



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, SAVANNAH DISTRICT
100 W. OGLETHORPE AVENUE
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31401-3604
December 6, 2021

Planning Branch

PUBLIC NOTICE
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of a Proposed Draft Master Plan (MP), Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for J. Strom Thurmond Project.

Notice of the following is hereby given:

- a. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, notice is hereby given that the Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) proposes to update the current MP for Thurmond Lake.
- b. Savannah District announces the availability to the public of an updated MP, Draft EA, and Draft FONSI for Thurmond Lake. Downloaded document copies may be obtained from the District website at <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/Divisions-and-Offices/Planning-Division/Plans-and-Reports/>.
- c. Written statements regarding the Draft MP, EA, and FONSI for the proposed action will be received at the Savannah District Office until

12 O'CLOCK NOON, January 20, 2022

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed action consists of updating the MP which is required for Civil Works projects and other fee-owned lands which USACE has administrative responsibility for management of natural and manmade resources. The current MP was completed in 1995.

The MP provides a programmatic approach to the management of all the lands included within the Thurmond Project boundary and serves as the basic document guiding USACE responsibilities pursuant to Federal laws to preserve, conserve, maintain, manage, and develop Thurmond Projects' lands, waters, and associated resources.

The purpose of the proposed action to update the MP would update the prescribed overall land and water management plan, resource objectives, and associated design and management concepts, which:

1. Provide the best possible combination of responses to regional needs, resource capabilities and suitability, and expressed public interests and desires consistent with authorized project purposes;
2. Contribute towards providing a high degree of recreation diversity within the region;
3. Emphasize the particular qualities, characteristics, and potentials of the project;
4. Exhibit consistency and compatibility with national objectives and other state and regional goals and programs.

The MP guidance includes revised categories of Land Classifications used to define project lands, as well as a shifting from a construction-based document to a policy-based document. All lands were acquired for authorized project purposes and allocated for these uses. The classification process is a further distribution of project lands by management categories which, based upon resources available and public needs, will provide for full utilization while protecting project resources. The guidance also includes requirements for an interdisciplinary team approach for the development, re-evaluation, and supplementation or updating of the MP. Coordination with other agencies and the public is an integral part of the MP process.

The MP serves two primary purposes that are equal in importance. First, it is the primary management document for the project and provides direction for many of the other plans that also guide the management of the Thurmond Project. Second, it is a land use management tool. This MP sets the stage for the update of many of the resource management plans, such as the Shoreline Management Plan.

Alternative plans were developed as part of the planning process. The alternatives that were considered were as follows:

a. **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative:** This No Action Alternative involves the continued use of the 1995 Thurmond MP. This would not allow the Thurmond Project to operate under an up-to-date Master Plan, in accordance with Engineer Regulation (ER)1130-2-550.

b. **Alternative 2 – Preferred Alternative - Update Master Plan:** In accordance with ER 1130-2-550, a MP is required for Civil Works projects and other fee-owned lands for which USACE has administrative responsibility for management of natural, recreational and cultural resources throughout the life of the water resource project.

The preferred alternative would comply with current regulations and provide guidance and direction for future management of project resources.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:

Environmental Assessment: Savannah District has prepared a Draft 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.

Wetlands: With implementation of the proposed action, the MP has been updated and includes maps of all recreation areas and proposed improvements (Appendix D of the MP). Proposed recreation area improvements avoid impacts to wetlands.

Aquatic Resources/Fisheries: With implementation of the proposed action, there may be positive impacts to the aquatic resources/fisheries. Improved angler access and proposed improvements to aquatic plant habitat would have positive impacts by potentially increasing the abundance of game and non-game fish and access to the fishery.

Floodplains: The proposed action would result in no adverse impacts to the floodplain or management of the floodplain.

Terrestrial Resources: With implementation of the proposed action, recreation facilities will be constructed in areas designated for recreational use. Natural resources management activities described in the proposed action, mainly timber harvesting, will have no long-term adverse impacts on terrestrial resources. The short-term impacts of timber harvest will be offset by site restoration (replanting) in areas that are clear cut. The short-term impacts to timber stands that are thinned are offset by providing short-term early successional habitat and long-term improvements to the residual stand. These short-term negative impacts to the terrestrial vegetation caused by timber harvesting have the long-term benefits of diversifying wildlife habitat.

