

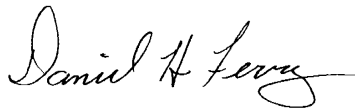
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 ProjectName: US 321-Fort Loudoun Dam Reservation  
 ProjectNumber: 2002-126

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In accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) and TVA's implementing procedures, Environmental Stewardship & Policy is adopting the attached environmental assessment (EA) and issuing the attached supplemental EA and FONSI. This serves as documentation of TVA's environmental review. As stated in the FONSI, we conclude that the proposed action will not have a significant impact on the quality of the environment.



Daniel H. Ferry, Senior Manager  
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RLT:SBW

Attachments: Federal Highway Administration and Tennessee Department of Transportation  
 1998 EA and TVA 2008 supplemental EA and FONSI

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## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT



On April 8, 2003, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) submitted an application to Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) for a highway easement on the Fort Loudoun Dam Reservation and for approval of Section 26a under the TVA Act for new bridges over the Tennessee River at Tennessee River Mile 601.8 and over the Tellico Canal between Fort Loudoun and Tellico reservoirs. Approval would allow TDOT to complete the upgrading of U.S. Highway (US) 321 (State Route 73) from Lenoir City, Tennessee, to Blount County, Tennessee, from two to four lanes in order to relieve traffic congestion and improve safety. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TDOT issued an EA in May 1998 that addressed the environmental impacts of the proposed 7.4-mile road improvement project, including the proposed bridges on the Fort Loudoun Dam Reservation. TVA and the U.S. Coast Guard were cooperators on the EA. On October 6, 1999, FHWA issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). Similarly, on May 9, 2001, the U.S. Coast Guard issued a FONSI.

During the development of this project, TVA proposed that TDOT remove the existing J. Carmichael Greer Bridge (US 321) on top of Fort Loudoun Dam and its approach roadways after the new bridges were completed. TVA also proposed that other existing roadways be modified to improve access to Lenoir City Park and Fort Loudoun Marina and to reduce public access to nearby TVA facilities on the dam reservation. TDOT agreed to these proposals in April 2003 and provided TVA with plans for the bridge removal and road modifications in December 2005. Consequently, TVA has prepared a supplement to the FHWA/TDOT EA to document the impacts of the bridge and approach roadway removal and modifications to other roadways on the dam reservation. TVA is adopting the FHWA/TDOT EA; both it and the supplemental EA are attached and incorporated by reference.

### **Proposed Action Need**

TVA needs to decide whether to approve the construction and operation of the proposed bridges under Section 26a and grant the easement for the bridge approaches and roadway. Furthermore, TVA needs to decide whether to authorize the bridge removal and modifications to roadways and other actions on the dam reservation described in the December 2005 plans.

### **Alternatives**

The FHWA/TDOT EA evaluated the potential impacts of a No Build Alternative and a Build Alternative for construction of new bridges over the Tennessee River and the Tellico Canal. In the supplemental EA, under the Build Alternative, TVA evaluated a "Keep Option" and a "Removal Option" addressing the existing bridge and approaches and modification of other

existing roadways. The Removal Option also includes the relocation of a transmission line structure.

Under the No Build Alternative, the new bridge construction would not occur. This could be for a variety of reasons under the control of the government agencies involved, including TVA not approving the proposed actions under Section 26a and/or not granting an easement across the dam reservation. Consequently, the existing J. Carmichael Greer Bridge on top of Fort Loudoun Dam would stay in service. Therefore, the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the proposed bridges would not occur, and transportation over the Tennessee River and Tellico Canal would not be improved. TVA would continue maintenance to preserve the structural integrity of the existing bridge, and the public would continue to access the Fort Loudoun Marina and Lenoir City Park through the dam reservation.

Under the Build Alternative, the proposed new bridge construction would occur along with the associated impacts described in the FHWA/TDOT EA. However, under this alternative, TVA could implement one of two options concerning the disposition of the existing bridge and modifications to existing roadways. Under the Keep Option, the removal of the existing bridge would not occur. TVA would continue maintenance to preserve the structural integrity of the existing bridge, and the public would continue to access the Fort Loudoun Marina and Lenoir City Park through the dam reservation. Under the Removal Option, TVA would approve the removal of the existing bridge and associated actions. This would result in the impacts and benefits described in the supplemental EA. Further, approval conditions have been developed to minimize the impacts identified for the original action as well as the removal of the existing bridge.

