action should submit comments no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice, in writing, to the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, Savannah Planning Unit, ATTN: Mr. William Bailey, Post Office Box 889, Savannah, Georgia 31402-0889, by FAX to 912-652-5787, or by emailing the comments to the following address: [william.g.bailey@usace.army.mil](mailto:william.g.bailey@usace.army.mil).

Any person who desires to comment or object to Georgia Coastal Zone Management Consistency Certification must do so in writing to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division, Federal Consistency Coordinator, Suite 300, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, Georgia 31520-8687.

Any person who desires to comment or object to South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Consistency Certification must do so in writing to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management; 1362 McMillan Avenue; Suite 400, Charleston, South Carolina 29405.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William G. Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'W' and 'B'.

William G. Bailey  
Chief, Savannah Planning Unit