

Study Plan 1 - Migratory Fish – Tallapoosa Basin Literature Review

1.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is interested in understanding and documenting the migratory species that currently or historically utilized the Tallapoosa River through a literature-based review. American eel is of main concern as this catadromous species has been collected in the Tallapoosa River downstream of the Thurlow Project, and passage of this species through the multiple dams on the Tallapoosa and Alabama Rivers is a concern for completion of its lifecycle.

USFWS is also interested in what other southeast hydroelectric power projects are doing in regard to managing American eels and would like to see a review and summary of other American eel management plans and any recovery plans for diadromous fish species in the Tallapoosa Basin.

2.0 RELEVANT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GOALS

Impacts to migratory rare, threatened, endangered or commercial fish species (including the American eel) are of concern to the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service and the USFWS as part of their Section 18 authority provided in the Federal Power Act. The USFWS has expressed a particular interest in southeast management goals for the American eel, and how the operation and relicensing of the Martin Project fits into those goals.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND EXISTING INFORMATION

There is extensive information available on migratory fish species including American eel. Many of these species are rare, threatened, endangered or of commercial value and have been studied on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. A review of some of the information available is provided at the following internet sites:

- <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/gulfcoast/>
- <http://www.fws.gov/daphne/sturgeon/sturgeon.html>
- <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/sos/spsyn/op/eel/>
- http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/sos/spsyn/op/eel/archives/28_AmericanEel_2006.pdf
- http://www.fws.gov/northeast/ameel/American_Eel_Questions_and_Answers.PDF
- <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/fisheries/SEFishPassage/SE%20FISH%20AND%20AQUATIC%20SPECIES%20BARRIER%20ASSESSMENT%20WORKSHOP%20DAY%202%20Questions.pdf>
- http://nia.ecsu.edu/noaa/0506/noaa_coastal_conference/coastal_agenda_draft.pdf

Additional citations that are available are:

- ASMFC. 2006a. Terms of Reference and Advisory Report to the American Eel stock assessment peer review. ASMFC Stock Assessment Report 06-01. 23 p.
- ASMFC. 2006b. 2006 review of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fishery Management Plan for American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*). <http://www.asmfc.org/>.
- Collette, B.B. and G. Klein-MacPhee (ed.). 2002. Bigelow and Schroeder's Fishes of the Gulf of Maine. 3rd edition. Smithsonian Inst. Press. Washington, D.C. 748 p.
- Mettee, M. F., P. E. O'Neil, and J. M. Pierson. 1996. Fishes of Alabama and the Mobile basin. Oxmoor House, Birmingham, AL.

- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC). 1995. Gulf sturgeon recovery plan. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta, GA.
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2000. Conservation agreement and strategy for the Alabama sturgeon. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta, GA

As seen in this sampling of information available, information for the Atlantic and Gulf coasts are readily available. Therefore, there should be adequate information available for a literature-review based study for migratory species including American eel.

4.0 PROJECT NEXUS

Because migratory species use rivers as migratory routes between spawning areas in freshwater and saltwater, hydroelectric dams can serve as obstacles to migration. The Martin Project serves as a potential barrier for fish passage on the Tallapoosa River. However the Yates and Thurlow dams are located downstream of the Martin dam and serve as the first fish barriers on the Tallapoosa River. There are also additional Army Corps of Engineer dams downstream on the Alabama River – R.F. Henry Lock & Dam/Woodruff Lake, Millers Ferry Lock & Dam/Dannelly Lake, Claiborne Lock & Dam/Claiborne Lake.

5.0 STUDY AREA AND STUDY SITES

This study would focus on the Tallapoosa River with emphasis on the Martin Project and will include the Tallapoosa River downstream of the Yates and Thurlow Projects. It will also include, to some extent, the Alabama River.

6.0 PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed method for implementing this study would be a literature search and review and summary of the information gathered.

