



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Wilmington District

Little River Water Supply Reservoir, Wake County, NC (Regulatory)

- **Project proposal to construct a regional water supply reservoir for Wake County, NC**
- **Current concerns are related to impacts to endangered species, secondary/cumulative effects, alternatives analysis, and compensatory mitigation**
- **A reallocation study to be funded by the city of Raleigh at Falls Lake is pending as a possible water supply alternative to construction of the Little River project**
- **Permit request not received to date**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: NC 13

DATE: 23 February 2015

1. **PURPOSE:**

To provide information regarding the proposed construction by the city of Raleigh of an 1,100-acre drinking water reservoir on Little River, a tributary to the Neuse River, in eastern Wake County, North Carolina.

2. **BACKGROUND:**

a. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for this proposal is being developed for the city of Raleigh, and the towns of Rolesville, Wake Forest, Wendell, Knightdale, Garner, and Zebulon, North Carolina. The DEIS identifies and quantifies impacts to the human environment associated with the construction of the proposed drinking water supply reservoir.

b. All land for this project has been purchased by Wake County, predominately from willing sellers; however, condemnation did occur for the remaining parcels. Wake County is now completing the transfer of property to the city of Raleigh to facilitate the construction of this project (if permitted).

c. Estimated impacts due to implementation of this project include 572 acres of wetlands and 37,000 linear feet of stream channel. Conducting an alternatives analysis

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review and designing a compensatory mitigation plan will be challenging for these impacts.

d. The dwarf wedge mussel and the tar spiny mussel, both federally endangered species, are found within the scope of the project and will likely necessitate formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In addition, the USFWS has determined that substantial scientific or commercial information may warrant the listing of 5 additional species found in the Little River watershed. While it is unclear if the listing procedure will continue for these additional species, it could increase the total number of species under formal consultation to seven.

e. The initial comment letter from the USFWS made a preliminary determination that the Little River ecosystem represented an aquatic resource of national importance (ARNI). This does not yet trigger the elevation proceedings; however, it may do so later in the process.

f. Interagency and public scoping is complete for the issues pertaining to the DEIS.

3. **CURRENT STATUS:**

a. An interagency, Instream-Flow Study Group has been formed to determine downstream flow requirements for maintaining biological integrity of the aquatic system. This portion of the project (study) is somewhat contentious due to the ARNI, federally listed species, and overall cost of the study.

b. An umbrella mitigation bank has been established by the city and is currently banking credits to offset proposed impacts.

c. Maximizing existing sources of drinking water is one of many alternatives listed for evaluation during the EIS process. Three Corps reservoirs, Falls, Jordan, and Kerr Lakes, are near Raleigh and will be included in this analysis. Falls Lake is the only reservoir that does not trigger the need for an inter-basin transfer certificate from the state and is therefore considered the stronger alternative.

d. Use of the newest hydrology model, OASIS, identified the possibility that adequate surplus water may be contained within the Falls Lake water quality pool to offset the need for Little River.

e. In early 2013, the Corps received a request to begin a reallocation study to evaluate the potential of reallocating this surplus water to the Falls Lake water supply pool. In June of 2013, the city of Raleigh, North Carolina offered to contribute \$500,000, to cover the estimated costs, plus contingencies, required to complete a reallocation study at Falls Lake.

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f. In March 2014, the congressional notification package was forwarded to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (ASA) for Civil Works for review and coordination with the Office of Management and Budget.

g. Also in March 2014, Hazen and Sawyer, consultants for the city of Raleigh, provided an Environmental Fluid Dynamics Code (EFDC) Model report to the State Division of Water Quality and the Corps. A key purpose of the EFDC model was to simulate Chlorophyll-a concentrations within the reservoir. The EFDC modeling efforts do not provide consistent evidence that increases in reservoir withdrawals increase Chlorophyll-concentrations.

h. In August 2014, the notification letters were submitted to Congress regarding the proposed acceptance of contributed funds from the city of Raleigh for the Corps to perform the Falls Lake Reallocation Study.

i. In September 2014, congressional approval was granted.

j. In November 2014, the Corps met with the city of Raleigh and the State Division of Water Resources to discuss the Falls Lake sediment pool temporary water supply usage cost, the Falls Lake reallocation study memorandum of agreement (MOA), the cost for reallocated water from Falls Lake and Falls Lake water quality modeling activities.

k. In mid-November 2014, the MOA between the Department of the Army and the city of Raleigh was drafted by the Corps to voluntarily accept non-Federal funds to be used by the Government for the reallocation study.

l. As of February 2015, the MOA is currently under review by Corps' headquarters.

m. To date, a Department of the Army permit application has not been received for this project.