Bottomland Hardwood Forest: With implementation of the proposed action, there would be no additional adverse impacts to the bottomland hardwoods. Adverse impacts will be minimized using Best Management Practices (BMP) for forest roads and accepted trail construction standards.

Wildlife: With implementation of the proposed action, positive impacts to wildlife could occur with additional improvements to wildlife habitat, timber stand diversity and incorporation of former quasi-public lease areas into wildlife management areas.

Threatened and Endangered Species (TES): With implementation of the proposed action, there would be no adverse impacts to any TES and their critical habitats. Recreation area development will not occur in critical habitats or if a TES is present.

TES will be better protected as maps of Environmentally Sensitive Areas are maintained and made available to natural resources management personnel. A protected species survey will be completed prior to constructing any new facilities to ensure no adverse effects to any Federally listed threatened or endangered species in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, May 28, 2010.

Waterbodies: The proposed action would result in no adverse impacts to Thurmond Lake. Erosion control measures will be implemented during proposed recreation area development and BMPs will be followed during timber harvest and wildlife management activities.

Cultural Resources: With implementation of the proposed action, there would be no direct adverse impacts on any cultural resources. Management of cultural resources would continue in accordance with the Historic Properties Management Plan and Programmatic Agreement.

Recreational Resources: There could be minor positive impacts to recreation due to the updated MP. With implementation of the proposed action, more recreation resources may be provided. The additional facilities are proposed within existing recreational areas.

Aesthetics: With implementation of the proposed action, additional recreational facilities would not have an adverse impact to the aesthetics or view of the watershed since these areas are already classified for recreation use.

Socioeconomics: Implementation of the proposed action provides for economically and socially productive uses of the project. Positive impacts on the socio-economic resources are expected to result. Enhancing the recreational capacity of the project will increase public use and draw more visitors to the area to the benefit of the local economy. Proper management of the natural resources will have a positive impact on the timber industry and business that support outdoor enthusiasts. Positive effects on residential property values in the surrounding area can also be expected, which can lead to proportionally higher property tax revenues for local governments.

Environmental Justice: With implementation of the proposed action, there would be no adverse impacts on environmental justice or the protection of children.

Air Quality: With implementation of the proposed action, there would be no additional adverse impacts on air quality.

Water Quality: With implementation of the proposed action, there could be minor adverse impacts on water quality due to an increased number of boats, construction projects and timber logging operations. The impacts of increased number of boats

would be minimal due to the reservoir size. Construction activities are required to follow state regulations for stormwater and erosion control measures and Clean Water Act permitting as required. Natural resources management activities that may impact water quality will be conducted in accordance with the appropriate state BMPs. Off-site activities such as major construction, road maintenance, timber logging operations, and agricultural uses have the highest potential to impact of water quality and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Hazardous, Toxic and Radioactive Waste (HTRW): With implementation of the proposed action, the probability of encountering HTRW is low. Any change in the storage or use of hazardous materials must comply with federal and state regulations. The Thurmond Project is responsible for ensuring compliance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental, and Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Environmental Protection Division regulations on public lands at the Thurmond Project. The EPA EnviroMapper website was researched and identified no known hazardous waste sites at the Thurmond Project.

Consideration of Public Comments: The Corps 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 would be considered by the Corps in its deliberations. Comments would be used to assess impacts to endangered species, wetlands, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments would be used in the preparation of the Final EA and FONSI pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments would also be used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity. Please note that dock permits or an authorization for a dock permit is covered by the Shoreline Management Plan, not the Master Plan.

Comment Period: Comment to the Corps on this proposed action should be submitted no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice, in writing, to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 100 W Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, GA 30643 Attn: PM-P - Gose, or by e-mailing the comments to the following address: cesas-planning@usace.army.mil . Questions concerning this request can be directed to Mrs. Cynthia Gose, Environmental Engineer at (912) 652-6107 or at Cynthia.A.Gose@usace.army.mil.

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Savannah District