

**FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION**  
**Washington, DC 20426**

DATE: May 03, 2002

MEMORANDUM TO: The Agency/Party Addressed

SUBJECT: Scoping of environmental issues for seismic remediation of the Saluda Dam, Saluda Hydroelectric Project, FERC No. P-516, South Carolina

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) is requiring the seismic remediation of Saluda Dam at the Saluda Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 516), licensed to South Carolina Electric and Gas Company. The project is located on the Saluda River, in Richland, Lexington, Newberry, and Saluda counties, South Carolina.

The Commission intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Saluda Dam Remediation Project, which will be used by the Commission to identify project impacts and to identify measures that may help mitigate the impacts caused by the project. To support and assist our environmental review, we are beginning the public scoping process to ensure that all pertinent issues are identified and analyzed, and that the environmental document is thorough and balanced.

We invite your participation in the scoping process, and are circulating the attached Scoping Document 1 (SD1) to provide you with information on the remediation project. We solicit your comments and suggestions on the SD1, which contains our preliminary list of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EA.

We will hold two scoping meetings on May 17, 2000, to receive input on the appropriate scope of the environmental analysis. Both meetings will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 200 Stoneridge Drive, Columbia, SC. A resource agency meeting will be held from 9:00 a.m to 12:00 noon. The public meeting will be held 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. The public and agencies may attend either or both meetings. The agency scoping meeting will focus on resource agency and non-governmental organization (NGO) concerns, while the public scoping meeting is primarily for public input.

Please review SD1 and, if you wish to provide comments, follow the instructions in section 3.0. If you have any questions concerning the scoping process, or the development of the EA for this project, please call John Mudre at (202) 219-1208.

Enclosure: Scoping Document 1

cc: Mailing List  
Public Files

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# **SCOPING DOCUMENT 1**



## **SALUDA DAM SEISMIC REMEDIATION PROJECT**

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

**FERC Project No. 516**

**Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
Office of Hydropower Licensing  
Washington, DC**

**May 2002**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission), under the authority of the Federal Power Act (FPA), licenses and oversees the operation of non-federal hydropower projects in the United States. As part of its oversight capacity, the Commission implements a dam safety program, through its Division of Dam Safety and Inspections (D2SI), to ensure that Commission-licensed projects comply with Federal dam safety standards and are designed constructed, and operated safely. Under 18 C.F.R. Part 12, the D2SI Regional Engineer has the authority to, among other things, require a licensee to take an action to repair or modify project works for the purpose of achieving or protecting the safety, stability, and integrity of project works.

It has been determined that the Saluda Dam near Columbia, SC (Figure 1) would fail if subjected to a repeat of the Charleston Earthquake that occurred in 1886. The magnitude of the Charleston earthquake is estimated by seismologists, including the United States Geological Survey, to be about 7.3. The Saluda Dam must be strengthened to withstand earthquakes in the interest of public safety for the thousands of people living downstream.

Consequently, the D2SI Director has directed South Carolina Gas and Electric Company (SCE&G), licensee for the Saluda Project (FERC No. 516), to design and construct a seismic stabilization of the Saluda Dam. Several alternatives were considered and it was concluded that a composite structure comprised of a rock fill berm in the downstream slope at the downstream toe of the existing dam and a free-standing roller compacted concrete dam at the downstream toe of the existing dam (where the rockfill berm would not fit due to space limitations) should be constructed. On March 25, 2002, SCE&G submitted the 95% complete design and plans and specifications package for Commission review. Although it was initially believed that remediation of the dam could be conducted without an impact to water levels in the Saluda Dam impoundment (i.e., Lake Murray), subsequent analyses, completed in March 2002, revealed the necessity of lowering Lake Murray to elevation 345 to ensure public safety during construction activities at the toe of the dam. This represents a 7 - 13 foot decrease from the normal Lake Murray water level, which varies seasonally, and is within the operating range allowed by the project license.

