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Lanier, dam to receive \$8.3 million in federal funds

Money will push forward study of river basin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mobile District, which governs Lake Lanier, will get \$293 million in federal stimulus money, including about \$8.3 million for Buford Dam and Lake Lanier, officials announced Tuesday.

One of the most notable funding moves is \$3 million to complete a study tied to the management of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River basin.

The study would cover "water supply, recreation, hydropower, flood damage reduction, navigation, and fish and wildlife," according to the corps.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, signed into law by President Barack Obama on Feb. 17, sets aside \$4.6 billion to the corps for its civil works program.

The corps has identified 172 projects in Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Mississippi, five geared toward construction and 167 toward operations and maintenance.

"We anticipate awarding the first contracts for these projects within 45 days," said E. Patrick Robbins, public affairs officer for the Mobile District.

"We will use a variety of contracting methods to get the projects under way as rapidly as possible. Some will be accomplished by using existing operations and maintenance contracts and some will be new contracts."

Also, the corps will hire temporary workers "at some of our projects to accomplish the work," Robbins said.

The projects must meet several requirements, including that they can be completed quickly, result in immediate hiring and "provide a useful service that does not require additional funding."

Twelve projects have been slated for Buford Dam and Lake Lanier and seven for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River basin, according to the corps' list.

The \$3 million study would serve to complete an update of the water control manual for the ACF basin.

The document would set guidelines for how much water should be released from Lanier and under what circumstances.

Last week, the corps decided to resume regular water discharges from Buford Dam into the Chattahoochee River, a move that upset two Lake Lanier advocacy groups, especially given the lake's water level rise from several months of healthy rainfall.

The Buford Dam/Lake Lanier projects focus mainly on maintenance and operations projects, including repainting a powerhouse and repairing roads that are becoming a safety hazard.

Vicki Barnhorst, executive director of the Lake Lanier Association, especially was excited about \$764,000 set aside for shoreline work "critical to preventing the degradation of ... natural resources."

"If that means some type of riprap or something to shore up the islands, something to do with erosion, that would be wonderful," she said.

Overall, Barnhorst was happy with the list of projects.

"This is all very positive for the lake," she said. "If they can get this study done efficiently, that would be wonderful."

Grier Todd, chairman of the 1071 Coalition lake advocacy group, agreed that the list contains some much-needed projects "that probably wouldn't have gotten done under the current budget situation."

"Plus, it should provide some kick to the local economy, with some jobs for people," he added.

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Federal funding boost

Here are projects, funded with federal stimulus money, affecting Buford Dam and Lake Lanier:

- Update inundation mapping below project for dam safety, flood damage reduction and emergency action plans to improve emergency response to flood events and reduce risk to public.
- Hire additional contract employees to provide increased maintenance support for project facilities.
- Repair/rehabilitate project buildings to improve energy efficiency, climate control and sanitary conditions.
- Perform shoreline and natural resources management activities critical to preventing the degradation of the project's natural resources.
- Upgrade to 50-amp electrical service at Old Federal, Bald Ridge and Bolding Mill campgrounds.
- Update sediment range surveys and upgrades to increase reliability of equipment and improve water management functions.
- Repaint powerhouse.
- Repair and resurface severely degraded roads that are becoming a safety hazard.
- Refurbish stop logs and perform annual maintenance of the dam and related structures to reduce the risk of failure.

- Improve plant safety by identifying power plant arc flash hazards.
- Replace plant motor control centers.
- Remove and replace asbestos containing insulation on raw water piping and air handlers.

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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