

DRAFT
Finding of No Significant Impact
for the Shoreline Management Plan
J. Strom Thurmond Lake
Georgia and South Carolina
May 2016

1.0 BACKGROUND

The J. Strom Thurmond Project is located on the Savannah River near the southeastern margin of the Piedmont Plateau Region, and comprises parts of McCormick and Abbeville counties in South Carolina; and parts of Columbia, McDuffie, Warren, Wilkes, Lincoln and Elbert Counties in Georgia.

Pursuant to ER 1130-2-406 Shoreline Management at Civil Works Projects, it is the policy of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to protect and manage shorelines of all Civil Works water resources development projects in a manner that promotes the safe and healthful use of the shorelines by the public while maintaining environmental safeguards to ensure a quality resource for use by the public. The objectives include maintenance of the aesthetic and environmental characteristics of the Reservoir for the full benefit of the general public.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), requires consideration of the environmental impacts for major federal actions. The proposed action and the environmental impacts of the proposed action were addressed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), J. Strom Thurmond Lake, dated August 2016.

The EA was coordinated with various regulatory agencies and the public and comment letters were received. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the environmental considerations, the decision that no significant impacts would occur if the proposal is implemented, and explains the rationale used in selecting the alternative proposed for implementation.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION – Proposed Shoreline Management Plan

The SMP was developed in accordance with the criteria outlined within the USACE shoreline management regulation (ER 1130-2-406). The preferred alternative will meet J. Strom Thurmond's shoreline management goals and responsibilities while protecting the natural environment. Some of the 2001 SMP will remain unchanged with the proposed SMP. The most substantial changes to the 2001 SMP are described in Section 5.0 Impacts of the Proposed Action.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives investigated in the EA were:

- Option 1 – Proposed Shoreline Management Plan
- Option 2 - No Action

Alternatives that could not be implemented if they were chosen, or that do not resolve the need for action and fulfill the stated purpose in taking action to a large degree, should be eliminated as unreasonable before impact analysis begins. The No Action alternative was considered further and thus carried through the impact analysis in the EA.

4.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY COORDINATION

In June, the EA for the SMP, J. Strom Thurmond Lake was mailed to federal and state agencies and the interested public for a 30-day review and comment period.

5.0 IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The objective of the SMP is to maintain a balance between permitted private uses, long-term natural resource protection, and public recreation opportunities.

The following resources would not be adversely affected by the selected plan: soils, topography, floodplains, surface hydrology, water quality, air quality, noise, cultural resources, hazardous wastes, water supply and wetlands.

Aesthetics – The SMP will not result in permanent adverse impacts to aesthetics or views of the watershed. The proposed SMP would increase the aesthetic quality of the view shed by requiring neutral colored roofs on the docks, where the 2001 plan did not have a color restriction. The Proposed Plan states that no third level decks will be approved or permitted.

Vegetation – Under both the current and updated SMP, minor vegetation modifications require an approved permit and an on-site meeting with the Park Ranger prior to commencement of work. The meeting is intended to identify where underbrushing can be authorized and develop an underbrushing plan. The proposed SMP clarifies underbrushing standards that requires applicants to submit a professional land survey prepared by a licensed surveyor showing the site meets the 600 foot distance requirement to be eligible for an underbrush permit.

Fish and Wildlife – The Proposed SMP would not allow for new licenses to be issued for power lines, as all new electrical service to docks must be solar powered. *Exceptions to solar power may be granted on a case-by-case basis in situations where solar power is not feasible along access trails (i.e., excessively shady sites).* All existing buried power lines would continue to be permitted as a prior commitment. There are no

foreseeable negative impacts associated with the changes addressed in the Proposed SMP to the fishery resource or local area wildlife.

Threatened and Endangered Species – The Northern long-eared bat, recently listed by USFWS, will result in changes to underbrushing requirements in Elbert and Abbeville Counties. The proposed plan will limit underbrushing in these counties only to vegetation less than 3" diameter at the ground. The current plan allows trees 6" or less in diameter to be removed. The Proposed Plan and the No Action alternative would have no adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species within the project area.

Land Use – The Proposed Plan and the No Action alternative would have no substantial adverse impacts to land uses around the Reservoir.

Recreation – Both the No Action alternative and the Proposed SMP allow for 15 percent of the shoreline to be allotted for public recreation, resulting in no impacts to current recreation opportunities available at the Reservoir.

Safety – The proposed updates to the SMP would require all new electrical service to facilities to be solar powered, with exceptions granted on a case-to-case basis. Also, electrical work would be required to be performed by an electrician licensed in the state in which the dock is permitted. Any required local or state permits must be obtained prior to installation of electrical service. A ground rod must be installed at the base of each light or power pole. To reduce the risk of inundation, all electrical outlets mounted to poles or pedestals must be located at or above 335 feet msl elevation.

All installed docks with a second level must display a weight rating plate identifying the maximum rated weight capacity of the second level to ensure dock owners are aware of the load bearing capacity.

No new courtesy dock permits will be issued. Existing courtesy dock permits authorized under previous plans will be reissued if the docks are maintained in a safe condition and are not modified in size or location. Upon modification or becoming dilapidated, the permit will not be reissued and the dock must be removed when the permit expires. Any dilapidated dock must be repaired or removed immediately.

Each of these changes would increase public safety; therefore, the Proposed Action will have a beneficial impact on public safety within the Reservoir, while the No Action alternative will not create a change in the current public safety.

Cumulative Impacts – Implementing management plans like the SMP help to ensure a balance between public uses and stewardship of the natural environment. The proposed updates to the SMP will require community docks in all new county certified, platted subdivisions, require earth tone colors be used on roofs to increase the natural aesthetics of the shoreline, require an electrician to be licensed in the state which the dock is permitted, and no longer approve retaining walls for bank stabilization.

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A considerable amount of private property adjacent to shoreline zoned as Limited Development has not yet been developed. Therefore the Thurmond Project is not planning to increase the amount of land allocated to Limited Development. Future development of those lands currently zoned as Limited Development around Thurmond Lake would benefit the local economy.

6.0 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the J. Strom Thurmond Lake SMP, the information provided by interested parties, and the information contained in this Finding of No Significant Impact, and I find that the proposed SMP will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, is not required.

DRAFT

Date: _____

Marvin Griffin
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander