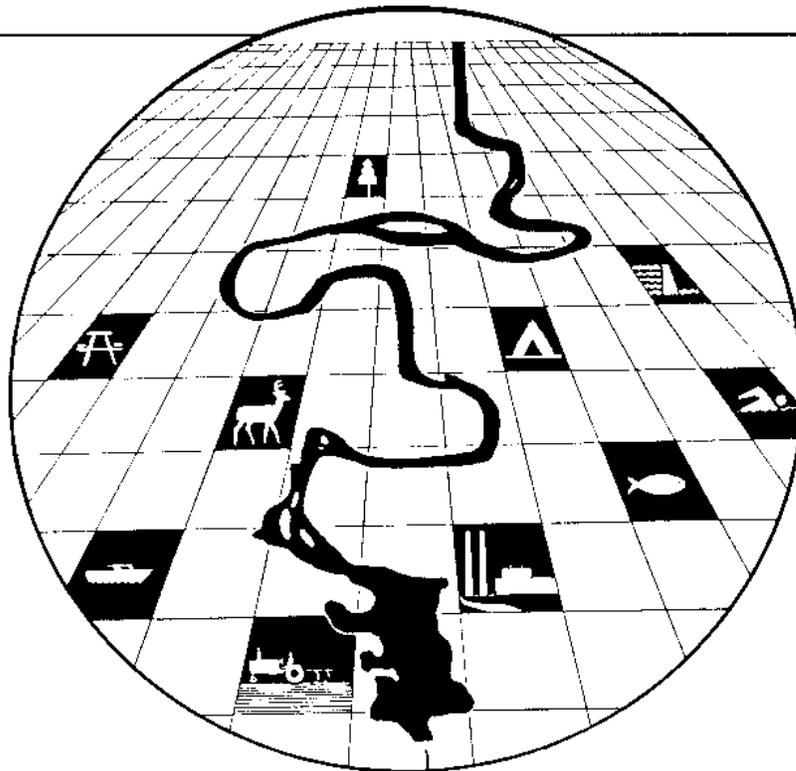


NICKAJACK RESERVOIR PLAN

Planning Issues and Objectives



PLANNING ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

TVA's multipurpose mission, as reflected in the reservoir land management goals contained in the INTRODUCTION to this plan, establishes the basis for a wide range of uses for TVA land on Nickajack Reservoir. To conform with TVA's broad mission, the plan identifies sites for economic development, including industry, navigation, and recreation, and provides for management of agricultural, forest, wildlife, cultural, and visual resources. The plan also reflects TVA's commitment to optimizing public benefit from the use of its land. This section focuses on the plan's strategies for balancing competing and sometimes conflicting land uses to meet TVA's goals, while at the same time being responsive to local and regional needs and values.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TVA's reservoir land management goals include promoting economic development in the reservoir area. While the total economic impact of the use of TVA's reservoir land is difficult to measure, every potential use has some direct and/or indirect impact on the economics of the reservoir area.

Economic development is most commonly associated with such land uses as industrial, navigation, or commercial recreation development; however, various public recreation and resource management land uses also contribute significantly to the area economy. For example, wildlife management attracts hunters and other non-consumptive wildlife users who spend money at area retail establishments. Similarly, proper management of the reservoir's visual resources or aesthetics will help to maintain and enhance the area's attractiveness for recreation and tourism activities which also provide area economic benefits.

Specific issues related to the use of TVA land on Nickajack Reservoir for economic development purposes include (1) industrial development adjacent to and downstream of the dam on the right bank of the Tennessee River, and (2) recreation development of a portion of the TVA land known as Little Cedar Mountain.

The large parcel of public land (Tract No. 1 - 637.7 ac.) on the right bank of the Tennessee River, adjacent to and downstream of Nickajack Dam, and bounded on the east by Shellmound Road, was identified for industrial development by the Marion County Planning Commission, the Tennessee State Planning Commission, and TVA (A Plan for Development, Nickajack Reservoir Area, 1965) during construction of Nickajack Dam. About 125 acres of this land was filled for industrial use with material from the river diversion channel dredged during dam construction. This parcel has been promoted for industrial development by both Marion County and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development.

The Little Cedar Mountain property (Tract Nos. 3 and 5 - 1,020.8 ac.) is located on the right bank of the reservoir between Nickajack Dam and Interstate 24 and includes TVA's Shellmound Recreation Area. The 1965 reservoir development plan prepared by TVA, the State, and Marion County identified 600 acres of this parcel for intensive recreation development because (1) regional access via I-24 and US 41/64/72 was excellent, (2) the site represented the only

suitable location for intensive recreation development on the reservoir, and (3) such development was seen as necessary to achieve a balanced use of reservoir shorelands. The Tennessee Department of Conservation (TDOC), with the full support of Marion County, completed a master plan for development of a State resort park on Little Cedar Mountain in 1973. However, the poor economy of the 1970s and changes in TDOC policy prevented subsequent implementation of the plan. Marion County maintained its interest in seeing the site used for commercial/resort recreation development and requested that TVA make the land available for such use as well as for commercial office space and private residential development.

