



IN REPLY REFER TO

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NASHVILLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
110 9TH AVENUE SOUTH, ROOM A-405
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37203

Project Planning Branch

MAY 04 2020

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and unsigned Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) dated May 2019 for the Revision of the 1998 Dale Hollow Dam and Reservoir Water Control Manual (WCM). The purpose of the proposed action is to update the Dale Hollow Dam and Reservoir WCM to include current project operations under the existing congressional authorizations.

The WCM at Dale Hollow serves as a guide for the day-to-day and emergency regulation of the project, and to provide background information on the project. The manual present the plan of regulation for the project and furnish information pertinent to its operation. This update would incorporate changes in basin hydrology and consumptive demands due to years of growth and development, new/rehabilitated structural features, and environmental considerations. The draft EA serves to evaluate the impacts of the proposed revision of the 1998 Dale Hollow Dam and Reservoir WCM. Figure 1 shows the study area for the project.

A Scoping Letter regarding the revision of Dale Hollow WCM was mailed on August 9, 2019 to solicit comments from the public. Based on public, federal, state, local agencies and officials, Indian Tribes, and other interested parties' comments to the August 2019 Scoping Letter, the Corps determined an EA was necessary to evaluate environmental impacts associated with the proposed changes to the Dale Hollow Dam and Reservoir 1998 WCM.

The EA evaluates both No Action Alternative (NAA) and Proposed Action Alternative (PAA). The PAA was ultimately determined to be the best selected alternative, which is the alternative that provides the greatest environmental benefits. The EA evaluated the following action alternatives:

- No Action Alternative – Would deny the revision of the 1998 WCM. The WCM would remain the same. This alternative is considered unacceptable due to limitations in emergency operations and increased demand for flood control, water quality, water supply, and hydropower generation. However, it is included in the alternatives analysis to establish a baseline condition for existing human and natural environmental conditions, to allow comparison between future with and without project actions, and to determine potential environmental effects of proposed project alternatives. Evaluation of the NAA is a requirement under NEPA regulation.

- Proposed Action Alternative – The revision of the WCM would involve several updates to incorporate recent historical data (1998-2020), watershed characteristics, communication networks, and modern forecasting methods. These updates are informational in nature and provide prudent knowledge to Nashville District water managers. This document only evaluates proposed operational alterations to the 1998 WCM.

Proposed operational modifications include:

- Control Flow at Celina – Currently, the control flow at Celina (combination discharges from Wolf Creek and Dale Hollow Dams’ and the uncontrolled watershed between Celina and the dams) varies seasonally based on crop season (April 15th – December 15th) at 30,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) and flood season (December 15th – April 15th) at 40,000 cfs. The revised water control manual proposes a single control flow at Celina that would not vary seasonally and remain at 40,000 cfs year round.
- Hydropower Ramp Rates – Dale Hollow Dam has three hydropower units/turbines. The revised water control manual would limit the ramp up to one unit per hour and ramp down to two units per hour, under normal operating conditions. During a power emergency, a ramp up of two units per hour would be allowed.
- Turbine Discharge and Sluice Gate Supplementation – Air supply valves connected to the turbine systems are typically utilized seasonally to improve dissolved oxygen when levels fall below the Tennessee Cold Water Aquatic Habitat standard of six milligrams per liter. If tailwater dissolved oxygen readings are still below the State standard, releases from other outlets, i.e. sluice gates, may be used to augment hydropower releases to potentially lessen environmental impacts downstream or provide additional discharge capacity.
- Minimum Flow – Minimum flow is currently defined as the discharge equivalent of one hour of generation during every 48-hour period from June 1st through November 15th. This would be changed to one hour of generation per calendar day. The proposed change would not be utilized during flooding and would maintain zero discharge until flows downstream recede to appropriate levels.

The EA evaluated environmental effects of the PAA and NAA under the following categories: recreation and scenic resources, aquatic resources and water quality, floodplain, wetland, navigation, climate and physiography, terrestrial resources, threatened and endangered species, prime farmland, cultural resources, hazardous/toxic substances, health and safety, socioeconomics, and air quality.

