

**MEETING NOTES**

**ALABAMA POWER COMPANY  
MARTIN RELICENSING  
MIG 1 – FISH AND WILDLIFE**

**CLANTON WATER COURSE, MITCHELL ROOM  
CLANTON, AL  
NOVEMBER 10, 2009**

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**ATTENDEES:**

Study Plan 7 - Wildlife Management Program (AM meeting)

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Rick Claybrook         | Alabama Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) |
| Ericha Shelton-Nix     | ADCNR   |
| Steve Krotzer          | Alabama Power Company (APC)                                 |
| Jim Crew               | APC   |
| Jim Lochamy            | APC   |
| Angie Anderegg         | APC   |
| Mark Tuggle            | APC   |
| Shane Boring           | Kleinschmidt Associates (KA)                                |
| Henry Mealing          | KA  |
| Amanda Fleming         | KA  |
| Jeff Powell (by Phone) | US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)                        |

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Study Plan 3 - Downstream Flows (PM meeting)

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|------------------------|---|
| Nick Nichols           | Alabama Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) |
| Chris Greene           | ADCNR   |
| Steve Krotzer          | Alabama Power Company (APC)                                 |
| Jim Crew               | APC   |
| John Grogan            | APC   |
| Charles Stover         | APC   |
| Jim Lochamy            | APC   |
| Angie Anderegg         | APC   |
| Alan Peeples           | APC   |
| Mark Tuggle            | APC   |
| Shane Boring           | Kleinschmidt Associates (KA)                                |
| Henry Mealing          | KA  |
| Amanda Fleming         | KA  |
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**ACTION ITEMS:**

**Wildlife Management Program**

- At the request of the ADCNR, Mark Tuggle will review the existing categories/zones/compartments of Martin Project lands and explain how these existing categories will be used to describe land management practices in the project.
- The group will consider the proposal of having annual/bi-annual update meetings to supplement the wildlife management reports, which will be distributed every six years.
- The Wildlife Management Plan should include: Which areas will have a desired future condition of longleaf pine? On a compartment basis, how will the DFC (desired future condition) be achieved? What is the general timeline? How will success be measured? Will any non-project lands be managed in this manner?
- Jim Crew will ask Jim Hancock, Balch and Bingham, about the liability of bow hunting and small game hunting on natural/undeveloped project lands.
- Continue to discuss the Wildlife Management Program after the MIG meetings on December 3.

**Downstream Flows**

- KA will contact Dennis Devries to gather information on paddlefish studies he has performed in Alabama – identify information he may have on population characteristics and the adult spawning migration.
- Angie Anderegg will determine how often flows of 6,000 cfs naturally occur below Thurlow.
- Based on the information gathered, APC will evaluate current project operations to see if operations at Martin can or need to be “tweaked” to improve Paddlefish spawning in the Tallapoosa River.

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*These notes summarize the major discussion items and are not intended to be a transcript or analysis of the meeting.*

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The Wildlife Management Program at the Martin Project (Study Plan 7)

Shane Boring opened the meeting by noting that the objective of the previous meeting on September 22 was to have a draft management plan ready for today's meeting. He added that, after some discussion with ADCNR staff, it was determined that today's meeting would be better spent further identifying and refining the wildlife management goals for the Project area, and as such, this would be the focus of today's session.

Mark distributed three Martin timber stand information spreadsheets: 1) proposed project lands, 2) current project lands, and 3) combined proposed and current project lands. These spreadsheets summarize information found on the Historical Timber Stand Data CD. Mark defined several terms on the spreadsheet: UH-Upland Hardwood, PN-Natural Pine, PP-Planted Pine, PH- Pine Hardwood Mix, and FL-Flowage. Mark explained that the total acres do not include the project lands on the islands and only includes plots greater than two acres. He noted that, because the group expressed interest in conversion of Project lands to longleaf pine, the total number of acres currently in the longleaf pine dominant cover type (Society of American Foresters code 80) was included at the bottom of each of the spreadsheets. Currently there are 1301 longleaf dominated acres within the project boundary. Shane distributed a map showing the current distribution of longleaf dominated communities. It was noted that the proposed addition of lands to the Martin Project Boundary would result in an automatic increase of 136 acres of longleaf pine dominated forest, bringing the total to 1437 acres. Shane explained that the information would be summarized in a more user friendly format (i.e. tables and/or figures) and included in the wildlife management plan as background information describing the baseline conditions for future management.

Ericha Shelton-Nix distributed an email with comments from Eric Spadgenske, USFWS, who was unable to attend the meeting (attached). Eric noted that lands suitable for upland pine forest should be managed for a desired forest condition of open, mature longleaf pine forest. Eric recommended conversion from non-native pines and hardwoods to a longleaf pine dominated condition on suitable sites and enhancement of existing longleaf stands. He added that emphasis should be on the use of prescribed fire early and often and that conversion to longleaf will likely be a lengthy process and will require some clear cutting. Eric suggested that all uplands, hardwood and pine, should be burned ASAP and then on a 1-3 year cycle until groundcover is dominated by herbaceous species, and then on a 3 year cycle to maintain openness, with fire regime trending toward the growing season. Rick Claybrook recommended using the Good Quality Foraging Habitat from the red-Cockaded Woodpecker Recovery Plan as a potential goal. Mark said that all of Eric's suggestions would be considered and most seemed possible. Mark also commented that the Safe Harbor Agreement is not part of the relicensing process and involves non-project lands.