The Commission's Regulations categorically exclude from review under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)<sup>1</sup>, certain types of actions which do

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<sup>1</sup> National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (Pub. L. 91-190. 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended by Pub. L.94-52, July 3, 1975, Pub. L. 94-83, August 9, 1975, and Pub. L. 97-258, section 4 (b), Sept. 13, 1982).

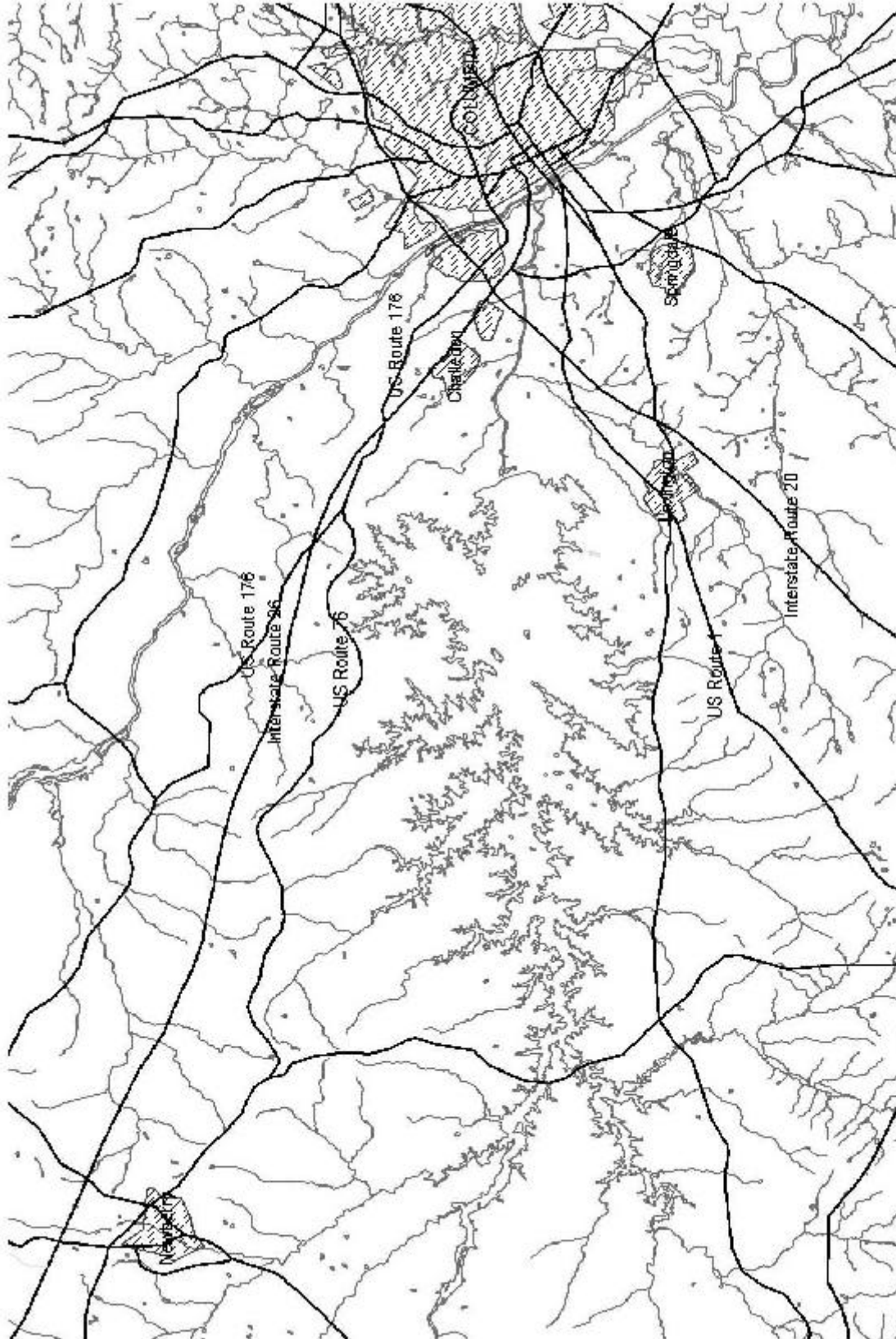


Figure 1. General location of Saluda Project and Lake Murray.