TDOC recognizes the significant opportunity for resort level recreation development of this land and realizes that such development could make a considerable contribution to the local and regional economy of the area. The department is prepared to assist in identifying and assessing options for development should a careful examination of all land use alternatives recommend such action.

While the requested uses of Tract No. 1 for industrial development and Tract Nos. 3 and 5 for recreation development are compatible with each other, all parcels (Tracts Nos. 1, 3, and 5 - 1,658.5 ac.) have been requested by TWRA, with significant support by outside organizations, for long-term wildlife management purposes. (See RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, pages 73 and 74).

Specific objectives which promote economic development on Nickajack Reservoir include:

- Cluster future industrial and navigation development facilities in two areas: the Interstate 24 bridge area and below Nickajack Dam.

This objective reflects a common desire of industrial/navigation development supporters as well as non-supporters. Proponents recognize that with clustering of development such infrastructure costs as roads, rail, and utilities can be shared. Non-supporters recognize the benefit, in terms of resource conservation, of directing such development to certain areas rather than spreading development throughout the reservoir area.

The plan seeks to maintain the overall character of the reservoir as valued by the public by accommodating industrial growth in areas that have already been developed. Three tracts have been identified for future industrial development: one along the right bank adjacent to and downstream of Nickajack Dam (Tract No. 1) and one each below the Interstate 24 bridge at Ladds (Tract No. 17) and above the Highway 41 bridge at Haletown (Tract No. 21). The Ladds and Haletown sites are also identified as future barge terminal sites and were graded and ripped for barge terminal development prior to impoundment of the reservoir.

- Designate sites for public/private partnership investments on TVA lands to generate economic growth opportunities in the reservoir area that are focused on recreation and tourism services.

When the comprehensive land use plan was completed for Nickajack Reservoir in 1965, intensive recreation development was viewed as necessary to achieve a balanced development of shorelands. Unlike development on many other TVA reservoirs, the variety and quality of

public and private recreation development have not occurred on Nickajack because of earlier environmental, economic, and political factors. Accordingly, visitation and economic impacts are not what were envisioned in planning for the reservoir nor what they could be. Viewed in total, existing recreation development does not attract large numbers of recreators for extended periods of time.

It appears the recommendations of the 1965 reservoir development plan are still valid today. The missing link on Nickajack is intensive recreation development, i.e., a properly developed/promoted focal point. The plan identifies two tracts for future recreation/tourism development that can provide a full range of recreation opportunities and services. Tract No. 3 includes the TVA land known as Little Cedar Mountain, and Tract No. 4 contains a smaller parcel located on the opposite, northern side of I-24. In addition, Tract No. 18 contains TVA's Running Water Campground for which a commercial operator is being sought, and Tract No. 20 is currently under license for commercial recreation purposes to the adjacent owner/operator of Anchor Inn Bait and Tackle Store.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

TVA's land management goal for protecting the amenities and environmental quality of the reservoir area and adjoining lands directly impacts other land management goals. Recognizing the interrelationship between environmental quality and land use, relevant environmental data were carefully analyzed prior to making any allocations. Furthermore, all development and management activities resulting from this plan will be conducted in accordance with applicable legal authorities and other environmental quality controls.

The most significant issue regarding environmental quality on Nickajack Reservoir concerns the use of TVA reservoir lands within the Tennessee River Gorge. From TRM 432 to 456, the Tennessee River forms what is referred to as the "Grand Canyon of the Tennessee." Much of the land in this narrow, steep-walled gorge is relatively unspoiled in character and is publicly owned or in large private land holdings (TVA's Raccoon Mountain Pumped-Storage Facility, Prentice-Cooper State Forest and Wildlife Management Area, Hiwassee Land Company). In 1983, the Nature Conservancy (TNC) began efforts to protect the scenic beauty of the river gorge. Ecological surveys revealed an array of rare plant and animal species. Twenty specific natural areas were identified, several of them within Prentice-Cooper State Forest.

TVA, also in 1983, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with TNC to manage the lands under TVA control "to protect and preserve the scenic beauty of the gorge." The Tennessee River Gorge Trust, Inc., (Trust) was formed in 1986 to further these protection efforts. TVA has been supportive of the Trust's efforts and has provided funding for land appraisals and map printing. The Trust has requested that TVA transfer to it, in fee simple, all planned lands between the U.S. Highway 41 Bridge (TRM 429.8) and TRM 442, with the exception of TVA's public boat ramp at TRM 440.

