



Through the Federal Power Act, National Park Service recommends provisions to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to mitigate and enhance conservation and recreation resources associated with licensing dams.

Congaree National Park, South Carolina

New Hydro License Could Enhance Congaree National Park Floodplain Ecosystem

The Saluda Relicensing Project consists of a single large dam and reservoir 23 miles up stream from Congaree National Park. The project's owner, South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCE&G), recently began proceedings to obtain a new operating license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The current license is scheduled to expire in 2010. SCE&G has opted to use an "enhanced traditional process" to seek their new license. The process offers the potential for extensive collaboration among the power company and numerous stakeholders, including Congaree National Park.

The Park was designated to protect a floodplain ecosystem consisting of more than 22,000 acres of southern bottomland old growth hardwoods—the largest such tract remaining in the United States. The Park is dependent on period flooding events of varying duration and magnitude to maintain the integrity of its ecosystem. Since the dam was completed in the 1930s, the natural flooding regime has been significantly altered. The implications of the impact are poorly known but are being evaluated. Impacts believed to be linked to dam operations include changes in floodplain and channel geomorphology, affects of threatened, endangered, and/or rare species, changes to the vegetation community, and more.

The Hydropower Assistance Program has been assisting park staff in negotiating new operating standards that will better protect park resources. To date, we have assisted the park in leveraging nearly \$50,000 dollars to study the impacts of the dam and to develop a set of consensus-based and scientifically-sound flow prescriptions. Other stakeholders involved with the project include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, the State of South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Lake Murray homeowners associations, Trout Unlimited, the University of South Carolina, American Rivers, The Nature Conservancy of South Carolina, Carolina Coastal Conservation League, and others.



Bald Cypress at Congaree National Park. The Park is home to numerous champion trees which depend on the timing, magnitude, and duration of floods.

"The Hydropower Assistance Program has provided outstanding guidance and leadership to Congaree National Park throughout the initial stages of the relicensing process for the Saluda Dam. They were instrumental in securing research funding for a floodplain inundation model, and have been actively involved with all aspects of project management for this critical study."
—**Bill Hulslander, Chief of Resources and Science, Congaree National Park**

National Park Service provides technical assistance on recreation and conservation issues to all participants in Hydropower Licensing Proceedings of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. NPS makes recommendations on recreation access and facilities, instream flows for recreation, and protection for riparian corridors and conservation buffer zones. More information on Hydropower Assistance at <http://www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/hydro/>

For more information about National Park Service project involvement, contact Jeff Duncan at jeff_duncan@nps.gov. Further project information is available at www.saludahydrorelicense.com.