

ADOPTION AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

BIRD DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN GEORGIA

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services program (hereafter referred to as “WS”), in cooperation with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), conducts programs to resolve or prevent wildlife damage to agricultural resources, natural resources, and property, including threats to human safety. WS is the lead federal agency responsible for managing conflicts between people and wildlife, and people may request the assistance of WS to manage wildlife damage or threats of damage.

In Georgia, WS has and continues to receive requests for assistance to reduce and prevent damage associated with several bird species including damage at facilities or properties owned or managed by TVA. TVA operates two hydroelectric dams, 22 substations and switchyards, and 469 miles of transmission line in Georgia. In addition, TVA manages recreational, natural, and cultural resources on 1,700 acres of TVA public land and 250 miles of reservoir shoreline in Georgia.

Bird damage and threats of damage occurring at TVA facilities and properties have primarily affected property, human safety, and the operational reliability of the electrical system. Birds roosting at TVA facilities can cause damage from bird droppings on buildings, equipment, and facilities which can be esthetically displeasing, can pose a threat from the potential transmission of zoonotic diseases, and can also make work areas slippery. Birds can also roost on or enter electrical substations and power generation facilities and threaten the interruption of power, and fecal droppings can be corrosive to the metal support towers of transmission lines. TVA has requested assistance from WS to address bird damage issues in the past and may request assistance with additional bird damage issues in the future.

WS, in cooperation with TVA, prepared an environmental assessment (EA) entitled “Managing Damage and Threats of Damage Caused by Birds in Georgia” to evaluate the effects of its proposed actions to manage damage and threats of damage associated with several bird species in Georgia. Those bird species include Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), feral/free-ranging domestic fowl, mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*), rock pigeons (*Columba livia*), Eurasian collared-doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*), mourning doves (*Zenaidura macroura*), killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), ring-billed gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), double-crested cormorants (*Nannopterum auritum*), great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*), great egrets (*Ardea alba*), snowy egrets (*Egretta thula*), cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), black-crowned night-heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), yellow-crowned night-heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*), white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*), turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), American crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), cliff swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*), European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), American robins (*Turdus migratorius*), house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), eastern meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), red-winged blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), brown-headed cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), common grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*), and boat-tailed grackles (*Quiscalus major*). Table 1.1 in Section 1.2 of the WS final EA shows the resource types that those bird species could damage in Georgia.

The EA is incorporated herein by reference. The EA will assist in determining if the proposed management of damage associated with birds could have a significant impact on the environment for both people and other organisms. WS and TVA defined the issues associated with meeting the need for action and identified preliminary alternatives through consultation with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The EA analyzes four alternatives to meet the need for action and to address the issues analyzed in detail.

Alternatives

The WS EA evaluated the potential environmental consequences under four alternatives. These include Alternative 1 - Continue the Current Integrated Methods Approach to Managing Damage Caused by Birds (Proposed Action/No Action); Alternative 2 - Continue the Current Integrated Methods Approach to Managing Damage Caused by Birds Using Only Non-Lethal Methods; Alternative 3 - Integrated Methods Approach to Managing Damage Caused by Birds Through Technical Assistance Only; and Alternative 4 - WS Would Not Provide Bird Damage Management Assistance. Depending on the alternative approach, several methods would be available to manage damage caused by birds in the state.

Alternative 1 is WS's Proposed Action and represents the No Action Alternative as well. Under Alternative 1, WS would continue its current bird damage management program in Georgia. This program consists of implementing an integrated damage management approach to resolve and prevent bird damage and to reduce threats to human safety. WS would continue to respond to requests for assistance with, at a minimum, technical assistance, or when funding is available, operational damage management. Technical assistance provided under this alternative would be similar to technical assistance described under Alternative 2.

Under Alternative 2, WS would continue its current bird damage management program in Georgia considering only non-lethal methods. Section I of the EA's Appendix B describes those non-lethal methods in more detail. This program consists of implementing an integrated damage management approach to resolve and prevent bird damage and to reduce threats to human safety. WS would continue to respond to requests for assistance with, at a minimum, technical assistance, or when funding is available, operational damage management. Technical assistance provided under this alternative would be similar to technical assistance described under Alternative 1. WS would refer requests for information regarding lethal methods to the USFWS, the GDNR, and/or private entities. Although WS would not recommend or use lethal methods under this alternative, other entities, including private entities, could continue to use many of the lethal methods discussed in Section II of Appendix B to resolve damage or threats of damage.

Under Alternative 3, WS would address every request with technical assistance only. Technical assistance would provide information and recommendations on bird damage management that could be employed without direct involvement by WS. Those entities experiencing damage or threats of damage associated with birds could employ methods recommended by WS, employ other methods, seek further assistance from other entities, or take no further action. Similar to Alternative 1 and 2, those methods described in Appendix B of the WS EA would be available except for DRC-1339, which is currently only available for use by WS.

Under Alternative 4, WS would not be involved with any aspect of bird damage management in Georgia. Technical assistance and operational damage management services would cease. Information on bird damage methods would remain available through a variety of public and private sources. All requests for assistance would be referred to the USFWS, to the GDNR,

and/or to private entities. Many of the methods listed in Appendix B would be available for use by other governmental agencies and private entities to manage damage and threats associated with birds. Similar to Alternative 1, 2 and 3, the only method discussed in Appendix B that is restricted to use by WS personnel and by persons under their supervision and would not be available for other entities to use would be the avicide DRC-1339.

Alternative 1, Continue the Current Integrated Methods Approach to Managing Damage Caused by Birds (Proposed Action/No Action), is TVA's preferred alternative.

Impacts Assessment

Implementing Alternative 1 would pose minimal risks to public health and safety. Risks to the public from the methods described in the EA were determined to be low. Therefore, bird damage management methods available would not adversely affect human safety. The effects of the proposed activities would not impose unique or unknown risks on the human environment. Bird damage management under Alternative 1 is effective for target species and would not adversely impact non-target species. Alternative 1 also offers a balanced approach to the issues of humaneness and aesthetics when all facets of those issues are considered. The implementation of Alternative 1 would not adversely affect any species that are currently federally listed or state-listed in Georgia. The USFWS has concurred with this determination. No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated from the implementation of Alternative 1.

Implementing Alternative 1 would not significantly impact soils, geology, minerals, water quality, prime farmlands, floodplains, wild and scenic areas, wetlands or ecologically critical habitat. WS standard operating procedures and adherence to applicable laws and regulations would further assure that WS activities do not harm the environment. No significant cumulative environmental impacts are anticipated from the implementation of Alternative 1.

Public Involvement

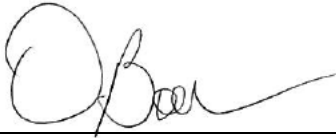
A notice of availability and the EA were made available for public review and comment on the national WS program webpage, the APHIS website and on the federal e-rulemaking portal at the www.regulations.gov webpage. WS sent direct mailings to local known stakeholders and an electronic notification to stakeholders registered through the APHIS Stakeholder Registry, and a notice was published in the legal section of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper.

Mitigation

No specific non-routine environmental mitigation measures were identified by TVA to reduce potential environmental effects. Implementation of the best management practices described in the WS EA and FONSI will minimize the potential for adverse environmental effects.

Conclusion and Findings

TVA has independently reviewed the WS EA and found it to be adequate. TVA is therefore adopting the WS EA. Based on the analyses in the EA and the findings documented above, TVA concludes that contracting with WS for bird damage management services or conducting its own bird damage management activities on TVA facilities and properties including reservoir lands and property easements in Georgia as described under Alternative 1 above would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required.



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Date Signed