

Submitted to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 2-26-19 at 10:40am.

As the Executive Director of Chattahoochee River Conservancy, a 501c3 non-profit organization based in Columbus, Georgia, I believe Georgia Power's intent to decommission and remove Riverview and Langdale Dams on the Chattahoochee River is a positive move for the health of the river and the communities on its banks.

Both dams are located in the center of the Fall Line region which extends from the tailrace of the US Army Corps of Engineers Dam at West Point Lake downstream to Columbus, GA. The Fall Line is a geographic feature representing the transition between Piedmont and Coastal Plain and gets its name from the steep gradient and extensive rock outcroppings. River bottoms in this area are characterized by exposed bedrock that creates habitat unique to southeastern streams. The Fall Line region of most rivers in Georgia and Alabama has been dammed and impounded since the 1800s, leaving very little of this unique habitat existing in a free-flowing condition.

I believe the removal of these dams to be essential for the preservation of native black bass species. Shoal Bass are native only to the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Rivers and have been assigned the status of Special Concern by the American Fisheries Society Endangered Species Committee and listed as a species of greatest conservation need by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Referencing the "Rangewide Management Plan for Shoal Bass" compiled by Dr. Steven M. Sammons from Auburn University's School of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Aquatic Sciences for Southeaster Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP), I state the following:

Shoal bass are a highly pursued sport fish across the ACF basin in both the main stem of the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint Rivers. In some areas strong populations exist but the species has experienced significant declines, particularly in the Chattahoochee River where the necessary habitat of Shoal Bass has been flooded by numerous impoundments. The main stem of the Chattahoochee River between West Point Dam and Bartlett's Ferry Reservoir is specifically listed in the management plan as an area that should be prioritized for restoration and dam removal.

In areas across the ACF Basin with altered flow regimes caused by upstream dams, a general pattern of reduced Shoal Bass recruitment has been documented. It has also been noted that fragmented populations below Langdale and Riverview dams in the main stem of the Chattahoochee River between West Point Dam and the headwaters of Walter F. George reservoir near Columbus, were characterized by low abundance and primarily large fish, an indication of poor recruitment within the population and dangerously low genetic diversity.

Fluvial Specialists, Shoal Bass are intolerant of reservoir habitats, and typically spawn in large shoal areas undergoing long migrations to reach a suitable area. Removing these dams will restore aquatic connectivity within this portion of the watershed and allow natural passage of the fish for spawning purposes. By reconnecting the segmented shoal bass populations, genetic diversity and fecundity will improve.

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