- 1) APC will solicit comments from the USFWS and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding the proposed study plan and request any documents they would like included in this literature search.
- 2) APC will review and summarize the historic range of migratory (anadromous, catadromous, and diadromous) fish species with emphasis on those species that are listed as rare, threatened or endangered on the USFWS and/or NOAA list of commercial species. The intent is to perform a thorough review of relevant literature (peer reviewed and “gray” literature).
- 3) APC will develop a bibliography of all documents (PDF copies of papers/reports/relevant documents and documentation of personal communications conducted) to be transmitted with the Draft Study Report. In addition, APC will develop a written summary for each relevant document reviewed as well as all relevant information gained through correspondence with researchers and others. Summaries for each relevant document should highlight the species, its life cycle and its historic range in the study area.
- 4) APC will use the “fish passage concept document” developed as part of the Coosa Project E9 IAG as a template for developing a similar process for Martin. The draft concept paper for the Martin fish passage document is included as Attachment A.
- 5) For the American eel, APC will review other existing recovery plans for information on how other hydroelectric power projects are addressing passage of American eels.

7.0 CONSISTENCY WITH GENERALLY ACCEPTED SCIENTIFIC PRACTICE

This study employs generally accepted practices for conducting literature searches. As noted above, the USFWS and NMFS will have opportunity to comment and edit this plan to include documents that should be reviewed and summarized as part of this study report.

8.0 PRODUCTS

A draft report summarizing the applicable literature of species associated with the Tallapoosa River Basin, specifically the Martin Project, will be distributed to MIG 1 for review and comment within 4 months of the completion of the literature gathering and review. A final report will be provided as part of the draft license application that will include PDF copies of the literature used for the report.

9.0 SCHEDULE

APC files Final Study Plan with FERC	November 2008
Anticipated FERC approval	April 2009
Begin Literature Review	July 2009
Draft Report	November 2009
Final Report	April 2010

10.0 LEVEL OF EFFORT AND COST

APC estimates the cost of consulting on study plan development, conducting a thorough literature review, developing a study report, and discussing the results with all stakeholders is approximately \$50,000.

11.0 REFERENCES

Many references are provided in the previous document sections.

ATTACHMENT A

ALABAMA POWER COMPANY
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

MARTIN RELICENSING PROJECT
FERC NO. 364

Tallapoosa River Fish Passage Concept Document

March 2008

Prepared by:

Alabama Power Company
United States Fish & Wildlife Service

MARTIN RELICENSING PROJECT

TALLAPOOSA RIVER FISH PASSAGE CONCEPT DOCUMENT

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ALABAMA POWER COMPANY BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

MARTIN RELICENSING PROJECT

TALLAPOOSA RIVER FISH PASSAGE CONCEPT DOCUMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Alabama Power Company (APC) is currently relicensing the Martin hydroelectric projects on the Tallapoosa River. The relicensing process includes a multi-year cooperative effort between APC and interested stakeholders to address operational, recreational, and ecological concerns associated with hydroelectric project operations. During the initial (scoping) phase of the relicensing process, APC consulted a wide variety of stakeholders, including state and federal resource agencies, non-governmental organizations, and concerned citizens seeking their input on important relicensing issues. Stakeholders identified several issues to be addressed during this relicensing process, including fish passage related to the Tallapoosa and Alabama River basins.

As part of the cooperative process, APC held several meetings with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and other stakeholders to further refine the fish passage issue. As part of these discussions, the USFWS identified preparation of a Fish Passage Concept Document to describe the fish passage issue and identify opportunities to enhance anadromous, catadromous, and diadromous species limited fish passage on the Tallapoosa River. The primary purpose of this document is to present the framework for addressing fish passage in the relicensing process. Specifically, it is the Tallapoosa River Fish Passage Concept Document that outlines the information needed to address the fish passage issue:

- What are the identified biological objectives?
- What information do we currently have?
- What information do we need?
- What is a reasonable initial approach for fish passage?

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2.0 BIOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES IDENTIFIED

The biological objectives should address three main areas:

- Which species are targets for fish passage?
- What are the fish passage goals for the selected species?
- What are the long-term restoration goals for the selected species?

In Table 2-1, a list of species from the Section 1135 Preliminary Restoration Plan for the Alabama River that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) conducted in response to a request from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The plan states that there are 144 species of fish in the Alabama River (Mettee et al. 1996), but the species in the table represent the migratory species that would benefit from fish passage at Claiborne Lock & Dam. Species of special concern are the Gulf sturgeon, Alabama sturgeon, paddlefish, and the Alabama shad.

