



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NASHVILLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 1070
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37202-1070

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

April 9, 2007

Project Planning Branch

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

The Corps of Engineers, Nashville District, is preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to address proposed operational changes at Center Hill Dam that could affect pool elevations in Center Hill Lake. Center Hill Dam is located in DeKalb County in central Tennessee.

Center Hill Dam, impounded in the early 1950s, was built on karst geology using accepted engineering practices of the day. Since the 1960s, seepage flows through the dam's right abutment and left rim wall have been monitored. Repairs have been made at various times and include grout injection into the dam foundation, earthen embankment, right abutment and left rim. These repairs were effective. However, recent increased seepage and development of turbid flows through springs below the left rim wall have become concerns. A comprehensive plan to repair the dam was approved, but will take a number of years to complete. The plan includes a major grouting project scheduled to start in fall 2007, to address the dam seepage, followed by installation of a cutoff wall through the main dam and saddle dam. These repairs along with other alternatives were discussed in the following National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents: *Proposed Center Hill Dam Seepage Rehabilitation, Environmental Assessment, July 2005*; and *Proposed Center Hill Dam Seepage Rehabilitation, Environmental Assessment Supplement 1, March 2006*. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed for both of these documents.

Since March 2005, the Corps has attempted to keep fall, winter and early spring lake levels from extreme rises due to high inflow. Seepage problems are made worse during continual high lake levels. Until repairs are sufficiently complete, the Corps has determined that it is in the public's interest to operate Center Hill Lake at the lower range of the operations curve to reduce pressure on the dam foundation, abutments, and rim walls. Lower lake levels year round would still be within the normal operation range. Although not expected, the Corps may have to lower lake levels significantly further should seepage conditions worsen, or new information determines this action is necessary. Currently, a formal risk assessment is being conducted to determine if a need exists to drop the pool level significantly below the normal operation range to reduce risk to people and property.

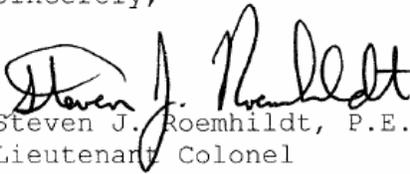
The DEIS is necessary to provide NEPA compliance to address impacts that could occur due to possible changes in lake levels. These changes could include, but are not limited to water quality, aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial habitat, recreation, water supply, flood storage, economics, hydropower production, and safety.

This letter serves to solicit scoping comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of proposed operational changes that could affect typical pool elevations for an extended period of time. Any comments received during the comment period will be considered in the NEPA process. We encourage comments not only about the immediate project area, but also of plans or proposals for any other development that may impact or influence project resources.

This letter also serves to initiate the public involvement requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Section 106, implemented by regulations at 36CFR800, requires the Corps of Engineers to consider the effects of its undertakings on historic properties. Because the Corps plans to maintain lower lake levels within the current operational curve, it is the Corps' finding that archeological sites located within the reservoir pool will not be affected; however, if the Corps has to lower lake levels significantly below the operating pool should seepage conditions worsen, appropriate archeological identification studies will be initiated in consultation with the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer and other offices as necessary.

The public is invited to submit written comments no later than thirty (30) days from the date of this letter. You may send your comments to the address above, attention Ms. Joy Broach, or by calling Ms. Broach at (615) 736-7956. Comments may also be e-mailed to: CenterHill.Repair@lrn02.usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,


Steven J. Roemhildt, P.E.
Lieutenant Colonel
Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

Enclosure

Figure 1. Center Hill Dam and Lake Location Map.