TVA prefers the Build Alternative with the Removal Option, which provides for the construction of the new bridges and removal of the J. Carmichael Greer Bridge.

The FHWA/TDOT EA considered other bridge designs and routes or locations within the vicinity. However, these proposals would have resulted in a degree of impact commensurate with or greater than the impacts of the Proposed Action. Some of these alternatives would not satisfy TDOT's stated purpose and need.

### **Impact Assessment**

TVA independently reviewed the impacts assessed in the 1998 FHWA/TDOT EA. As a cooperating agency, TVA provided scoping comments and commented on the draft EA. Since the completion of the FHWA/TDOT EA, TDOT has provided plans for the removal of the existing US 321 bridge, and new information regarding threatened and endangered species has become available. This material is incorporated into the supplemental EA.

The new bridges and road modifications would provide convenience and beneficial effects to local traffic and others who use US 321. New bridge construction and removal of the existing bridge would have short-term impacts to navigation and use of the lock during the demolition of the existing bridge. No long-term impacts to navigation are anticipated.

Under the Build Alternative with the bridge removal, there would be little to no impact on existing shoreline resources. Use of the methods described in the Bridge Removal Plan included in the supplemental EA would prevent any hazardous material resulting from the bridge removal from introduction to the Tennessee River. No wetlands would be affected. The proposed actions

constitute a repetitive action in the floodplain, and impacts to the floodplain have been minimized to the extent practicable. TVA has determined that the proposed action complies with Executive Order 11988.

Construction of the new bridges and approach roads, removal of the existing bridge, and modification of the existing roadways are expected to result in minor, temporary, and insignificant effects to local terrestrial and aquatic life. As stated in the FHWA/TDOT EA, three species listed under the Endangered Species Act occur in the vicinity of the proposed new bridges. If the conditions of the April 22, 1998, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service letter to TDOT are met, these species are unlikely to be adversely affected by construction of the bridges. None of these species would be affected by the proposed bridge removal. No impacts to state-listed species are anticipated.

Overall aesthetic effect from the proposals would be consistent with the general aesthetic character of the area. Removal of the existing bridge and the approaches would return the dam complex to near its original appearance. The Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer concurred that historic properties considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places would not be adversely affected by the construction of the new bridges and approach roads or removal of the existing bridge and associated roadwork.

Noise impacts from construction of the new bridges and approach roads and removal of the existing bridge are expected to be temporary and insignificant. There would be no adverse effects to local residential property values or disproportionate effects to any minority or low-income groups.

Cumulative impacts from the proposals would be negligible with the use of the described mitigation. Considering past, present, and future proposals, there would be only minimal adverse cumulative impacts associated with the bridge construction and removal.

#### **Mitigation and Special Permits**

In addition to the normal Best Management Practices and other measures included as TVA's General and Standard Conditions of Section 26a permits, TVA would require the following measures:

- Implementation of the Bridge Removal Plan.
- To the extent practical, in-stream construction (particularly blasting) would be scheduled to avoid the February through May fish spawning season.
- Provide mowable slopes and ditches for vegetation management at the new construction according to specifications in the December 2005 plans.
- Provide at least a 25-foot-wide maintenance road corridor under bridges between the water and the bridge for access to TVA land.

#### **Other Findings**

FHWA and TDOT have prepared, and TVA has adopted, an EA assessing the proposed action of upgrading US 321, including constructing new bridges and approach roadways on the Fort

Loudoun Dam Reservation. TVA has supplemented the 1998 FHWA/TDOT EA to assess the additional proposed action of removing the existing US 321 bridge and approach roads and making other road modifications on the dam reservation. Based on the findings in the FHWA/TDOT EA and the supplemental EA, we conclude that the issuance of the Section 26a permit and road easement to facilitate the construction of new bridges and approach roadways, as well as the removal of the existing bridge and associated road modifications, would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. This FONSI is contingent upon adherence to the Mitigation and Special Permit Conditions listed above.



4/30/08

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Tennessee Valley Authority

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Date Signed