This letter serves as a Notice of Availability for reviewing the draft EA and unsigned FONSI. The draft EA is prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4370h), Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 C.F.R. §§ 1500-1508), and the Corps' implementing regulation, ER 200-2-2, 1988 (33 C.F.R. § 230), *Policies and Procedures for Implementing NEPA*. Electronic copies of the documents can be found at: <https://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/Media/Public-Notices/Article/2168841/draft-environmental-assessment-and-unsigned-finding-of-no-significant-impact-fo/>

In light of workplace limitations due to COVID-19, we request comments be sent by email to cody.a.flatt@usace.army.mil no later than thirty calendar days from the date of this letter to ensure consideration in the final EA. If you are unable to access an email account, you may send written comments to the address listed on the letterhead, ATTN: CELRN-PMP (Cody A. Flatt). Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

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CRAIG D. CARRINGTON
Chief, Project Planning Branch

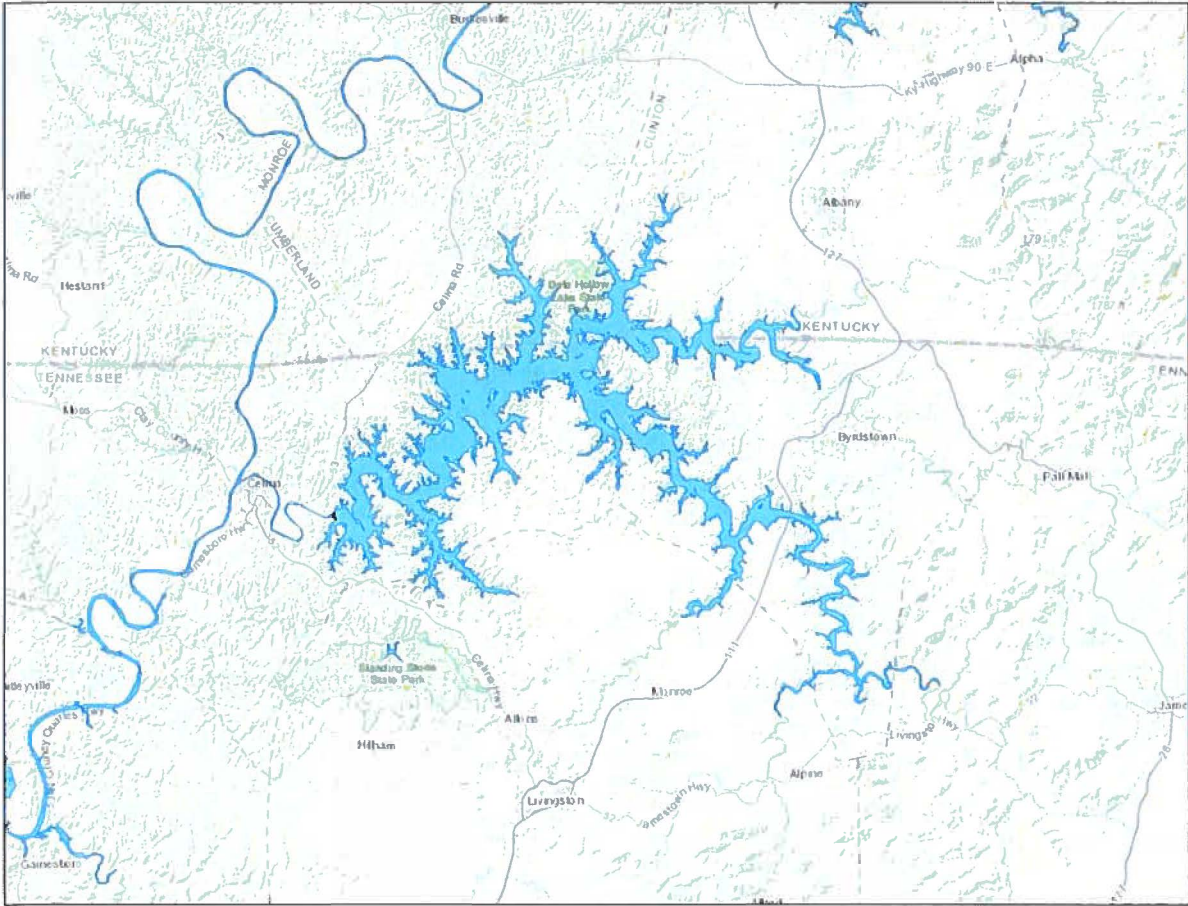


Figure 1. Dale Hollow Reservoir and Dam Project Map