Specific objectives designed to protect the amenities and environmental quality on Nickajack Reservoir include:

- Preserve TVA's reservoir lands located in the Tennessee River Gorge in their natural state.

With the exception of the small 2-acre tract located at TRM 440, left bank, which contains a TVA public boat ramp (Tract No. 30), all remaining TVA fee-owned land upstream of TRM 431 (Tract Nos. 29 and 31), including all islands, is designated for natural resource management purposes including: habitat protection, informal recreation, visual protection, and wildlife management. These lands will continue to be available for informal public recreation and wildlife habitat improvement activities; however, no development will be allowed. TVA will continue management of these lands.

- Protect the natural beauty and visual quality of TVA public land, especially the reservoir shoreline.

Overall, participants at the Nickajack public workshops listed scenic beauty of the reservoir as their highest value. Toward this objective, TVA staff completed an analysis of the visual resources on the reservoir and assigned a visual quality rating to each parcel of TVA land prior to development of this plan. The ratings identified (1) the distinctiveness of the landscape, (2) the visibility and level of concern for the landscape, and (3) acceptable management activities that could occur on the parcel. (The visual quality rating system is described in Appendix B.) Based on these ratings, four tracts were identified for visual protection, which permits no development and only low visual impact activities (Tract Nos. 5, 6, 29, and 31). Additionally, 13 tracts were designated for visual management, so that visual considerations will be built into any management or development plans for those tracts (Tract Nos. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 24, 25, and 26). Furthermore, all tracts will be managed to minimize visual resource degradation.

- Protect reservoir water quality through land uses that will reduce erosion and sedimentation.

TVA lands with high soil erosion potential were identified through interpretation of soils data. Where appropriate, highly erodible sites were designated for various non-developmental uses so that vegetative cover could be established or maintained (various tracts).

RECREATION

TVA's reservoir land management goals include providing a diversity of quality recreation opportunities on TVA reservoirs and adjoining lands. Specific to recreation, public comment and TVA staff input resulted in the following objectives:

- Designate areas for informal recreation uses such as hunting, hiking, and bank fishing.

Participants at both public workshops highly valued areas of undisturbed shoreline along the reservoir. They cited the need for such areas to allow for hiking, nature observation, bank fishing, and other passive forms of recreation. Consequently, six tracts (Tract Nos. 6, 8, 9, 11, 24, and 29) as well as all islands were designated for informal recreation. Many of the tracts have historically received heavy informal use by the public.

- Designate areas for commercial recreation development downstream of Hales Bar Dam.

Existing commercial recreation services on Nickajack Reservoir are very limited. This plan recognizes the importance of providing a variety of facilities, services, and locations to give visitors a range of choices. In total, three tracts were designated for commercial recreation development downstream of Hales Bar Dam: one for development of a commercial (or public) campground (Tract No. 4), one for conversion of a public TVA campground to a commercial campground (Tract No. 18), and one for expansion of an existing small-scale recreation supplies/camp-ground operation (Tract No. 20).

- Retain and enhance current TVA public recreation areas.

Participants at both public workshops highly valued public recreation opportunities on Nickajack. They stressed a need for better maintenance of existing facilities with control of littering, vandalism, and general misuse.

TVA, in 1969, began providing basic recreation improvements, such as picnic facilities, boat launching ramps, access roads, and sanitary facilities, where public use indicated a need for such facilities. Over the last several years, emphasis has been placed on improving the quality of services and facilities and seeking cooperative arrangements with other parties such as commercial operators and local governments in the operation and maintenance of these areas.

On Nickajack Reservoir, TVA has developed public recreation facilities at the dam reservation (Tract Nos. 2, 3, and 7), Maple View (Tract No. 10), Running Water (Tract No. 18), and three water access sites (Tract Nos. 12, 23, and 30), as well as at the Raccoon Mountain pumped-storage facility and below Chickamauga Dam. Running Water Campground is operated under a cooperative agreement with a resident manager. Use of these areas ranges from moderate to heavy, with the Shellmound Campground and Day Use area on the dam reservation (Tract No. 3) ranking as the most popular.

No new TVA public recreation area development is anticipated within this plan's 10-year horizon. However, all existing TVA public recreation areas (Tract Nos. 2, 3, 7, 10, 12, 18, 23, and 30), as well as a small area under license to Marion County (Tract No. 22), have been designated for public recreation. In addition to the existing public recreation facilities, the plan allocates two tracts for future public development. Tract No. 3, Little Cedar Mountain is suitable for large-scale resort development, and Tract No. 4 is suitable for either public or commercial campground development.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

TVA's land management goal to protect and enhance the forestry, fisheries, and wildlife resources and preserve the cultural and agricultural resources on TVA lands acknowledges the importance of stewardship of the Valley's natural and cultural resources.

