

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**  
**SICKLEFIN REDHORSE CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) proposes to enter into a Candidate Conservation Agreement (CAA) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Duke Energy Carolinas LLC, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Georgia Department of Natural Resources in order to formalize a collaborative effort to promote the recovery of the sicklefin redhorse and preclude their listing under the Endangered Species Act. Under the agreement, TVA would participate in sampling, collection, and stocking activities and would provide financial contributions to support fish hatchery production of sicklefin redhorse and other species management activities under the direction of USFWS. The initial term of the CCA would be 10 years and may be extended by consent of the parties.

The execution and implementation of this CCA is intended to lead to the conservation of this sensitive fish species in its range, which presently includes the Hiwassee and Little Tennessee River basins in North Carolina and Georgia, including all of their tributaries and associated uplands. Only those river segments in North Carolina (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties) and Georgia (Towns, Union, and Rabun counties) would be included in the agreement.

The proposal supports and is consistent with TVA's mission of environmental stewardship and the objectives for species conservation in the TVA Natural Resources Plan (2011). TVA has prepared an Environmental Assessment to address potential impacts of TVA's participation in the CCA as well as the alternative of not implementing the action (i.e., taking no action).

In the EA, TVA considered the potential impacts of implementing the conservation activities on numerous environmental resources and determined that only aquatic communities, including state- and federally-listed species and their habitat may be impacted by the proposed conservation activities. Implementation of these activities is anticipated to have beneficial direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the sicklefin redhorse, as these activities would promote the recovery of the sicklefin redhorse in its range. Because sicklefin redhorse is a native fish, which was previously part of the fish communities in these drainages, re-introductions or population augmentation activities are not anticipated to result in measurable effects on aquatic species and their habitats. TVA found that minor habitat disturbance and disturbance of behavioral patterns of aquatic species would occur during collection, but that such impacts would be minor and temporary, as species and habitat would quickly return to pre-disturbance conditions.

As noted in the EA, activities would be directed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, whose *Propagation and Reintroduction Plan* would include measures to ensure that all transplanted or introduced individuals are screened for disease or parasites before being placed into waterways covered by this CCA. It is the intent and expectation of CCA parties that the execution and implementation of this CCA would lead to conservation of the sicklefin redhorse in its range. If, subsequent to the effective date of this CCA, the Secretary of the

Interior should determine, pursuant to Section 4(a) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA; 16 U.S.C. §1533(a)) that the sicklefin redhorse is threatened or endangered, TVA and the CCA parties would be encouraged to participate in recovery planning for the sicklefin redhorse; the CCA would serve as a basis for providing conservation credit for any federal actions reviewed under Section 7 of the ESA.

**Conclusion and Findings**

Based on the findings listed above and the analyses in the EA, we conclude that these TVA conservation activities would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required.



September 16, 2016

---

Amy Henry,  
Manager, NEPA Program and Valley Projects  
Environmental Permitting & Compliance  
Tennessee Valley Authority

---

Date Signed