

State Agency Scoping Coordination Meeting
Glades Reservoir EIS
US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District
Permit Application SAS-2007-00388
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date	March 23, 2012
Time	10:00 am (EST)
Subject	Florida State Agency Scoping Coordination Meeting
Location	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Conference Room A, Tallahassee, Florida
Attendees	See list below

Meeting Summary

1) Welcome and Introductions

Richard Morgan, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Project Manager for the EIS, introduced the USACE team and stated that they are the lead federal agency and that engineering firm AECOM is the third party contractor for the project. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) will be cooperating agencies. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was invited to be a cooperating agency but declined due to funding constraints.

Tai Yi Su, AECOM Project Manager, gave an introduction of AECOM's role in the project. AECOM team members each introduced themselves and explained their role.

State agency representatives from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) introduced themselves.

2) Overview of Proposed Reservoir and Water Supply Project

Tai Yi Su gave an overview of the proposed project, including project elements (reservoir, pump station, and pipelines), operational plan, and purpose and need.

3) Open Discussion

Model Verification

Comment (C) (USACE): The information contained in Hall County's (Applicant) application has not been verified yet. The USACE is working to obtain a copy of the ResSim model that the Applicant used to assess downstream impacts. The EPD is also working on its own version of the ResSim model for the project. The USACE will review the Applicant's model, and will coordinate with the EPD during the EIS process to verify the information provided in the application. The USACE will also be looking at alternatives to the proposed reservoir.

Purpose

Question (Q) (FL): Is the main purpose of the transmission pipes and the pump station on the Chattahoochee River to supply water to Cedar Creek Reservoir?

Answer (A) (AECOM): Yes, the purpose of the Chattahoochee River pump station would be to supply water to the Cedar Creek Reservoir for treatment and distribution to meet Hall County's future demands. The pump station would also be used to send water from the Chattahoochee River to the proposed Glades Reservoir for storage. Water from the proposed Glades Reservoir would be used to meet the minimum instream flow requirement in the Chattahoochee River during times of low flow.

Proposed Operational Plan

Q (FL): Would water ever flow from the proposed Glades Reservoir directly to the Cedar Creek Reservoir?

A (USACE): The information submitted indicates that the proposed Glades Reservoir would operate as a flow augmentation facility and water would transfer from the reservoir back to the Chattahoochee River as needed to meet minimum instream flow requirements. The water held in the proposed Glades Reservoir would not go into the Cedar Creek Reservoir.

C (AECOM): The annual average yield for the proposed water supply system would be 80 million gallons per day (mgd). This number includes an annual average yield of 7.5 mgd from the Cedar Creek Reservoir, which relies on pumping from the North Oconee River. The remaining 72.5 mgd would be supplied by the Chattahoochee River and the Glades Reservoir system.

C (FL): We would like to see the ability and quantity of water that the Applicant is allowed to withdraw from the Chattahoochee River be tied to the storage stage at Lake Lanier and within the entire COE reservoir system (total composite conservation storage).

C (USACE): The USACE clarified that by 2060, an average of 72.5 mgd would be pulled from the Chattahoochee to meet the Applicant's projected water needs. As proposed, the Glades Reservoir would supplement the flow of the Chattahoochee if the withdrawal would cause the river to drop below the annual 7Q10.

Q (FL): Who will be operating the proposed Glades Reservoir?

A (USACE): Hall County will be operating the reservoir.

Q (FL): Does Hall County plan on selling the excess water?

A (USACE): The application is based on supplying water for Hall County needs only.

Minimum Instream Flow and High Flow

Q (FL): Are there separate minimum instream flows established for different stretches of the river?

A (AECOM): According to the Applicant, the EPD has verified a minimum instream flow of 3 mgd downstream of the proposed dam location on Flat Creek. This proposed minimum instream flow was based on the calculated annual 7Q10 flow in Flat Creek. The Applicant proposed a minimum instream flow of 119 mgd for the Chattahoochee River below the withdrawal location, which is currently being evaluated by the Georgia EPD. The proposed minimum instream flow below the withdrawal location at the Chattahoochee River was also based on the calculated annual 7Q10 flow and a site-specific study conducted by the Applicant.