Table 2.1 Anadromous, Catadromous, and Diadromous fish species collected in the Alabama River.

Species	Species of Special Concern	Movement Characteristics
Gulf sturgeon (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi</i>)	x	Anadromous
Alabama sturgeon (<i>Scaphirhynchus suttkusi</i>)	x	Diadromous
mooneye (<i>Hiodon tergisus</i>)		Diadromous
paddlefish (<i>Polyodon spathula</i>)	x	Diadromous
alligator gar (<i>Lepisosteus spatula</i>)		Diadromous
American eel (<i>Anguilla rostrata</i>)		Catadromous
Alabama shad (<i>Alosa alabamae</i>)	x	Anadromous
skipjack herring (<i>Alosa chrysochloris</i>)		Diadromous
gizzard shad (<i>Dorosoma cepedianum</i>)		Diadromous
threadfin shad (<i>Dorosoma petenense</i>)		Diadromous
blue sucker (<i>Cycleptus elongatus</i>)		Diadromous
Alabama hog sucker (<i>Hypentelium etowanum</i>)		Diadromous
smallmouth buffalo (<i>Ictiobus bubalus</i>)		Diadromous
quillback (<i>Carpionodes cyprinus</i>)		Diadromous
highfin carpsucker (<i>Carpionodes velifer</i>)		Diadromous
spotted sucker (<i>Minytrema melanops</i>)		Diadromous
river redhorse (<i>Moxostoma carinatum</i>)		Diadromous
black redhorse (<i>Moxostoma duquesnei</i>)		Diadromous
golden redhorse (<i>Moxostoma erythrurum</i>)		Diadromous
blacktail redhorse (<i>Moxostoma poecilurum</i>)		Diadromous
channel catfish (<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>)		Diadromous
blue catfish (<i>Ictalurus furcatus</i>)		Diadromous
flathead catfish (<i>Pylodictis olivaris</i>)		Diadromous
Atlantic needlefish (<i>Strongylura marina</i>)		Diadromous
white bass (<i>Morone chrysops</i>)		Diadromous
striped bass (<i>Morone saxatilis</i>)		Anadromous

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Species	Species of Special Concern	Movement Characteristics
spotted bass (<i>Micropterus punctulatus</i>)		Diadromous
largemouth bass (<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>)		Diadromous
southern walleye (<i>Stizostedion vitreum vitreum</i>)		Diadromous
freshwater drum (<i>Aplodinotus grunniens</i>)		Diadromous
hogchoker (<i>Trinectes maculatus</i>)		Diadromous
striped mullet (<i>Mugil cephalus</i>)		Diadromous

Additional efforts have been made to collect fishes on the Tallapoosa river downstream of the Thurlow Project as part of a minimum flow evaluation plan for that project. These fish are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Anadromous, Catadromous, and Diadromous fish species collected downstream of Thurlow Dam in the Tallapoosa River.

Species	Species of Special Concern	Movement Characteristics

Other federally listed species in the Tallapoosa and lower Alabama River include:

Alabama red-bellied turtle (*Pseudemys alabamensis*), southern clubshell (*Pleurobema decisum*), heavy pigtoe (*Pleurobema taitianum*), inflated heelsplitter (*Potamilus inflatus*), and fine-lined pocketbook (*Lampsilis altilis*).

Restoration goals should follow approved fishery management plans if they are in place (FERC 2003). A plan is available for the Gulf sturgeon (USFWS and GSMFC 1995), and other documents indicated a reference to a conservation agreement for the Alabama sturgeon (USFWS 2000) and future plans for the Alabama shad.

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3.0 *SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND*

The purpose of this section is to investigate resources and define the existing information on the fisheries community and their need for migration.

The USACE prepared a Preliminary Restoration Plan (PRP) in 2000 at the request of the WWF, but the WWF withdrew from the project after this plan was completed. It is unclear as to whether the Ecosystem Restoration Report (ERR), a second step of the PRP, was ever completed, and which would have included an environmental impact statement (EIS) as well.

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4.0 SCIENTIFIC UNKNOWNNS

There are several scientific unknowns that will need to be addressed as part of fish passage.

