

Responsible Federal Agency: Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Title: SHORELINE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE: AN ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENTIAL SHORELINE DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS IN THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

Proposed Action: TVA proposes to review existing permitting practices and establish a policy that better protects shoreline and aquatic resources, while accommodating reasonable access to the water by adjacent residents. Jurisdictions affected by this action are 30 reservoir projects where TVA, under Section 26a of the TVA Act, has approval authority over proposed obstructions. Included are mainstream Tennessee River and tributary reservoirs in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Abstract: The environmental consequences of seven alternatives for managing residential shoreline development (docks, bank stabilization, vegetation management, etc.) are analyzed. The alternatives vary according to the type of standards for allowable shoreline development and whether additional shoreland would be opened for residential access. Residential shoreline development was found to generally decrease forested area, wildlife habitat, aquatic habitat, water quality, and informal recreational opportunities, and increase income, employment, and property values and taxes. Currently, about 13 percent of the total shoreline miles on TVA's reservoirs is developed for residential uses. Lakefront property owners have access rights along an additional 25 percent of the shoreline that is currently undeveloped.

Based on the analysis in this document, and public review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), TVA prefers a Blended Alternative—a composite of standards previously presented in several different alternatives. The standards proposed in the Blended Alternative have been chosen to provide flexibility for those seeking to make residential shoreline alterations while also minimizing environmental impacts to TVA public lands and waters. Standards are defined for vegetation management, docks, shoreline stabilization, and other residential shoreline alterations. In the Blended Alternative, TVA would:

- Adopt a strategy of maintaining and gaining public shoreline through an integrated approach that conserves, protects, and enhances shoreline resources and public use opportunities, while providing for reasonable and compatible use of the shoreline by adjacent residents.
- Continue to allow docks and other alterations along open shorelines where sensitive resources, navigation, flood control, and power generation concerns do not exist.
- Limit consideration of requests for access across shorelines where such rights do not exist to (a) projects proposed by others for exchange of access rights that result in no net loss or preferably a net gain of undeveloped public shoreline, and (b) TVA projects that support the agency's integrated resource management mission. Other than these situations, no additional residential access rights would be considered.
- Continue to emphasize the ecological and recreational importance of public lands by placing high priority on resource conservation and public recreation in the management of other undeveloped public shorelands that are not available for residential shoreline development permits.
- Ensure that sensitive natural and cultural resource values of reservoir shorelines are conserved and retained by completing a resource inventory and adding a shoreline categorization system to land management plans prepared by TVA for individual reservoirs; the categorization system would designate open shorelines into use categories (Shoreline Protection, Residential Mitigation, and Managed Residential).

- Promote voluntary establishment of conservation easements across flowage easement or other shoreland to protect scenic landscapes, encourage clustered development, or provide other public benefits.
- Merge some features of existing permitting guidelines with upgraded standards that promote the use of best management practices for the construction of docks, management of vegetation, stabilization of shoreline erosion, and other shoreline alterations.
- Emphasize education activities and incentives as important components of shoreline management.

Accompanying Volume I of this Final EIS is a separate comment response document (Volume II) which contains summarized public comments on the Draft EIS and TVA responses.

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