

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

### BLUE RIDGE DAM REHABILITATION PROJECT SUPPLEMENT FOR EXTENDING PROJECT WORKING HOURS AND OTHER MINOR MODIFICATIONS OF THE ACTION ALTERNATIVE

In December 2009, TVA issued a final environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) entitled *Blue Ridge Dam Rehabilitation Project* (original EA), available at: [http://www.tva.com/environment/reports/blue\\_ridge\\_dam/index.htm](http://www.tva.com/environment/reports/blue_ridge_dam/index.htm). The EA evaluated a No Action Alternative and an Action Alternative of repairing the penstock, repairing and stabilizing the upstream face of the dam, stabilizing the intake tower base, and repairing and stabilizing the downstream face of the dam. The components of the original action alternative analyzed and approved in the 2009 EA and FONSI are still valid and are incorporated by reference. However, minor modifications to the project scope of the original Action Alternative are needed which were either unforeseen at the time of the preparation of the original EA, or in which insufficient information was available for appropriate evaluation of environmental impacts:

1. Extend project working hours for deliveries, rock handling and placement activities to 24 hours per day seven days per week, instead of limiting these activities to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
2. Establish an additional spoil area for temporary or permanent storage of old riprap and soil from the upstream and downstream faces of the dam near the intersection of North River Road and Veterans Memorial Highway on the northeast side of the dam.
3. Reduce the risk of potential collisions that could be caused by construction-related traffic congestion on North River Road by temporarily closing one or more segments of North River Road to the public for the duration of the construction phase of the Blue Ridge Dam Rehabilitation Project. The construction phase is expected to be completed by October 2012. Due to safety concerns, one segment of North River Road has already been closed. The supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) evaluates the impacts of that temporary road closure as well as the effects of a potential future closure of another segment of North River Road.

As explained in the original EA, unforeseen events such as unseasonably heavy rains could temporarily refill Blue Ridge Reservoir to elevations in excess of those needed to ensure safe work on the penstock, and such events could lead to project delays if the work on the project must be halted while the reservoir level is again lowered. For this reason, TVA needs to ensure greater flexibility in meeting the schedule for the project, and the SEA addresses the monitoring and mitigation measures needed for extending hours for deliveries, rock-handling, rock placement, and other project outdoor activities involving heavy equipment. Working hours for these activities would only be extended if necessary to maintain the project schedule.

TVA has assessed the impact of the changes to the proposed action in an SEA prepared in accordance with its procedures for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This SEA is incorporated by reference.

## **Alternatives**

The alternatives remain the same as the original EA, the No Action Alternative, and the Action Alternative of repairing the penstock, repairing and stabilizing the upstream face of the dam, stabilizing the intake tower base, and repairing and stabilizing the downstream face of the dam. The proposed scope changes to the Action Alternative include extending the construction project working hours, the establishment of an additional on-site spoil material area for material removed from the dam faces, and temporary road closures to ensure public safety due to traffic congestion.

## **Impacts Assessment**

Due to the nature of the three proposed changes related to the construction phase of the Action Alternative for rehabilitating Blue Ridge Dam, and due to the lack of wetlands, endangered and threatened species, managed areas, archaeological or cultural resources, or floodplains near the footprint of any of these proposed changes, impacts to these resources are not anticipated. Additionally, the proposed Action Alternative changes do not alter the analyses or conclusions of the analyses for air quality, socioeconomic, and environmental justice from the original EA, therefore, no significant impacts on air quality, socioeconomic, and environmental justice are anticipated. Impacts of the proposed changes on surface water quality and aquatic life, terrestrial ecology, recreation, visual quality, transportation, and noise would either be minor and insignificant or become minor and insignificant with implementation of the following mitigation measures.

## **Public and Intergovernmental Review**

Due to safety concerns related to traffic issues on North River Road, TVA informally communicated with Georgia and Fannin County officials during the summer of 2010. Subsequently, notice of the impending road closure was published in the *Fannin County News Observer* on July 9, 2010. The southernmost segment of North River Road from the Fishermen's Parking Lot at the Blue Ridge Dam Tailwater Access to Veterans Memorial Highway (old US Highway 76) was closed to the public on July 12, 2010. Similar coordination and publication of advance notice will occur should it become necessary to temporarily close an additional segment of North River Road.