Q (FL): Is high flow considered to be anything above the minimum instream flow?

A (USACE): Based on the EIS team's understanding of the 404 permit application, it does appear that high flow would be the amount available beyond the proposed minimum instream flow (i.e. the annual 7Q10). According to the application, water could be pumped to the proposed Glades Reservoir when both the water supply needs at the Cedar Creek Reservoir and the minimum instream flow requirement in the Chattahoochee River are met.

Return Flows

C (USACE): The Applicant assumed a 70-percent return rate to the Chattahoochee River Basin. Wastewater would be treated and returned to the Chattahoochee River or Lake Lanier. According to the Applicant, this is in agreement with the regional planning agency (Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District - MNGWPD) long term plans for wastewater to be returned to the Chattahoochee Basin from Hall County. The USACE and AECOM will verify the return flow assumptions during the EIS review process and will verify where the returns are planned to take place.

Modeling

Q (FL): Why doesn't the Applicant's model apply streamflow records after 2003? Florida considers the 2007 drought to be the critical drought period.

A (AECOM): The Applicant's model covered a 23-year period (1995-2008), and used the 1998-2003 period as the critical drought period to show the potential effects on downstream reservoirs. At the time the modeling analysis was conducted, the entire 2007-2009 drought record may not have been available and that may have been why it was not selected as the critical drought period. The EIS team plans on including the 2007-2009 drought data in the review of the critical drought period for assessing downstream effects.

C (AECOM): The Applicant used the ResSim model for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) Basin that was current at the time the application was submitted. Since that time, an updated model has been developed by the USACE Mobile District; the information contained in the application will likely be evaluated using the current version (May 2011) of the ResSim model during the EIS process.

Q (FL): Is there coordination between the Savannah and Mobile Districts of the USACE?

A (USACE): The Mobile District has provided the current ACF Basin model to the Savannah District for use in this EIS. Once the modeling analysis for this EIS is completed, the USACE will take that information (draft results) to the USACE Mobile District and ask them to assess how the proposed project will affect the operations of the federal projects along the Chattahoochee River.

Q (FL): Will the current model be shared with the Georgia EPD?

A (USACE): The cooperating agency agreement that the USACE has with the EPD for this project does allow the USACE to share draft information with the EPD prior to being released to the public. The USACE does not know when the team will be ready to share the modeling information with the EPD, but at some point the draft modeling analysis will become available to everyone.

C (FL): The current ResSim model (2011 version) has not been provided to the state of Florida yet so the state agencies cannot give input as to the adequacy or shortcomings of the model at this point.

Cooperating Agency Agreements

Q (FL): Can the cooperating agency agreements be made available to the Florida agencies?

A (USACE): Yes, we will provide the cooperating agency agreements (letters).

Downstream Effects

C (FL): We have concerns with the proposed project which is located at the top of the ACF Basin. Florida is located at the bottom end of the basin and the quantity of streamflow that reaches Florida is dependent upon how the USACE (Mobile District) operates the federal projects. Florida is already concerned that it is not receiving an appropriate quantity of water under the current Revised Interim Operations Plan (RIOP) that governs releases from Lake Lanier. We are seeking a more equitable distribution of the storage capabilities of Lake Lanier.

C (FL): We are uncomfortable with the cooperation between the USACE and the Georgia DNR for this project since the state of Florida is currently in conflict with the state of Georgia.

NEPA Process

Q (FL): What counts as a federal action for the purpose of this project?

A (USACE): The USACE is considering the permit for the building of the reservoir, pipelines, and pump stations. The EPD will make the decision about permitting water withdrawals.

Magnitude of Water Withdrawal

C (FL): We are concerned that the drainage basin for the proposed Glades Reservoir water supply project consists of approximately one-third of the drainage basin for Lake Lanier. We are particularly interested in the proposed project's impacts on the composite storage of the reservoirs upstream of Florida; especially because Lake Lanier alone contains 65 percent of the available total composite conservation storage of the five federal reservoir projects in the ACF Basin. Anything that affects the storage in various storage zones in Lake Lanier affects the operations at the Woodruff Dam,

which affects the downstream communities of the ACF basin. A few inches of water elevation changes may indicate different storage zones in Lake Lanier and may in turn result in different release quantities below the Woodruff Dam (varying from 5,000 to 8,000 cfs). This is also important since the Mobile COE calculates "basin inflow" after withdrawals have been made.