Shane distributed the following "Talking Points" relative to the Wildlife Management Program for the Martin Project, discussions of which are shown below in *italics*. Shane noted that the purpose

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of these talking points was to stimulate dialogue towards development of specific wildlife management goals, adding that any plan would also include those items agreed to in the Study Plan.

Overarching Goal of the Wildlife Management Program:

Management toward longleaf pine habitat on suitable sites, with native mixed hardwoods and/or mixed pine/hardwood in creek bottoms, on steep slopes and other sites deemed unsuitable for longleaf. *The group agreed that this seemed like a reasonable overarching goal.*

Measurable Objectives for Achieving Goal:

- Addition of 136 acres of longleaf dominant habitat upon issuance of new license.
- Increase longleaf pine dominant acreage (on suitable sites) by approximately 10% from baseline between each 6 year reporting period. *Shane noted this was primarily suggested as a means of stimulating discussion regarding measurable targets for conversion to longleaf and that there may be other approaches worth considering. After discussion of several alternatives, attendees agreed that the 10% approach seemed most reasonable.*
  - “Adaptive Management” strategy. *The group discussed that an adaptive management strategy would likely be needed to allow for adjustments to the target levels of longleaf conversion, especially considering the fact that the number of suitable sites would likely dwindle as new acreage is converted. Rick remarked on the importance of an adaptive management strategy.*
- Basal Area Reduction- Need to determine in consultation with agencies.
  - *The group discussed basal area of 40-50 sq ft, however, after some discussion it was determined that the habitat guidelines for red-cockaded woodpecker state that 60 sq ft is likely a better target.*
- Controlled Burning- Historically, Alabama Power has burned 200-300 acres of project lands per year. Potentially a yearly average of 200 (+/- 10%) over each 6 year reporting period.
  - *Jim Lochamy noted that the program needs to be written with flexibility to allow for some deviations due to unforeseen circumstances.*

#### Hunting Opportunities

In addition to the talking points regarding wildlife management goals, the group also discussed the ADCNR’s request to provide additional hunting opportunities on Project lands. Jim Crew enquired as to whether ADCNR staff had been able to compile information demonstrating a need for additional hunting opportunities at the Project, particularly small game hunting that was discussed in the last meeting.

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Ericha and Rick provided two reports: 1) A Portrait of Hunters and Hunting License Trends in Alabama by Southwick Associates; 2) State of Alabama Wildlife Management Area Harvest Report 2007-2008 (<http://www.outdooralabama.com/hunting/land/2005-06%20WMA%20Har%20Rep.pdf>). Ericha and Rick noted that ADCNR would be willing to manage hunting lands on/near the project boundary and assume liability. However, ADCNR would need at least 4,000-5,000 acres to manage effectively. Jim Crew explained that there are not enough contiguous acres in the project area to commit to hunting only.

Mark suggested establishing a public access hunting area near Irwin Shoals (500-600 acres) that could be managed by Alabama Power for small game and bow hunting. The area could be managed similar to Forever Wild lands with permits and maps available online.

The group then briefly discussed the ADCNR request for additional handicap hunting. APC staff noted that handicapped hunting will be handled as agreed in the previous meeting - managed through Camp ASSCA.

Shane said that the information developed during the meeting was adequate for Kleinschmidt to pull together a Draft Wildlife Management Plan. It was noted that the draft plan was due by April, and that a draft would be distributed to the group with sufficient time for review prior to the next meeting.

Downstream Flows at the Martin Project (Study Plan 3)

The group briefly discussed the goals of Study Plan 3:

- Characterize baseline aquatic conditions in the Martin Dam tailrace
- Characterize baseline aquatic conditions in the Tallapoosa River downstream of the Thurlow Dam.
- Explore possibilities for flexibility in the Martin Dam operations that could enhance downstream areas – tailrace and Tallapoosa River.

They then reviewed what Alabama Power has completed to date:

- Preliminary review of the Martin Dam project operations.
- Reviewed, compiled, and distributed (to the USFWS and ADCNR) the existing environmental data for the Tallapoosa River downstream of Thurlow Dam. The attendees noted that they had received the information and didn't have questions on it at this time. Henry noted that the information would be used to characterize the baseline conditions under the minimum flow – 1,200 cfs.
- Completed fisheries field surveys in the Martin Dam tailrace. High river flows delayed sampling for mussel, snail, and crayfish in the Martin Dam Tailrace and downstream of

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Thurlow Dam on the Tallapoosa River. Nothing unusual has been found to date during sampling.

The group discussed project operations and downstream flows and how to proceed forward for the two areas – Martin Tailrace & Tallapoosa River downstream of Thurlow Dam.

