

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**  
**WATTS BAR RESERVOIR LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT**

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) manages land under its stewardship to protect the integrated operation of the TVA reservoir and power systems, to provide for appropriate public use and enjoyment of the reservoir system, and to promote the continuing economic growth of the region. As part of the implementation of these goals, TVA prepares reservoir land management plans (RLMPs) to guide land and resource management decisions on TVA-managed reservoir lands. TVA develops RLMPs using a Single-Use Parcel Allocation methodology, which defines separate parcels of reservoir lands and allocates those parcels and affiliated land rights to a land use zone.

In 2009, TVA issued the *Watts Bar Reservoir Land Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* that examined the potential effects of several alternative methods proposed to manage the 16,220 acres of public lands on and surrounding Watts Bar Reservoir. TVA now proposes to amend the 2009 RLMP to change the land use allocations on six parcels in Rhea and Roane Counties. The land use allocation changes are proposed in response to new issues and changes in conditions and circumstances that affect approximately 226 acres of TVA public land on Watts Bar Reservoir. TVA developed a Watts Bar RLMP Amendment and prepared a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider the potential environmental impacts of these proposed actions.

**Alternatives**

As described in detail in the Final Supplemental EA, TVA proposes to amend the 2009 RLMP by reallocating land use zones on six parcels, affecting 226 acres of TVA-managed public lands on Watts Bar Reservoir. The land use allocations on other Watts Bar Reservoir parcels would remain as described in the 2009 RLMP and its related supplements. This is TVA’s preferred alternative because it updates the 2009 RLMP and Final EIS to reflect existing land rights and actual land uses and would allow for potential future uses beneficial to the public. The proposed changes to land use allocations are described in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Description of Proposed Allocation Changes**

<b>Parcel Number</b>	<b>Parcel Acreage</b>	<b>Current Allocation</b>	<b>Proposed Allocation Change Description</b>
89	35.0	Zone 4 – Natural Resource Conservation	Change 0.4-acre portion (new Parcel 89a) of the 35.0-acre Parcel 89 to Zone 7 – Shoreline Access to reflect a previous property exchange where shoreline access rights were gained under TVA’s former Maintain and Gain program.
144	172.3	Zone 3 – Sensitive Resource Management	Change entire parcel to Zone 2 – Project Operations to support TVA’s proposed use for this and several adjacent parcels for a potential power generation project.
153	40.6	Unplanned – Excluded from 2009 RLMP	Change entire parcel to Zone 7 to reflect the change in backlying property ownership from TVA to private

			residential with shoreline access rights and to reflect the current land use.
197	36.8	Zone 7 – Shoreline Access	Change 10.2-acre portion (new Parcel 197a) of the 36.8-acre Parcel 197 to Zone 6 – Developed Recreation to reflect a change in backlying property ownership from private residential to the State of Tennessee for public recreation purposes.
256	34.2	Zone 7 – Shoreline Access	Change 0.1-acre portion (new Parcel 256a) of the 34.2-acre Parcel 256 to Zone 4 – Natural Resource Conservation to reflect a previous property exchange where shoreline access rights were extinguished under TVA's former Maintain and Gain program.
271	14.0	Zone 4 – Natural Resource Conservation	Change 2.4-acre portion (new Parcel 271a) of the 14.0-acre Parcel 271 to Zone 6 – Developed Recreation to support public recreation access on the adjacent Parcel 270.

The Final Supplemental EA analyzed two alternatives, the proposed action summarized above and the no action alternative. Under the no action alternative, the six parcels identified in Table 1 would continue to be managed under the allocations in the 2009 RLMP and its supplements.

### Impacts Assessment

In the Final Supplemental EA, TVA analyzed potential impacts in relation to 15 environmental and socioeconomic resource areas:

- Land Use and Prime Farmland
- Recreation
- Terrestrial Ecology (Plants and Wildlife)
- Aquatic Ecology
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Water Quality
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Navigation
- Air Quality and Climate Change
- Historic and Archeological Resources
- Natural Areas and Ecologically Significant Sites
- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Noise
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice

Generally, TVA's analysis found that potential impacts to most environmental resources from the proposed action alternative would be minor because any future developments would require site-specific environmental reviews to evaluate the impacts to these resources and to identify appropriate mitigation requirements. For example, a greater amount of land allocated to Zone 2 (Project Operations), Zone 6 (Developed Recreation), and Zone 7 (Shoreline Access) results in a higher potential for ground disturbing activities that could cause impacts to aesthetics, noise, water quality, and terrestrial and aquatic ecology. TVA's analysis also finds the proposed action has the potential to result in minor impacts to threatened and endangered species with fewer acres allocated to Zone 3 (Sensitive Resources Management) and Zone 4 (Natural Resource Conservation). However, the future site specific analysis of such actions would identify impacts and specify appropriate mitigation actions to reduce those impacts. The preferred action was found to be in compliance with Executive Order 11988 on floodplain management and Executive Order 11990 on wetlands. TVA finds that the proposed allocation changes would not

result in any effects on historic properties. The Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has concurred with this determination in a letter dated July 17, 2018.

