

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

AVIAN VACUOLAR MYELINOPATHY REDUCTION FOR J. STROM THURMOND (JST) LAKE

Columbia, Lincoln, McDuffie, Elbert, and Wilkes Counties, Georgia and
McCormick and Abbeville Counties, South Carolina

1. Description of Proposed Action: The Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District (CESAS), proposes incremental stocking of certified sterile triploid grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*- triploid) (CSTGC) at JST plus limited herbicide application to control hydrilla. Full details can be found in the Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy Plan (AVMP). The AVMP does not replace the Aquatic Plant Management Plan for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District Water Resources Projects, South Carolina and Georgia, Updated December 2002. Initial stocking of CSTGC in JST will occur in Year 1 and 2 with a Year 3 maintenance stocking to account for initial mortality. CSTGC stocking will target 7.5 fish per vegetated acre in Year 1 and 9.75 fish per vegetated acre in Year 2 resulting in a total of 15 fish per vegetated acre (including 2.25 fish per acre to offset 30% mortality rate). The acreage of hydrilla will be determined using the best available information on coverage and density. Fish would be ordered from an approved certified supplier to ensure sterility. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) offers a triploid grass carp inspection service for natural resource agencies in the United States to help protect aquatic habitats. CSTGC would be at least 10-12 inches total length (TL) to reduce predation. In Year 3, 3.75 fish per vegetated acre will be stocked to compensate for the initial mortality. No action will be taken in years 4 and 5 other than possible herbicide treatment. In Year 6 monitoring for success will occur. USACE will determine if incremental stocking or further maintenance stocking is needed to meet the hydrilla reduction objectives. USACE plans to continue with these efforts to reduce AVM at JST into the future if necessary based on monitoring of AVM related deaths and the density of the hydrilla.

2. Factors Considered in Determination: CESAS has assessed the impacts of the proposed action on important resources, including wetlands and aquatic vegetation, aquatic/fisheries, forest, threatened, endangered and protected species, cultural, recreation aesthetics, socio-economics, environmental justice and protection of children, air quality, hydrology, water quality and water supply. No significant adverse impacts were identified for any of the important resources. The risk of encountering HTRW is low. No impacts were identified that would require compensatory mitigation. In a letter dated May 27, 2016 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service confirmed that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat. The proposed action is not located within, and does not influence, the Coastal Zone. USACE would follow the terms of the States of Georgia's and South

Carolina's general NPDES permit for the discharge of pesticides into public waters. No dredging or sediment disposal activities are included in the proposed plan. Therefore, a Section 404(b)(1) evaluation is not required. Concurrence by the Georgia and South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officers in the USACE's determination of No Effect on cultural resources was not required for this action. As described in the Historic Properties Management Plan and Programmatic Agreement, pesticide treatments are categorically excluded from SHPO review. In an E-mail dated June 17, 2016 from the Easter Shawnee Tribe THPO, since this work will not include ground disturbance, the ESTO has no objections to this action. CESAS has concurred with, or resolved, all Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act recommendations contained in a letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, dated May 27, 2016. The District has concurred with, or resolved, all comments on the air quality impact analysis, which were contained in a letters from EPA (May 26, 2016), South Carolina (May 31, 2016), and Georgia (May 31, 2016). The proposed action does not affect any essential fish habitat.

3. Environmental Design Commitments. The following commitments are an integral part of the proposed action:

1. If the proposed action is changed significantly or is not implemented within one year, Savannah District will coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that the proposed action would not adversely affect any Federally-listed threatened or endangered species, or their habitat.
2. If any unrecorded cultural resources are determined to exist within the proposed project boundaries and ground disturbance is required, then no work will proceed in the area containing these cultural resources until a Savannah District staff archeologist has been notified and final coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer has been completed.
3. Only certified sterile triploid grass carp will be used in accordance with the National Triploid Grass Carp Inspection and certification Program and both State of Georgia and South Carolina's statutes.
4. Spot treatments of herbicide will occur in areas where hydrilla is at or near the surface with priority given to those areas known to have high concentrations of American coots and past eagle mortalities. Only those herbicides classified as "aquatic use" by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be used.
5. Certain herbicides would not be applied within required setback distances from potable water intakes. Depending on the type of herbicide application, drinking water withdrawals may be temporarily suspended at specific sites as specified on the product label.
6. The Aquatic Plant Management Plan for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District Water Resources Projects, South Carolina and Georgia, Updated December 2002 will still be followed.
7. Impacts to palustrine wetlands and the state-listed shoals spider-lily will be avoided by controlling the treatment boundaries adjacent to existing wetlands to eliminate over-spraying.

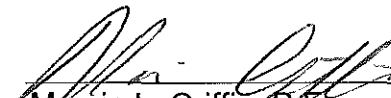
8. Monitoring and adaptive management will occur.

4. Public Involvement. Resources of concern at JST have been identified through a survey (May 2013) sent to stakeholders within twelve adjoining counties who fell within one of the following five user groups: fishing license holders, state waterfowl stamp holders, registered boaters, campground visitors, and shoreline permit holders. The surveys were targeted to identify users' knowledge of AVM, its association with hydrilla, and opinions on potential management options to control hydrilla. The proposed action has been coordinated with appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies and businesses, organizations, and individuals through distribution of a draft EA in May 2016 for their review and comment. In addition, public workshops were held 16 and 17 May 2016 in McCormick, South Carolina and Appling, Georgia, respectively.

5. Conclusion. CESAS has assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. Based on this assessment, a review of the comments made on the EA, and the implementation of the environmental design commitments listed above, CESAS has concluded that the proposed action would not result in a significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

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Date


Marvin L. Griffin, P.E.
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Commanding