- What information do we need to know about fish biology and fish passage needs (lifts, locks, or ladders) in addition to our current base knowledge?
- Which developments need fish passage facilities?
- What type of effectiveness studies would be needed?

Most of the current effort for fish passage has focused on Claiborne Lock & Dam, but fish passage should also be considered at the Miller's Ferry Development.

The USACE's PRP specifically proposed three types of fish passage for the Claiborne Lock & Dam: 1) modification of the existing lock gates (installation of sluice gates in the upper and lower gates), 2) construction of a fish lift at the west end of the fixed-crest spillway, and 3) construction of a fish bypass channel around the east end of the dam. The fish lift provides the best opportunity to pass the most species of fish, including sturgeon, but is the most expensive to construct. While the PRP does not mention downstream fish passage, it is assumed that this will be accomplished via periodic flood flows at Claiborne, which has been reported as the most effective at passing downstream migrants (FERC 2003).

During a sampling effort for passage via the lock mechanism, where a small attraction flow was provided for eight hours (starting at midnight), the PRP reports that "large numbers of fish" were collected. Species included: threadfin and gizzard shad, hogchoker, freshwater drum, channel catfish, blue catfish, bluegill, common carp, striped mullet, white and black crappie, skipjack herring, flathead catfish, American eel, paddlefish, smallmouth buffalo, silver chub, silverside shiner, and blacktail shiner.

The PRP notes that additional gill netting below Claiborne was scheduled for FY2000, with plans to provide fish attraction flows, but it is unknown if this effort was completed.

The PRP states that the discussion of the proposed fish passage techniques caused debate among technical experts because of the lack of site-specific information on the species of concern. Specific questions were raised about fish migratory movement timing, swimming performance capabilities, and attraction flow needs.

According to the FERC, the most frequently utilized method for assessing the effectiveness of a fish passage facility is the number of fish utilizing it. This method, while necessary, does not take into account the actual population of fish that are available to utilize the facility. Therefore, FERC recommends measuring effectiveness based on the proportion of the target population that is passed through the facility.

This recommended method will be more problematic for the Claiborne Lock & Dam. Estimates of the population below the dam may need to be determined before the fish passage facilities are in place to adequately measure the effectiveness of these facilities. The effectiveness of the potential facilities at Miller's Ferry will be easier to quantify, as they can be

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expressed as the percentage of fish that pass through these facilities as a function of the number of fish that pass through the facility immediately downstream (*e.g.*, the effectiveness of a facility at Miller's Ferry will be equal to the number of fish passing at Miller's Ferry divided by the number of fish passing at Claiborne). Effectiveness of downstream fish passage will be measured by mark and recapture techniques.

Additionally, the FERC (2003) recommends the following in the effectiveness plan: 1) including an effectiveness plan in all license articles requiring upstream or downstream fish passage as part of the requirement, and 2) defining the duration of monitoring the effectiveness (typically 2-4 years depending on flow conditions).

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5.0 *INITIAL APPROACH*

As part of setting an initial approach for examining fish passage needs, we need to consider what the sequence of events should be for fish passage, culture of stocks, restocking specific species of concern.

Construction of a fish passage facility on the Alabama River is under consideration at the Claiborne Lock & Dam, but is dependent on Federal appropriations. Once the paperwork for appropriations is completed and construction can actually begin, the USFWS plans to examine construction of facilities at the Miller's Ferry Lock & Dam.

As for culture and restocking, these would have to be developed with the assistance of the ADCNR. Restocking could take place once a successful propagation program is in place for this species. It is unlikely that other species would have to be restocked as there are viable populations below Claiborne which should increase as more spawning grounds are made available due to the passage facilities.

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6.0 INFORMATION SOURCES/LITERATURE CITED

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). 2003. Evaluation of mitigation effectiveness at hydropower projects: Fish passage, draft report. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Washington, D. C.

Mettee, M. F., P. E. O'Neil, and J. M. Pierson. 1996. Fishes of Alabama and the Mobile basin. Oxmoor House, Birmingham, AL.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC). 1995. Gulf sturgeon recovery plan. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta, GA.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2000. Conservation agreement and strategy for the Alabama sturgeon. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta, GA.