



SAVANNAH RIVERKEEPER®

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May 2, 2017

Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Planning Division: ATTN Mr. Nathan Dayan
100 West Oglethorpe Avenue
Savannah, GA 31401

To Whom It May Concern,

In regards to the future of the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, Savannah Riverkeeper, et al. submits the following comments for consideration:

Whereas we recognize the importance of facilitating the passage of Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon and other anadromous fish, such as striper and shad around the existing New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam (NSBLD) to the last remaining shoals on the Savannah River upstream, and that the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP) is contingent on that allowance;

Whereas we recognize the growing reliance and desirability of the downtown Augusta/North Augusta area to retain the current pool level of the river created by the impoundment structure downstream;

Whereas we recognize the untapped potential of the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam Park and believe it holds they key to providing enhanced recreational opportunities and a river-based economic driver to Richmond County, GA, through public/private partnerships geared towards responsible development of river recreation;

Whereas we recognize the growing encroachment into the floodplain along the Savannah River in the Downtown Augusta/North Augusta areas and the concerns of those landowners that flood control be highly regulated;

Whereas we recognize the rehabilitation of the NBSLD will not be funded by the Corps of Engineers, and the willingness of Augusta/North Augusta taxpayers and the consortium to fund the rehabilitation is close to nonexistent; and

Whereas we recognize the \$36 million allocated through the SHEP mitigation are funds designated for fish passage around NSBLD, and funds must be spent on projects that advance that objective; therefore

Savannah Riverkeeper recommends that the Savannah Corps of Engineers take the following actions related to the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam:

1. The Corps of Engineers should advance the proposal to replace the NSBLD dam structure with a rock weir; and
2. rehabilitate the lock system to maintain its functionality.

We believe replacing the aging dam structure with a rock weir not only provides safe passage for the fish, but will also provide the greatest protection for the current pool level desired by the upstream community. Rehabilitation of the lock system will open up opportunities for enhanced recreation and economic growth, such as the possibility of a whitewater center, while allowing opening of the gates to facilitate the passage of water downstream provides the crucial element of flood control.

We applaud the Corps of Engineers for the work they have done thus far in advancing this project. Their willingness to explore the combination of two large and necessary projects will allow considerable cost savings for local taxpayers, as well as the best possible outcome for the Savannah River and those desiring the upstream pool.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tonya Bonitatibus', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tonya Bonitatibus
Executive Director/Riverkeeper
Savannah Riverkeeper