



R. L. Harris Hydroelectric Project

FERC No. 2628

Meeting Summary

HAT 3 Meeting

August 27, 2019

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Wendell Mitchell Conference Center, Greenville, AL

Participants:

Angie Anderegg - Alabama Power

Jeff Baker - Alabama Power

Jason Carlee - Alabama Power

Curt Chaffin - Alabama Rivers Alliance (ARA)

Kristie Coffman - Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

Evan Collins - United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Colin Dinken - Kleinschmidt

Taconya Goar - Alabama Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (ADCNR)

Elise Irwin - USGS Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit (ACFWRU)

Jason Moak - Kleinschmidt

By Phone:

Dave Anderson - Alabama Power

Chris Goodman - Stakeholder

Donna Matthews - Stakeholder

Ashley McVicar - Alabama Power

Sarah Salazar - Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

Action Items:

- Prepare draft meeting notes and distribute to HAT 3 members (will also be available on the Harris Relicensing website – Alabama Power)
- Determine the need, extent, and timing of surveys for finelined pocketbook in Tallapoosa River near HWY 431 - Alabama Power and USFWS
- Review existing information on southern pigtoe and Morefield's leather flower to determine if further analysis is warranted - USFWS
- Determine if there is existing data for fish/mussel communities at Little Coon Creek – Alabama Power
- Determine the need, extent, and timing of surveys to assess aquatic habitat in Little Coon Creek – Alabama Power and USFWS

Meeting Summary:

Angie Anderegg (Alabama Power) opened the meeting by explaining where we are in the R.L. Harris Project (Harris Project) relicensing process. Alabama Power filed a revised Study Plan on March 13, 2019, and FERC issued its study plan determination on April 12, 2019. Since the study plan approval, Alabama Power started several studies and will host additional Harris Action Team (HAT) meetings to provide progress updates on the various resource studies.

Jason M. (Kleinschmidt) reviewed the goal, geographic scope, and methods of the Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species Study Plan. Jason M. then reviewed the study schedule and upcoming October Progress Update. Alabama Power plans to distribute a draft T&E Study Report in February 2020 and file the Initial Study Report with FERC in April 2020. Harris Action Team meetings will be held subsequently as needed, and Alabama Power will file with FERC, an additional Progress Update in October 2020, and an Updated Study Report in April 2021.

At present, there are no listed species known to occur within the Harris Project Boundary. Jason M. reviewed the list of federally threatened and endangered species potentially occurring in Alabama counties within the Harris Project, beginning with the Red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). Jeff Baker (Alabama Power) reported no RCW habitat has been observed in the Harris Project Boundary during bald eagle surveys and no RCWs have been observed to date.

Curt Chaffin (Alabama Rivers Alliance) mentioned the June 2019 removal of the Howle and Turner Dam on the Tallapoosa River upstream of Lake Harris and asked if there was any chance the removal could affect critical habitat for the finelined pocketbook. Evan Collins (USFWS) replied that given the proximity of the finelined pocketbook's critical habitat to the Project Boundary, some investigation could be warranted. Jason asked where in the mainstem the species occurred, and Evan said he could send Alabama Power a map and that he would not be surprised if finelined pocketbook occurred near the Harris Project Boundary (around HWY 431). Sarah Salazar (FERC) suggested that any mussel assessments should also consider fish species that serve as hosts for mussel larvae.

Jason M. noted that the Southern Pigtoe is endemic to the Coosa River and may have never existed in the Tallapoosa basin, which may warrant removal from further consideration. Sarah noted that Alabama Power should document USFWS concurrence with any decision to remove from consideration any species on the official list.

Jason M. reviewed the Indiana Bat, Northern Long-eared Bat and Gray Bat. He noted that the Alabama Natural Heritage Program did not report any occurrences of these bat species in the Harris Project Boundary. Evan stated it is likely that all three bat species occur at Skyline. Jason Carlee (Alabama Power) confirmed that timber harvest activities follow appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), including leaving snag tree and preferred habitat trees and delaying timber harvest during sensitive time periods. Some forestry BMPs have been expanded but have not been incorporated into the existing license. Sarah noted that it appears that all project counties occur within the White Nose Syndrome Zone.

Jason M. reviewed threatened and endangered plants, beginning with Little Amphianthus (Pool Sprite). One occurrence was reported within the Harris Project Boundary in Flat Rock Park in March 17, 1995. The group discussed the possibility of changing the land use classification of some lands from Recreation to Natural/Undeveloped and noted that surveys at Flat Rock Park occurred in Fall 2018 and Spring 2019. An additional survey is scheduled for Fall 2019. Taconya Goar (ADCNR) asked Alabama Power to clarify what it means to reclassify land as Natural/Undeveloped. Angie commented that the 20-acre parcel of land where the botanical inventory is taking place is currently classified as Recreation. The American Glade Conservation Coalition (AGCC) has recommended that Alabama Power reclassify the 20-acres to provide additional protection for the rare habitat types present there. Jeff Baker (Alabama Power) mentioned the BioBlitz held at that site in Fall 2018. Evan asked if the AGCC were looking for

suitable habitat in addition to the species themselves. Jason Carlee noted that the ongoing survey efforts will document both the species and habitats currently present on the parcel.

Jason M. reviewed the White Fringeless Orchid and stated that Alabama Power may use Geographic Information System (GIS) data to determine if habitat requirements align with potential habitat available within the Project Boundary. Jason M. reviewed the Price's Potato-bean and stated that Alabama Power may further investigate this species since it is known to be present within the Skyline Wildlife Management Area. Jason M. also reviewed the Morefield's Leather Flower. Sarah asked if there would be a complete set of maps for the Project Update and stated that Morefield's Leather Flower is not in the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) species list. Angie asked why this species wasn't in the IPaC or Natural Heritage Program list but is in the Study Plan. Evan commented that the IPaC data is on a finer scale than a county and that he would look through USFWS data.

Evan commented on some of the different requirements of certain mussel species and fish: the *Notropis* species (Palezone Shiner) may be present in some of the lower reaches of Tennessee River tributaries. Jeff offered to make an inquiry with ADEM to determine if/where they have performed fish surveys on Little Coon Creek at Skyline. Evan suggested that Little Coon Creek would need to be investigated further to determine the type and extent of available habitat and whether it is suitable for aquatic species listed in the study plan.

Jason M. reiterated the need to investigate the likelihood of some of the study plan species occurring within the Harris Project. Jason C. pointed out that most of the field verification work could be performed fairly quickly. Evan will take a closer look at the distributions of some plant species such as Morefield's Leather Flower to see if they should remain in the Study Plan. Evan asked how the habitat assessment was going to be performed. Jason M. replied that Alabama Power is consulting with subject matter experts that are familiar with these areas and looking at the possibility of field surveys for confirmation. Jason C. discussed existing protection and enhancement measures performed by Alabama Power, including BMPs, animal boxes, and future discussion items such as the Wildlife Management Plan.

Jason M. noted Kleinschmidt will prepare the T&E Species report, which will focus on life history requirements and distributions of study plan species within the geographic scope. Alabama Power will host a HAT 3 meeting in the Spring of 2020, but a phone meeting may be scheduled earlier if needed.