not have a significant effect on the human environment.<sup>2</sup> This categorical exclusion applies to compliance actions involving dam safety. However, the regulations also provide an exception to such categorical exclusions by stating that the Commission may consider public comment, and will prepare an environmental document, where circumstances indicate that an action may be a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.<sup>3</sup>

In order to determine whether the Saluda Dam seismic remediation project is a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and in order to identify mitigative measures that may be implemented to reduce the impacts of the remediation project, the Commission staff intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) that describes and evaluates the probable effects, including an assessment of the site-specific and cumulative effects, if any, of the proposed action and alternatives. The EA preparation will be supported by a scoping process to ensure the identification and analysis of all pertinent issues.

## 2.0 SCOPING

### 2.1 Purpose of Scoping

Scoping is the process used to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities associated with a proposed action; the process, according to the NEPA, should be conducted early in the planning stages of the project.

The purposes of this Scoping Document 1 (SD1) are as follows:

- Invite participation of federal, state, and local resource agencies; Native American tribes; and individuals to identify significant environmental issues related to the proposed action.
- Determine the depth of analysis and significance of issues to be addressed in the EA.
- Identify how the project would or would not contribute to cumulative impacts in the project area and the Saluda River basin.
- Identify reasonable alternatives to the project that we should evaluate.

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<sup>2</sup> 18 C.F.R. 380.4(a)(3)

<sup>3</sup> 18 C.F.R. 380.4(b)



Following the comment period for this SD1, all issues raised will be reviewed and decisions made about the level of analysis needed. If preliminary analysis shows that any issues presented in this SD1 have little potential for causing significant impacts, the issue(s) will be identified and the reasons for not providing a more detailed analysis will be given in the EA.

The staff will revise this SD1, as necessary, to reflect comments received during the comment period, and will then issue Scoping Document 2 (SD2). If no substantial comments are received, and no revisions to the SD1 are necessary, we will notify all participants by letter.

## **2.2 Scoping Meetings**

We will hold two scoping meetings in the project area. We invite all interested agencies, non-governmental organizations, Native American tribes, and individuals to attend one or both of the meetings and to assist the staff in identifying the scope of environmental issues to be analyzed in the EA. The times and locations of these meetings are as follows:

### *Morning Scoping Meeting*

When: Friday, May 17, 2002, from 9:00 a.m. to noon  
Where: Embassy Suites Hotel  
200 Stoneridge Drive  
Columbia, South Carolina

### *Evening Scoping Meeting*

When: Friday May 17, 2002, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Where: Embassy Suites Hotel  
200 Stoneridge Drive  
Columbia, South Carolina

Scoping meetings will be recorded by a court reporter, and all statements (oral and written) will become part of the Commission's public record for the project. Before each meeting, all individuals who attend, especially those individuals that intend to make statements, will be asked to sign in and to clearly identify themselves for the record before speaking.

Interested parties who choose not to speak or are unable to attend the scoping meetings may provide written comments to the Commission as described in the next section.

