



Adaptive Management of R.L. Harris Dam and the Tallapoosa River

Overview

Members of the R.L. Harris Stakeholder Board and interested stakeholders met in Alexander City on August 2, 2007 for an Adaptive Management Research Update. Highlights from Auburn University's sampling and Alabama Power Company's historical data since implementation of "green plan" were presented. A facilitated discussion followed each segment.

Property owners who have provided access to the river (a constant challenge) and stakeholder groups who have provided volunteers to assist with data collection were recognized for the important contribution they have made to the process.

This is a significant and long-range collaboration process that is being recognized nationally as an important alternative to litigation.

Auburn Research Discussion Themes

Has the issue of water temperature been studied?

More data is constantly being added as modeling moves forward. Instant data is being captured with data loggers at the dam and at Wadley.

Is temperature data available online?

It is not. Physically, the data is being captured, but not real-time. Alabama Power plans to connect this capability at Wadley in the future.

Is modeling in place to support a long-term data set?

Somewhat. Malcolm Pierson's data from the 1990s can be largely connected to current modeling. Different experimental portions exist. The long-term record is growing rapidly and improving significantly.

Will data collected prior to the green plan ever be comparable to old data?

Though multiple types of gear were used in Pierson's study, we can account for any differences in species detection; these data can be compared. Retro data is valuable. A grant to the National Science Foundation is being prepared to conduct additional analysis of this data.

If there was no water in 2007, shouldn't there be zero observations of fish?

We are dealing with almost dry conditions...not completely dry conditions. There is still water in the river. The key is to know how populations vary. It is possible that fish move up or down river during these periods. If we cannot measure the absence of fish, we cannot say conclusively that fish aren't there.

Our analysis is not a fisher statistical sampling

This is a missing variable. Zero says something is NOT there. Zero says you know something.

Our procedure is very specific on where and how sampling takes place and how we analyze our data. It's based on maximum likelihood factors. Probabilities are what we're dealing with.

August 2, 2007 Research Update



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Is it still our goal to optimize wildlife below the dam?

It certainly is a goal for some stakeholders. We want to measure that we're doing no harm. A long-term data set will support this.

A 5-year study was agreed to before we modify flows. With the 2006 data we will be able to include extinction rates. We can determine if a species is coming or going with this data.

Modeling will support various flow regime changes and patterns in the data?

Yes, we are examining these.

Is it correct that there are no capture rates for some fish below the dam?

Over 42 fish species that sample well with our electro grids have been found below the dam.

Is this a lot compared to Western Rivers?

The ratio of fish doing very well is surprisingly good. Most Western Rivers contain a higher percentage of threatened and endangered species. 128 species have been found in the Tallapoosa Basin. We want to use as much historical data as possible. Each species has a different life history. The Tallapoosa River is extremely complicated biologically.

Have creel surveys been examined for bass?

A creel station was put in place approximately 10 years ago by AL DCNR for flathead and channel catfish. No specific species studies have been undertaken.

Are indicator species the bottom of the food chain?

No. They are studied because they are very specific to the biosystem. An additional advantage is their rapid reproduction rate. Most reproduce in a year or less. Bass take 3.

Can a fish make a nest in 1 ft of water and hatch eggs from it if the level rises to 9 ft?

Not with a rapid rise, according to our research on redbreast sunfish. We do see evidence that they will quickly rebuild new nests if water levels rise.

Why aren't you studying pools?

Pools don't have the same range of variation as the shoals do. Additionally, the very specific size and location of shoal study make comparisons much more valid.

Why weren't some of these issues considered before the dam was constructed and licensed?

Community values change. Today they're different than they were when the dam was built.

We don't know what the river really needs for proper biological function. What can be done to make things better? This is the purpose of the long-term study.

What about water temperature?

This is a huge portion of the model and is being monitored and studied.



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Alabama Power Discussion Notes

Where is online data available?

<http://www.rivermanagement.org>

What is the difference between DFS (day foot second) and CFS?

Essentially nothing. DFS is simply a 24-hour expression of cubic feet/seconds

Can fill be moved to March on filling Harris?

This could be considered. Some discussion has already taken place with the Corps of Engineers. Litigation on the Coosa system needs to be resolved before this can move further.

Why is so much water allocated below Montgomery if the Alabama River is non-navigable?

There are 2 issues here. 1 is a requirement for specific flows specified in the NPDES permits of 2 paper mills downstream from Montgomery. The other is the downstream surface elevations

Why are there different elevation measures on Martin and Harris?

These will be rectified January 2008.

Is there any chance for a variance to leave levels up in the winter?

This is under discussion. A 1-year variance in Martin.

Rumors & Fact Checks:

Rumors of minimum flows reductions at Wadley were refuted

No nuclear plant is being proposed at Harris

Relicensing will take place in 2023; not in the next few years.



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