C (FL): In the application, the term "natural flow" was not defined. Since the 7Q10 flow is not one of the standard minimum instream flow options (according to Georgia's current Interim Instream Flow Policy), we request that the USACE consider looking at different minimum instream flow scenarios in the EIS.

C (USACE): Please keep in mind that there are seven miles of river between the proposed pump station and the upstream boundary of Lake Lanier. When considering minimum instream flow requirements, this is the section of river that would be affected. Buford Dam controls the flow downstream of Lake Lanier.

Mitigation Plan

Q (FL): Has the Applicant proposed a mitigation plan?

A (USACE): Currently there is no completed mitigation plan, but the USACE has discussed this with the Applicant and the idea is that the Applicant will purchase the requisite mitigation credits or use the USACE's in-lieu-fee program. There are currently about 1/3 of the credits for streams and all the credits for wetlands available. If the project appears likely to be permitted, the mitigation strategy will be established at that point. The Applicant does not plan to do any of its own mitigation at this point. The current mitigation banks that would be considered are in the basin and at or above Lake Lanier. Information about available mitigation banks can be found on the USACE website.

Data Review

Q (USACE): We heard at Florida's public scoping meeting that peak flows in the Apalachicola River are important due to the effect peak flows have on oyster harvesting. Is there an area that the USACE should focus its attention on that has not been detailed in the scoping materials?

A (FL): For modeling of hydrological effects, the USACE should consider evaluating daily flow variations over a period of a month rather than over a period of a year. The monthly distribution curve may show variations that are important from a biological standpoint that would not be noticeable on a yearly distribution curve. It also is important to consider what happens not only when there is a drought, but also when there are periods of flows that are below average. Effects on downstream flows at the Chattahoochee gage should be examined at high, medium and low flows.

C (AECOM): If the FWC or DEP have specific suggestions on methods of data presentation for issues they may be concerned about, they should let the USACE know within the scoping period if possible.

C (FL): We will discuss internally whether we need to issue a Coastal Zone Management (CZM) statement (consistency review) and whether the CZM affects the proposed project.

EIS Process

C (USACE): April 17, 2012, is the close of the public comment period for the scoping portion of the EIS. A scoping report will be prepared after that and the USACE and AECOM will begin working on a draft EIS, which is tentatively scheduled to be released in December, 2012. There will be a public comment period after the draft EIS is released. The USACE intends to post as much information as possible on the project website.

Alternatives

C (USACE): The agencies should consider submitting comments on alternatives to the project.

Q(FL): Would an alternative that meets less than Hall County's 2060 demands be considered a valid alternative?

A(USACE): No, meeting the 2060 demands has been identified by the applicant as part of the project purpose.

C (FL): The Florida DEP requested that the USACE evaluate the option of water conservation closely. Another option to be evaluated should be that withdrawals only occur when Lanier was in Zone 1.

Q (FL): Would the alternatives be expanded beyond what was proposed by the Applicant in the EIS?

A (USACE): Yes. The alternatives presented in the 404 permit application were what were considered by the Applicant. They are not necessarily the only alternatives that would be evaluated by the USACE during this EIS process.

C (AECOM): The "Alternatives Analysis" document from the 404 permit application is temporarily unavailable on the website as the EIS team is working on redacting sensitive references to the cultural resources. It will be re-posted on the website as soon as the cultural resources references are removed.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am (EST).

Meeting Attendees

Staff in Attendance

Richard Morgan (USACE)
Katie Freas (USACE)
David Crosby (USACE)
Tai Yi Su (AECOM)
Anne Minihan (AECOM)
Blaine Dwyer (AECOM)
Pamela Burnett (AECOM)
Robert Esenwein (AECOM)
Rebecca Brofft (AECOM)
Brian Rochester (Rochester & Associates)

State Agencies in Attendance

Ted Hoehn (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)
Janet Llewellyn (Florida Department of Environmental Protection)
Teresa Mussetto (Florida Department of Environmental Protection)