### 3.0 REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Commission staff requests federal, state, and local resource agencies; Native American tribes; and other entities and individuals to forward to the Commission any information that will assist it in conducting an accurate and thorough analysis of the site-specific and cumulative effects of the Saluda Dam seismic remediation project. The types of information requested include, but are not limited to:

- information, quantified data, or professional opinion that may contribute to defining the geographical and temporal scope of the cumulative effects analysis and identifying significant environmental issues;
- identification of, and information from, any other EA, Environmental Impact Statement, or similar document of study (previous, ongoing, or planned) relevant to the Saluda Dam seismic remediation project;
- existing information and data that may aid in describing the past and present actions and effects of the project and other developmental activities on water quality, fish and wildlife resources, cultural resources, recreation resources or land use;
- identification of any federal, state, or local resources plans and future project proposals that encompass the Saluda Project area, with information on when they will be implemented, if known. For example, proposals to construct or operate water treatment facilities, recreation areas, water diversions, or to implement fishery management programs; and
- documentation that would support a conclusion that the proposed project *does* or *does not* contribute to cumulative adverse or beneficial effects on resources and, therefore, should be excluded from further study or included for further consideration of cumulative effects.

Documentation should include, but need not be limited to: how the project would interact with other projects in the area and other developmental activities; results from studies; resource management policies; and reports from federal, state, and local agencies.

The requested information and scoping comments should be submitted in writing to the Commission no later than June 17, 2002. All correspondence must clearly show at the

top of the first page: "**Saluda Hydroelectric Project, FERC No. 516.**" Send your comments and any other information about the project to:

Magalie R. Salas, Secretary  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20426

Scoping comments may be filed electronically via the Internet in lieu of paper. See 18 CFR 385.2001 (a)(1)(iii) and the instructions on the Commission's web site (<http://www.ferc.gov>) under the "e-Filing" link.

Any questions concerning the scoping or preparation of the EA for this proposed action should be sent to John Mudre, e-mail address: [John.Mudre@ferc.gov](mailto:John.Mudre@ferc.gov), or telephone (202) 219-1208 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Office of Energy Projects.

#### **4.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

In accordance with NEPA guidelines, our environmental analysis will consider, at a minimum, the following alternatives: (1) the applicant's proposed action, (2) the applicant's proposed action with Commission staff's modifications, and (3) the no-action alternative.

##### **4.1 Applicant's Proposed Action**

SCE&G proposes to remediate the Saluda Dam through the construction of a rock berm and a roller-compacted concrete (RCC) dam in and at the downstream toe of the existing Saluda Dam. In addition, SCE&G proposes a number of measures to mitigate the adverse impacts of the dam remediation project.

###### **4.1.1 Description of Proposed Remediation**

SCE&G proposes to remediate Saluda Dam by constructing a downstream rock-fill berm with a RCC section in the center of the dam at the toe of the existing Saluda Dam. The berm and RCC sections would be the water impoundment structure in the event of the failure of the existing dam during an earthquake. This berm would have a crest elevation of 372 feet and is composed of three sections with a total length of 7,850 feet. The northern rock-fill section is approximately 3,450 feet long with a maximum width of about 340 feet. The center section is composed of RCC and is about 2,100 feet long, with a maximum width of about 130 feet. The southern rock-fill section is about 3,700 feet long, with a maximum width of about 390 feet.

Construction of the berm will require about five million cubic yards (CY) of rock fill and filter material obtained from a quarry site immediately downstream of the dam and about 1,000,000 CY of RCC. The center RCC section functions as a gravity-stabilized dam and is necessary because of space limitations in the area adjacent to the powerhouse. Except for 90,000 CY of cement, all materials will be obtained on site.

In accordance with Commission directives, SCE&G plans to award the contract for project construction by August 12, 2002, and to begin construction by November 1, 2002. The drawdown of Lake Murray is scheduled to begin about October 1, 2002, at a rate not to exceed six inches per day, in order to be at elevation 345 by November 1. The need for a drawdown will end with the completion of excavation and backfilling at the toe of the dam, at the end of July 2004. Refilling of the reservoir will be dependent on inflows, and can not be predicted with any certainty. The remediation project will be completed in early 2006.

#### **4.1.2 Proposed Mitigative and Enhancement Measures**

SCE&G proposes a number of measures to mitigate environmental impacts associated with the Saluda Dam Remediation Project. These include preparation of a cultural resources management plan, mitigation for impacts to wetlands downstream of the dam, and procedures for temporary extension of docks, among others.