### **Public Involvement and Intergovernmental Review**

TVA held a 30-day scoping period in October and November 2017 to solicit public comments on the proposed changes to the land use allocations under consideration in the Supplemental EA. TVA posted a notice of public scoping on its website, published a notice in newspapers serving Knox, Loudon, Meigs, Rhea, and Roane counties, and notified various local, state, and federal agencies and federally recognized Indian tribes. TVA received comment letters from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, and the Tennessee Wildlife Federation. The predominant theme identified in the comments was that land use changes should include an evaluation of potential impacts on sensitive resources.

TVA posted the Draft Supplemental EA on its website for a 30-day public comment period on November 16, 2018 and published a notice in newspapers serving Knox, Loudon, Meigs, Rhea, and Roane counties. An electronic version of the document was also posted on TVA's website, where TVA also provided contact information and direction on how to submit comments. TVA also notified various local, state, and federal agencies and federally recognized Indian tribes of the availability of the Draft Supplemental EA. TVA received two comments from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, and the comments have been addressed in the Final Supplemental EA.

### **Mitigation Measures**

No new mitigation measures were developed from the analysis in this Supplemental EA. The mitigation measures identified in the 2009 *Watts Bar Reservoir Land Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* continue to apply. As noted above, future projects will be evaluated to determine site-specific environmental impacts, and potential impacts to sensitive resources would be identified and avoided or minimized as appropriate and in a manner that would be consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

The mitigation measures that would be carried forward from the 2009 RLMP and EIS are listed below.

- All activities would be conducted in accordance with the stipulations defined in the Natural Resource Plan Programmatic Agreement executed in 2011 between TVA, the Tennessee SHPO, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- The construction of water-use facilities and shoreline alterations within the marked limits of the safety landings and harbors would be prohibited.
- Requests for water-use facilities on the shoreline immediately upstream and downstream of the safety landings and harbors would continue to be reviewed to ensure that barge tows have sufficient room to maneuver in and out of the safety landings and harbors without the risk of damaging private property.
- Because caves are extremely fragile and biologically significant, TVA has placed and would continue to maintain protective buffer zones around the known caves on TVA public land on Watts Bar Reservoir.

- As necessary and as practicable, visual buffers, between 50 feet and 100 feet wide, would be provided to screen timber harvest areas and commercial development from public thoroughfares and shorelines.
- Best management practices would be used on all soil-disturbing activities.
- Landscaping activities on developed properties would not include the use of plants listed as Rank 1, "Severe Threat," Rank 2, "Significant Threat," and Rank 3, "Lesser Threat," on the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council's list of Invasive Exotic Pest Plants in Tennessee (Appendix D, Table D-7 of the 2009 RLMP and EIS).
- Revegetation and erosion control work would utilize seed mixes comprised of native species or noninvasive, nonnative species (Appendix D, Table D-8 of the 2009 RLMP and EIS).
- If TVA were to develop facilities at any Zone 5 (Industrial) or Zone 2 (Project Operations) site, the following measures would be employed to minimize the potential for effects on federally listed species:
  1. TVA would consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in order to determine if the proposed action could affect listed mussels present in the area.
  2. Pre-construction mussel surveys would be conducted in all areas of the Clinch River (Watts Bar Reservoir) that would be affected by construction and use of any future terminal associated infrastructure (e.g. barge terminal, water intakes or water outfalls).
  3. Any listed mussels found during these surveys would be dealt with according to the terms and conditions imposed as a result of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service consultation process; these could consist of minimization or avoidance measures implemented during construction and operation or relocation of the mussels encountered if effects are unavoidable.

### Conclusion and Findings

Based on the findings and the analyses in the Supplemental EA, which is incorporated by reference, TVA concludes that the proposed action to amend the 2009 RLMP by reallocating land use zones on six parcels would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an EIS is not required.




---

Lana Bean  
 Manager  
 NEPA Program & Valley Projects  
 Tennessee Valley Authority

03/29/19

---

Date Signed