The plan establishes agriculture, forestry, wildlife, and cultural resource management as recognized, long-term uses for TVA land on Nickajack Reservoir. The 10-year life of the plan allows time to experience results from these resource management practices that sometimes represent significant investment by TVA or other agencies.

The major issue involving resource management on Nickajack Reservoir lands centers around competing and exclusive proposed uses of a single large parcel of TVA land referred to as Little Cedar Mountain.

As discussed under ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (see pages 64 and 65), TVA lands adjacent to and downstream of Nickajack Dam on the right bank (Tract No. 1 - 637.7 ac.) have been requested for industrial development by Marion County and the State Department of Economic and Community Development.

TVA lands referred to as Little Cedar Mountain (Tract Nos. 3 and 5 - 1,020.8 ac.) have been requested by Marion County for commercial/resort recreation development, to include commercial office space and residential development. In addition, the Tennessee Department of Conservation has had ongoing interest in the use of a portion of the Little Cedar Mountain lands for public recreation purposes since 1973 (see page 33).

While these two requests are compatible with each other, all of these lands (Tract Nos. 1, 3, and 5 - 1,658.5 ac.) have also been requested by TWRA for designation as a State Wildlife Management Area. TWRA's request has significant support by such organizations as Quail Unlimited, Inc., The Tennessee Field Trial Association, and the Chattanooga Retriever Club. As discussed in the RESERVOIR DESCRIPTION section (see page 57), a cooperative agreement between TVA and the Chattanooga Chapter of Quail Unlimited has been in effect since April 1986 to develop wildlife habitat on a 400-acre portion of this land. In addition, TDOC supports TWRA's interim use of this land on the basis of maintaining options for future recreation development, and recommends continuation of the existing land use, including the cooperative agreement between TVA and Quail Unlimited.

Specific objectives related to resource management on Nickajack include:

- Protect significant cultural resources, including archaeological and historical sites, throughout the reservoir area.

TVA completed a survey of the architectural, historical, and archaeological resources of the reservoir area prior to development of this plan. The survey information is recorded in the plan's data base and will be considered when any land management actions are taken. In order to promote compatible uses on the land surrounding significant archaeological sites and historic sites and structures located in the area, four tracts have been identified for cultural resource protection (Tract Nos. 5, 10, 13, and 15).

- Protect the integrity of riparian habitat areas for wildlife and erosion control benefits.

Areas of the reservoir shoreline such as that found around islands and on TVA lands within the Tennessee River Gorge (Tract Nos. 29 and 31) provide extremely important wetlands and riparian wildlife habitat. Maintenance of these areas in an undeveloped state is essential to the survival of a variety of species of waterfowl as well as bald eagle, osprey, wading birds, and furbearers. All of these areas (Tract Nos. 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 19, 26, 27, 29, and 31) have received nondevelopmental resource management/protection designations in the plan which, in addition to providing protection for wildlife habitat, will provide erosion control benefits.

- Designate areas for the protection and management of significant wildlife resources.

The public strongly valued the reservoir's wildlife resources as adding to the natural beauty of the area. They enjoy seeing wildlife along the shoreline. They also value the hunting opportunities which the reservoir provides. The plan addresses this dichotomy between consumptive and nonconsumptive uses of wildlife by identifying land to satisfy both needs. Twelve tracts are designated for wildlife management (Tract Nos. 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19, 26, 27, 29, and 31). Some will be used for non-consumptive wildlife observation areas and others for public hunting areas. Management plans for tracts with multiple-use designations will be developed with input from all affected TVA programs.

- Designate sites to provide long-term protection for sensitive plant and animal species and unique or unusual communities currently under or recommended for State or Federal protection.

Numerous rare or sensitive plant species are located in the reservoir area, and their habitats could be destroyed by improper management, heavy public use, or inappropriate development. Additionally, some reservoir lands are used by nesting osprey, wintering bald eagles, and other wildlife species of Federal or State concern. Since protection of these sensitive and/or unique habitats is important in maintaining the environmental quality of the reservoir area, the plan identifies five tracts for habitat protection areas (Tract Nos. 5, 10, 16, 26, and 31).

- Designate sites for the demonstration of proper forest management techniques and application of best management practices on these lands.

TVA land contains only a small portion of the total forest resource in the Nickajack Reservoir area, since most of the forested land is in private ownership. TVA should practice good stewardship and use appropriate lands to research and demonstrate forest management techniques applicable to the amount of land and types of forest held by private landowners in the reservoir area. The plan identifies four tracts for forest management, most of which are suitable for forest management demonstrations (Tract Nos. 8, 9, 11, and 27).

- Promote integration of natural resources through multiple-use land designations.

Of the 31 tracts identified in the plan, 14 are designated for multiple resource management. In implementing the plan, TVA programs with responsibility for each use will jointly develop specific multiuse plans for each tract.