- The Martin Tailrace - The maximum hydraulic capacity (cfs) for each turbine at Martin are Unit 1= 4,024; Unit 2 = 3,653; Unit 3 = 3,563; and Unit 4 = 4,464. Alabama Power does not operate the units at less than “best gate” (best efficiency). Running turbine units at levels lower than best gate typically causes excessive wear on the operating parts of the turbine. Because of these consequences, operating the existing turbine units at low gate settings for long periods of time is not an option for Alabama Power. Due to the high volume of water that would pass through any one of the turbines at best gate, a minimum flow below Martin Dam is not economically feasible with the existing equipment. In addition, no biological evidence from the tailrace suggests that a minimum flow at Martin Dam is ecologically necessary.
- The area downstream of Thurlow Dam may be affected by two issues:
  - Drought Operations- There have been no changes to the Alabama Drought Response Operating Proposal (ADROP) since the agencies reviewed it at the last Alabama Drought Assessment and Planning Team (ADAPT) meeting. The United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) is currently evaluating ADROP for inclusion in their basin manual- so ADROP will not be official until the basin manual is complete. The USACE will, however, grant a variance to use the ADROP polices once the USACE has completed modeling and reviewed the policies. John Grogan reminded the group that the benefit of ADROP was to be able to anticipate and therefore mitigate for droughts. In addition, a higher winter pool (if approved) for the Martin Reservoir may help mitigate drought conditions.
  - Paddlefish spawning requirements- According to the Jordan Radio telemetry Study, paddlefish spawning typically occurs annually during March and April – associated with increasing water temperatures. Spawning events appear to be triggered by flow events of around 6,000 cfs. The study also noted that paddlefish appeared to prefer the Tallapoosa River to the Coosa River despite the higher flows in the Coosa River. Alabama Power will review the operations data at Thurlow and determine how many times a flow of 6,000 cfs or higher has occurred during March and April during past operations. This will indicate whether this is a common occurrence or something that needs to be a periodic operation target in the future.

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- Other issues downstream:
  - A population of the Tallapoosa Pebblesnail (*Somatogyrus pilsbryanus*) was found downstream of Thurlow Dam in the Tallasee Falls area. This species had not been reported from the drainage "since the river was impounded", and it is listed as a species of Moderate Conservation Concern (<http://www.dcnr.state.al.us/watchable-wildlife/what/inverts/mollusks/aquaticsnails/>).
  - As required in the Thurlow license, additional sampling will be conducted below Thurlow Dam in 2010 (duplicating the 1992 study). The report is due June 2011, so will not be available before the Martin License Application is filed, however, some preliminary information from sampling may be incorporated into the Martin License Application.

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**Martin Project Relicensing**

**MIG 1**

**Meeting Purpose:** To continue discussions with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife regarding The Wildlife Management Program at the Martin Project.

- 9:30 AM      Review of September Wildlife Management Plan Meeting – Jim Crew (Alabama Power)
- 9:45 AM      Review Draft Wildlife Management Plan, Martin Maps, and lake tracts
- 11:45 AM     Questions and Next Steps
- 12:00 PM     Lunch –Zaxby’s (1490 7th St S Clanton, AL)

**Meeting Purpose:** To continue discussions with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife regarding the downstream flows at the Martin Project.

- 1:00 PM      Review CD of Existing Environmental Data for the Tallapoosa Downstream of Thurlow Dam
- 1:30 PM      Discussion of Downstream Flows - project operations, drought scenarios, drought plan, pulsing, and potential effects of Rule Curve change.
- 3:00 PM      Adjourn

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**Shelton-Nix, Ericha**

**From:** Eric\_Spadgenske@fws.gov  
**Sent:** Friday, November 06, 2009 10:33 AM  
**To:** Shelton-Nix, Ericha  
**Cc:** Jeff\_Powell@fws.gov; Claybrook, Rick  
**Subject:** Re: APC meeting next week  
**Attachments:** pic15289.gif

Ericha -

I will not be in next week at all, and will not make the meeting on Tuesday.

The message I want to convey to everyone is fairly simple. We need to know what lands should be in upland pine forest, these should be managed for a DFC of open, mature, longleaf pine forest. Primary management of this will be conversion of off-site pines and hardwoods to longleaf pine, and enhancement of existing longleaf pine stands. The emphasis should be on use of prescribed fire - early and often. The conversion from loblolly plantation can take a long time, but will require some clearcutting. All uplands, either oak or pine, should be burned ASAP, and then on a 1-3 year cycle until the ground cover community is dominated by herbaceous plants, and then on a 3 year rotation to maintain the open character. The fire regime should trend toward growing season over time. We could use the definition of Good Quality Foraging Habitat from the RCW Recovery Plan for a goal. I am not anti-hardwood. I would expect numerous hardwood inclusions in the ravines and drains, and a mix of fire-tolerant hardwoods scattered throughout the pine stands.

My questions to APC are: What areas will have a desired future condition of longleaf pine (this should include most upland sites)? On a stand-by-stand basis, how will the DFC be achieved (conversion, fire, thinning, etc.)? What is the general timeline? How will success be measured (e.g., extent and quality of longleaf pine forest)? Will you manage any non-project lands in this manner? Can we move forward with a Safe Harbor Agreement?

I will be here to day if you want to discuss. Have a great weekend!

Eric

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