



Keeping Watch Over Our Waters

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December 23, 2009

**Tetra Tech, Inc.
107 Saint Francis Street, Suite 1403
Mobile, AL 36602-9986**

**Colonel Byron Jorns
US Army Corps of Engineers - Mobile District
PO Box 2288
Mobile AL 36628-0001**

RE: Notice of Intent to Revise Scope of Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Updating the Water Control Manual for the Apalachicola–Chattahoochee–Flint (ACF) River Basin to Account for Federal District Court Ruling

Dear Colonel Jorns:

I am writing on behalf of the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper in response to the November 19, 2009 Public Notice published in the Federal Register (FR Doc. E9–27787) concerning the Water Control Manual Update for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (“ACF”) River Basin. These comments are supplemental to those we submitted on November 21, 2008 in response to the September 19, 2008 Public Notice (FR Doc. E8–21912).

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (“UCR”) is a non-profit environmental advocacy organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Chattahoochee River, its tributaries, and watershed. UCR represents more than 5,000 members who use and enjoy the river and its resources and depend on the Chattahoochee River and its lakes as a source of drinking water and for recreation.

In our November 2008 letter, our comments focused primarily on the operation of Buford Dam and its impacts on water quality, recreation, fishing, and water supply downstream from the Lake Lanier project on the Chattahoochee River. In light of the July 17, 2009 federal judicial ruling significantly curtailing metro Atlanta’s access to Lake Lanier for water supply, we make the following additional comments.

While the ruling clarifies the limited degree to which Lanier can be operated for water supply, the response of the three states, Georgia in particular, will have a significant impact on the ACF Basin. For instance, we note the array of water supply options recently proposed by Georgia’s Water Contingency Task Force, which include

- **Pump-Storage Reservoirs along Tributaries to the Chattahoochee River**—We have serious concerns with at least two of these—Glades Farm, South Fulton Bear Creek. I have attached comment letters UCR has submitted to the Corps’ Savannah District that highlight both our site-specific as well as our ACF River Basin-wide concerns.
- **Deviation from Georgia’s Interim Instream Flow Policy and Peachtree Creek Flow Target**—We further note that the Task Force has proposed significant deviations from the state’s Interim Instream Flow Policy as well as the 750 cfs flow target Peachtree Creek presumably to increase yield within these water supply reservoirs. These proposals will have devastating impacts on water quality, recreation, habitat, and other key instream needs throughout the ACF Basin. I have attached a comment letter UCR submitted to the Task Force which also raises these concerns.
- **Inter-Basin, Intra-Basin, and Interstate Water Transfers**—The Task force has proposed everything from inter-basin transfers (moving water from Lake Burton and Lake Hartwell/Savannah River Basin to Gwinnett County’s water treatment plant on Lake Lanier) to intra-basin transfers (moving water from West Point Lake up into Metro Atlanta) to even interstate transfers (from Alabama’s Tennessee River to “somewhere” in the Metro District). Of course, because of widespread use of septic systems, any transfer of treated water into Gwinnett County may ultimately end up in the Ocmulgee Basin, not the Chattahoochee. As for West Point Lake, there are serious concerns over inadequate flows to maintain current water quality conditions let alone restore water quality to meet designated uses.
- **Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR)**—Finally, the Task Force has proposed at least one ASR site in northwest Georgia that, if implemented, may adversely impact the surface hydrology and water quality of the ACF River Basin.

Although still in the planning stages, each of these options is undergoing serious scrutiny by the state of Georgia and a decision on implementation is imminent. If any or all of these above options are implemented, they will significantly impact the Corps ACF operations, which must accommodate authorized uses of navigation, hydropower, and flood control. With respect to the latter, the recent historic 500-year flood is a good indicator of the management challenges the Corps will continue to face as metro Atlanta’s rapid, unchecked development leads to more and more impervious surfaces throughout the ACF Basin.

Along with highly engineered, unsustainable options that will adversely impact the ACF River Basin if pursued, the Task Force has proposed a handful of relatively modest conservation measures to help address the 2012 water “gap” left by the federal judicial ruling. In conjunction with the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC), UCR submitted extensive comments (attached) detailing the true potential of water conservation to meet water supply needs. The region’s ongoing reluctance to readily embrace water conservation means that more demands will be placed on the ACF system. These foreseeable future demands will cumulative and adversely impact Corps ACF operations.

Finally, we also want to emphasize the need for the Corps to consider the ongoing Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing of the Bartlett’s Ferry facility and the operations of other non-Corps facilities during the Water Control Manual update. Notably, some 60,000 acre-feet of storage is available in Lake Harding, which could provide roughly 1,000 cfs

of water for 40 or more days. One alternative that the Corps ought to consider is the integration of non-Corps, federally-licensed reservoirs into a meaningful drought contingency plan.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to comment again on the update to the ACF Water Control Manual.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Hartt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura Hartt
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