



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.

Little Tennessee and Cheoah Rivers

2004 Settlement Agreement Helps to Improve Great Smoky Mountains National Park

The Tapoco Project consists of four hydroelectric dams on the Little Tennessee and Cheoah rivers straddling the Tennessee-North Carolina border. Owned by the ALCOA Corporation, the combined capacity of the project is over 380 megawatts. All four reservoirs are partially situated with the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests. One of the reservoirs—Chilhowee—lies partially within Great Smoky Mountains National Park, its waters flooding the lower reaches of two creeks that drain the southern portions of the park. After more than five years of collaboration and intense negotiations under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s Alternative Licensing Process, a Comprehensive Hydropower Settlement Agreement was signed in April, 2004. Along with the National Park Service, signatories to the landmark agreement include ALCOA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Forest Foundation, the states of Tennessee and North Carolina, various local municipalities, the National Parks and Conservation Association, American Rivers, the Tennessee Clean Water Network, The Nature Conservancy, and Sierra Club.

Conservation and Mitigation Results

The agreement involves the protection of nearly 10,000 acres of land in and adjacent to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, restored river flows, establishment of a \$5,000,000 conservation trust fund, numerous recreational improvements, and continued hydropower generation over the lifespan of the new 40 year license. Specifically, the National Park Service received a donation in excess of 400 acres from ALCOA, lands lying within its authorized boundary, and is one of several beneficiaries to the mitigation fund. At the signing ceremony, Senator Lamar Alexander touted the agreement as a “win-win-win” between all levels of government, NGOs, and industry. Then Assistant Secretary Craig Manson went on to suggest that it epitomizes Secretary Norton’s 4 Cs of Communication, Consultation, Cooperation, for Conservation.



Calderwood Dam on the Little Tennessee River. Lands on both sides of the dam are now protected from development under the terms of the agreement.



Senator Lamar Alexander at the signing ceremony

“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. They’ve worked consistently and successfully with park staff, agency representatives and other regional stakeholders, and will be an integral partner in advocating for park resource protection throughout this relicensing process.”—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/>

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