

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**  
**CORNELIUS CHANNEL EXCAVATION**

PICKWICK RESERVOIR  
COLBERT COUNTY, ALABAMA

**Proposed Action and Need**

William Cornelius has applied to TVA for permission to excavate a channel to provide access to private docks for seven waterfront residential lots on Pickwick Reservoir. The project is located north of Cherokee, Alabama, between the Natchez Trace Parkway and the Mississippi State Line. The area to be excavated is a small cove located at Tennessee River Mile 235.0, left bank, facing downriver. The shoreline along the cove is designated as residential access in the Pickwick Reservoir Land Management Plan (2002). The channel excavation would be approximately 325 feet in length with a width of 150 feet. The new channel would have a bottom elevation of 404 feet MSL, providing year-round water. All work would be performed in the dry during normal winter drawdown of Pickwick Reservoir. The property to be excavated is TVA property under the waters of Pickwick Reservoir. The disposal area is an upland site located on private property. Any future private docks would require Section 26a approval from TVA.

Following initial review of the project (see Categorical Exclusion Checklist attached as Appendix C to the Environmental Assessment (EA)), TVA decided to cooperate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in preparation of an EA on the impacts of this proposal.

**Alternatives**

The EA prepared by USACE evaluated four alternatives. Under No Action, the channel excavation would not take place. Under the Applicant's Proposed Action, a boat access channel would be constructed as described above. Under Other Alternatives, the proposal would be scaled back or alternate dredging such as suction dredging would be used. Under the Applicant's Proposal with Appropriate Mitigation and Special Conditions, equipment would be limited to one access point along the bank, the dredge would be performed only during low pool or winter pool drawdown, excavated material would be placed on an upland location outside the 100-year floodplain, and material would be disposed of on land lying above the 421.4-foot contour.

**Impacts Assessment**

Under No Action, the channel excavation would not take place. Residential docks would not be accessible during winter drawdown. Under the Applicant's Proposed Action, a channel would be excavated. During construction, there would be minimal potential for increasing turbidity of the reservoir since excavation would be constructed in the dry. There would be no effects to federally-listed endangered or threatened species and no historic properties affected. Other alternatives such as reducing the area of the dredge

or use of suction dredging would result in less impacts to water quality and turbidity; however, given the minimal impacts of the proposed alternative, and the fact that the applicant's purpose and need is to provide winter water for residential docks, it is not necessary to require a reduction in area or a special excavation technique. The special conditions provided in the Applicant's proposal and attached to the Section 404 permits would provide additional assurance that the impacts of land disturbance in the area would be minimized and that the potential for erosion and sedimentation is reduced.

### **TVA Review**

TVA independently evaluated the project as indicated in the Categorical Exclusion Checklist. Because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) had in the past expressed concern about dredging activities for public and private water use facilities in the Tennessee River and potential effects to rare mussels and fish, TVA reviewed the results of consultation from the public notice. Excavation in the dry reduced the potential for impacts to these resources. TVA also conducted a field review of the project for historic properties, and confirmed that no historic properties would be affected. The agencies' finding of "no historic properties affected" was included in the January 13, 2006 public notice for the project. A copy of this public notice was sent to the Alabama State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The Alabama SHPO did not object to this finding. For the purposes of indirect and cumulative impact analysis, if a permit is issued, it is anticipated that upland development on private property would occur. However, this development would likely take place whether or not a channel excavation was approved by TVA.

### **Mitigation**

TVA would require use of its general and standard conditions for Section 26a approval. These Best Management Practices, together with the requirements of the Section 404 permit, would reduce all potential impacts to insignificance.

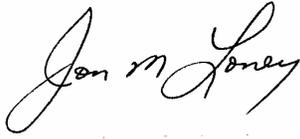
### **Public and Intergovernmental Review**

The proposed channel excavation was announced to the public and agencies by Joint Public Notice 06-04, dated January 13, 2006. A comment letter was received from FWS. FWS indicated that suitable habitat did not exist for any threatened or endangered species at the site. However, they recommended strict adherence to Best Management Practices, restriction of excavation to low winter pool, and contact with the State of Alabama to determine possible impacts to public river bottom property. These conditions were added to the Section 404 approval.

### **Conclusion and Findings**

As mentioned above, TVA finds that the project would have no effect on endangered and threatened species and would not affect historic properties. For compliance with Executive Order 11988, channel excavation is a repetitive action in the floodplain for which there is no practicable alternative. TVA has independently reviewed the USACE EA and determined that the impacts have been adequately addressed. TVA is adopting

the USACE EA. Based on review of the USACE EA, TVA concludes that approval of the channel excavation for Cornelius at TRM 235L would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Therefore, an EIS is not required.



*May 31, 2006*

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Date Signed