

WATR Policy Position on the FERC re-licensing for the Tuckasegee River Projects

BECAUSE THE RELATIVE VALUE OF OUR WATER RESOURCES WILL ONLY INCREASE IN THE NEXT 30 TO 40 YEARS, we require that Duke Power provide ongoing support for ecological and environmental well being in our communities. The support is needed for (not necessarily in this order): 1) the purchase of property or conservation easements for habitat areas, greenways, and river and tributary access, 2) maintenance of aquatic and riparian habitat and river-access amenities, 3) the expansion and maintenance of soil-erosion and sediment control, and 4) the support of community-based water quality and ecological projects. We envision that Duke Power creates a public fund, and we strongly prefer a single up-front payment to establish that fund. The fund should be administered by a non-profit entity with representation from Jackson and Swain Counties.

BECAUSE THE STREAMS IN OUR REGION, BY NATURE, HAVE MOSTLY ROCK AND BEDROCK STREAMBEDS, AND BECAUSE SEDIMENT RETENTION IS A NATURAL FUNCTION OF ALL WATER IMPOUNDMENTS, WATR seeks to have periodic dredging and impoundment maintenance as an integral part of the FERC settlement for all the dam projects. This requirement will reduce the disruption of the headwater area in Fontana Lake that results from flooding. In recent decades, Nantahala Power and Light, and later Duke Power, have not directly or indirectly supported dredging operations that used to be common place. We ask 1) that they supply the land, access, and support for dredging, 2) that the primary purpose of dredging shall be sediment removal and the secondary purpose shall be production of commercially valued sand. Dredging is required at all facilities and remediation dredging is required at the Dillsboro impoundment – regardless of the fate of the dam itself.

OUR RECENT EXPERIENCES DURING HURRICANE STORMS FRANCIS AND IVAN showed our vulnerability to reservoir management decisions during flood events. Therefore, we ask that a Floodwater Impoundment Management Plan be developed for the Tuckasegee basin. The plan shall be subject to professional peer review and citizen review. It shall be updated periodically and as new flood experience is acquired.

TO ENHANCE THE RIVERINE ECOLOGY: We ask FERC to stipulate that Duke Power provide water flows sufficient to support habitat in the Bonas Defeat bypass area below the Glenville Dam on the West Fork.

MITIGATION must, in part, offset the negative impacts of fluctuating water levels on aquatic habitat conditions for trout and other cold-water species. Frequent, artificially low flows in the summer months in areas of the Tuckasegee River, designated as “Trout Waters” by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, help to drive temperatures above state limits for trout fisheries.

ON THE IMPORTANT ISSUE OF THE REMOVAL OF THE DILLSBORO DAM, OUR MEMBERS HAVE DIFFERING OPINIONS; THEREFORE WE HAVE NO SINGLE POSITION ON DAM REMOVAL. WATR envisions an ecologically enhanced river *with* the Dillsboro Dam and *without* the dam, with both alternatives requiring active steps to repair and prevent ecological damage. WATR provides a forum for all viewpoints insofar as they are ultimately aimed at the well-being of our water resources; therefore our neutrality on the dam-removal decision should NOT to be interpreted as INDIFFERENCE to the outcome.

IF THE DAM IS TO BE REMOVED, THEN:

- the sediment behind the dam should be pumped out prior to demolition to reduce ecological impacts down river and to eliminate the adverse ecological and recreational effects in the headwaters of Fontana Lake;
- the impoundment reach should be repaired and/or restored to ensure a stable river bank and a riparian zone without nuisance or invasive plant species;
- the large Appalachian Elktoe colony (a federally endangered species) below the dam should be protected from harm;
- the Town of Dillsboro should be adequately compensated for the loss of the dam; and finally;
- we note that there will be positive regional and national recognition for a run-of-river dam removal.

IF THE DAM IS TO BE RETAINED, THEN

- the dam, powerhouse, and impoundment must be repaired and maintained regularly;
- the sediments must be dredged, as per our requirements for all Duke projects in our watershed;
- retention of sediments behind the dam will benefit downstream users with in increased pride in the river and enhanced recreational use because the stream will be clearer – with fewer days of silty, brown water; and finally
- we note that another major benefit of keeping the dam will be that periodic sediment removal – regardless of how the bill for this is paid – will for the first time, show an actual cost of uncontrolled erosion by development, construction, agriculture, and other activities upstream. This will provide the main motivation for wiser and more stringent controls.

Adopted by the WATR Board of Directors, Tuesday, April 5, 2005

For more information, contact:

Roger B. Clapp
Executive Director
835 Main Street
PO Box 2593
Bryson City, NC 28713
828 488 8418