## **Commitments and Mitigation**

The environmental commitments of the original EA would still apply. In addition, the following measures would be implemented to ensure no significant environmental impacts result from the minor modifications to the Action Alternative for rehabilitating Blue Ridge Dam:

1. All lights used (including headlights and pole-mounted, equipment-mounted or structure-mounted floodlights) will be fully shielded or have internal low-glare optics, such that no light is emitted from the fixture at angles above the horizontal. For construction, this may require temporarily retrofitting headlights, floodlights, and other fixtures with external visors and side-shields. Shielded low pressure sodium lights will be used during the construction and operational phases. Area lighting and parking lot poles will be no taller than 40 feet, unless they are lighting objects taller than 40 feet. In such cases pole heights will be minimized.
2. Erosion control measures consistent with TVA best management practices and the Georgia Erosion and Sediment Control Manual will be used to prevent material deposited at the new on-site spoil area from eroding and reaching the Toccoa River.

3. At the conclusion of construction activities, the new on-site spoil area will be contoured and re-vegetated with native plant species or noninvasive plant species.
4. If it becomes necessary to close North River Road from the Henry Road intersection to Veterans Memorial Highway, public notice will be provided, and directional signage will be provided to reroute tailwater users to the Tammen Park River Access.
5. If it becomes necessary to close North River Road from the Henry Road intersection to Veterans Memorial Highway, TVA will assist if necessary to accommodate Fannin County's planned upgrades of the river access at Tammen Park, including streambank stabilization and construction of new river access stairs.
6. The noise monitoring plan described in Attachment A of the Supplemental EA will be followed.
7. Noise emissions from equipment used for work on the dam faces after 10:00 p.m. and before 7:00 a.m. will be less than or equivalent to the values given in Table 6 of the Supplemental EA, or corrective measures as described in the noise monitoring plan will be implemented.
8. Rock drilling activities outside of the penstock will be restricted to the hours between 7:00 am and 10:00 pm.
9. All noise-producing equipment and vehicles using internal combustion engines will be equipped with exhaust mufflers, air-inlet silencers where appropriate, and any other shrouds, shields, or other noise-reducing features in good operating condition that meet or exceed original factory specification. Mobile or fixed "package" equipment (e.g., generators or air compressors) will be equipped with shrouds and noise control features that are readily available for that type of equipment.
10. All mobile or fixed noise-producing equipment used on the project, which is regulated for noise output by a local, state, or federal agency, will comply with such regulation while in the course of project activity.
11. The use of noise-producing signals, including horns, whistles, electronic alarms, sirens, and bells, will be for safety warning purposes only.
12. The trucking noise analysis assumed that engine brakes (also known as Jake brakes) will not be used. The contractors will be made aware that engine brake usage, especially at night, will be practiced only in emergency situations.
13. No project-related public address, loudspeaker, or amplified music system will exhibit sound levels that exceed limits imposed by local regulations at any adjacent noise-sensitive land use.
14. TVA will implement a noise complaint process and hotline number for use by members of the surrounding community. TVA or its compliance inspectors will have the responsibility and authority to receive, evaluate, and when appropriate make reasonable efforts to resolve noise complaints.

## Conclusion and Findings

Because the three proposed changes to the construction phase of the Action Alternative of rehabilitating Blue Ridge Dam would not impact endangered and threatened species, or archaeological or cultural resources, the project would still comply with the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. Additionally, these changes would not impact floodplains or wetlands so the proposed action would still comply with Executive Order (EO) 11988 (Floodplain Management) and EO 11990 (Wetlands Protection).

Based on the findings listed above and the analyses in the SEA, TVA concludes that implementing the proposed changes to the Action Alternative for the rehabilitation of Blue Ridge Dam would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is contingent upon adherence to the mitigation measures described above and detailed in the original EA.

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April 11, 2011

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Date Signed