#### **4.2 Applicant's Proposed Action With Commission Staff's Modifications**

We will review and consider alternatives to the proposed mitigative measures, including environmental measures not proposed by SCE&G. Modifications could include recommendations by the agencies, non-governmental organizations, Native American tribes, interested parties, and the Commission staff. These will be analyzed in the EA.

#### **4.3 No-action Alternative**

Under the no-action alternative, the Saluda Dam would not be strengthened to meet safety standards. Under this scenario, Lake Murray would need to be drained and the Saluda Project decommissioned. This is not considered a feasible alternative.

#### **4.4 Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Detailed Analysis**

We propose eliminating the following alternatives from detailed study in the EA.

##### **4.4.1 No-action Alternative**

Because of the significant long term adverse impacts to the human environment associated with the no-action alternative, it is not considered to be a feasible alternative.

## **5.0 SCOPE OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ANALYSIS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

### **5.1 Cumulative Effects**

According to the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA (50 CFR § 1508.7), the cumulative effects of a proposed action are the effects on the environment that result from the incremental effect of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time, including hydropower and other land and water development activities.

Based on information in the licensee's project description, agency comments, other filings related to the project, and preliminary staff analysis, we have preliminarily identified that no resources have the potential to be cumulatively affected by the Saluda Dam seismic remediation project in combination with other activities in the Saluda River basin. However, this determination will be revisited based on scoping comments received.

#### **5.1.1 Geographic Scope**

The geographic scope of the analysis defines the physical limits or boundaries of the proposed action's effects on the resources. Because the proposed action would affect the resources differently, the geographic scope for each resource may vary. Should potential cumulative impacts be identified through scoping, the geographic scope of those impacts will be discussed in SD2.

#### **5.1.2 Temporal Scope**

The temporal scope of our cumulative analysis in the EA, should potentially cumulatively impacted resources be identified, will include past, present, and future actions and their possible cumulative effects on each resource identified. The appropriate temporal scope regarding future actions will be determined on a resource-specific basis once potentially cumulatively impacted resources are identified. The analysis will concentrate on the effect on the resources from reasonably foreseeable future actions. The historical discussion will, by necessity, be limited to the amount of available information for each resource.

We are seeking further information from federal, state, and other agencies and any other sources pertaining to past, present, and future actions and their effects on potentially cumulatively impacted resources (in the form of previous studies; present plans; and future plans, goals, or forecasts) in the Saluda River Basin (see section 3.0 for how to submit information).

## **5.2 Resource Issues**

In this section, we present a preliminary list of environmental issues to be addressed in the EA. We identified the issues, which are listed by environmental resource area, through our review of SCE&G's project description and the Commission's record for the Saluda Dam remediation project. This list is not intended to be exhaustive or final, but is rather an initial listing of issues that could be significant. After the scoping process is complete, we will review the list and determine the appropriate level of analysis needed to address each issue.

### **5.2.1 Water Resources**

- The effects of lowering the reservoir on water temperature and dissolved oxygen concentration in the Saluda River downstream of the Saluda Dam.
- The effects of the extended drawdown of the reservoir on dissolved oxygen concentration and water temperature in Lake Murray.
- The effects of the drawdown on shoreline erosion, turbidity, and sedimentation.
- The potential impacts of the drawdown on groundwater supplies and wells.
- The potential impact of the drawdown on municipal water supply.
- The potential impact of the drawdown on authorized and unauthorized private water withdrawal systems.

### **5.2.2 Aquatic Resources**

- The impacts of any changes in water temperature or dissolved oxygen concentration on the coldwater fishery in the Saluda River downstream of Saluda Dam.
- The effects of any changes in water temperature and dissolved oxygen concentrations in Lake Murray on reservoir fish populations, in particular, striped bass populations.

- The effects of the drawdown on spawning habitat available for centrarchids.
- The effects of drawdown-related reduced reservoir volume on available fish habitat.
- The potential effects of the dam remediation on Essential Fish Habitat, as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act.

### **5.2.3 Terrestrial Resources**

- The effects of proposed construction activities on about 4.2 acres of jurisdictional wetlands located downstream of below the existing Saluda Dam.
- The effects of the extended drawdown on Lake Murray wetlands, including shallow cove, buttonbush and willow flats, wet flats, and bottomland hardwood habitats, that are dependent on at least periodic hydrologic augmentation from the reservoir.
- The potential effects of the drawdown on preservation of the 75-foot buffer zone along the reservoir shoreline.
- The potential effects of the drawdown on identified Environmentally Sensitive Areas, as defined and identified in SCE&G's Shoreline Management Plan.
- The potential effects of the drawdown on special-status plants and animals, if present, and appropriate measures to minimize project effects.

### **5.2.4 Threatened and Endangered Species**

- The potential effects of dam remediation and lake drawdown on the federally listed threatened bald eagle.
- The potential effects of dam remediation on the federally listed endangered shortnose sturgeon.

### **5.2.5 Recreational Resources**

- The effects of the drawdown on public access to the lake at boat ramps.
- The effects of the drawdown on public access to the lake at marinas.
- The effects of the drawdown on public access to the lake at beaches and parks.

- The potential effects of the drawdown of the reservoir on fishing in the lake.
- The ability of the existing marinas and access points to operate during the drawdown.
- The impacts of the drawdown on safe navigability of Lake Murray.
- The potential effects of human disturbance to the exposed reservoir bottom.

### **5.2.6 Land Use and Aesthetic Resources**

- The potential effects of the drawdown on the aesthetic resources of the project area.
- The effects of construction traffic on local traffic.

### **5.2.7 Cultural Resources**

- The potential effects of dam construction on cultural resources downstream of Saluda Dam.
- The potential effects of lake drawdown on cultural resources located in the reservoir.

### **5.2.8 Socioeconomics**

- The effects of the prolonged drawdown on Lake Murray-related businesses, including marinas and restaurants.
- The effects of the drawdown on local tax revenues.

## **6.0 EA PREPARATION SCHEDULE**

The tentative schedule for preparing the Saluda Dam Seismic Remediation Project EA is:

<u>Major Milestone</u>	<u>Target Date</u>
Scoping Meetings	May 17, 2002
Scoping Comments Due	June 17, 2002
Draft EA Issued	July 15, 2002



Final EA Issued

September 15, 2002

## **7.0 PROPOSED EA OUTLINE**

The preliminary outline for the Saluda Dam Remediation Project EA is as follows:

### SUMMARY

- I. ACTION
- II. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION
- III. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
  - A. Applicant's Proposed Action
    - 2. Project Description
    - 3. Proposed Environmental Measures
  - B. Proposed Action with Commission Staff's Modifications
  - C. No-action Alternative
  - D. Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study
- IV. CONSULTATION AND COMPLIANCE
  - A. Agency Consultation
  - B. Compliance with Endangered Species Act
  - C. Compliance with Essential Fish Habitat Requirements
  - D. Compliance with National Historic Preservation Act
- V. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS
  - A. General Description of the Saluda River Basin
  - B. Scope of the Cumulative Effects Analysis
    - 1. Geographic Scope
    - 2. Temporal Scope
  - C. Environmental Analysis
    - 1. Water Resources
    - 2. Aquatic Resources
    - 3. Terrestrial Resources
    - 4. Threatened and Endangered Species
    - 5. Recreational Resources
    - 6. Land Use and Aesthetic Resources
    - 7. Cultural Resources
    - 8. Socioeconomics

- VI. ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
  - VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
  - VIII. FINDING OF (NO) SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
  - IX. LITERATURE CITED
  - X. LIST OF PREPARERS
- APPENDICES (if necessary)

## 8.0 DISTRIBUTION LIST

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