

## **IMPACTS FROM PROPOSED DUCK RIVER DAM**

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The Corps of Engineers issued a permit to the Cullman-Morgan Water District in November 2006 to construct a dam on Duck River near Highway 278. Many concerns were raised when the dam was first proposed in 1996, including justifying the need for such a large amount of additional water supply. In the 10 years since the initial studies were conducted, many additional social, economic, and environmental concerns have been raised regarding this potential dam and more concerns keep surfacing.

The proposed Duck River dam will create a 640-acre reservoir and numerous financial, social, and environmental impacts for the local communities. The creation of the dam will result in the loss of more than 5 miles of Duck River and more than 500 acres of woodlands. Thirteen residential properties and one farm will also be lost forever.

The 1999 Environmental Assessment estimates a minimum increase in water rates of 20 percent will occur from the construction of the dam. In 1995, the cost for construction was estimated to be \$42 million. Updates on costs have not been made publicly available, but reports in the media suggest the costs are now well over \$50 million. With such high costs, it may be difficult for Cullman-Morgan Water District to recover the construction and operation costs. Several local water systems are providing their own water or searching for another supply, so the water needs in Cullman County may be overestimated. Other, less damaging water supply alternatives could provide a more reasonable amount of new water supply.

The following information was derived from several sources and summarizes the general impacts from water supply dams. This fact sheet was compiled to give every citizen information to use in forming an opinion of the benefits and impacts from the proposed dam.

***Your support of the organizations listed below will help ensure our rivers are protected and used effectively to enhance all water uses.***

### **IMPACTS FROM DAMS**

**Impacts Community and Quality of Life** The community surrounding a dam faces irreversible impacts from the construction of a dam. The cost for the construction and operation of a new dam is often passed along to water customers, resulting in an increase in water rates or taxes. Personal property is lost and the current quality of life along with it. Your friends and neighbors may lose a part of their family history or their favorite place to relax or recreate. With the addition of a water supply in the area, land development around Lake Catoma may increase, causing further water quality impacts to Lake Catoma and Eightmile Creek. Additional development and industry can alter the rural nature of the area. Rural areas are cherished in Alabama and may become more urbanized with increased development, leading to a decrease in rural communities. The reservoir will not generate income as private developments and marinas will not be allowed adjacent to the reservoir.

**Impairs the Flows Downstream** Dams permanently disrupt the flow of water in segments of the river below the dam. Even with water releases from the proposed dam, the stream will be

negatively impacted. Maintaining the natural flow in a stream is critical for aquatic ecosystems and for wildlife. Altered flows can also impact stream bank stabilization, erosion, property values, water quality, wetland ecosystems, and recreation. The flows in the Duck River are important for local ecosystems and human needs, but they also provide a significant portion of the flows for the Mulberry Fork, which is a valuable resource to residents, businesses, and cities as far downstream as Tuscaloosa. The Duck River is the second largest tributary to the Mulberry Fork.

**Impacts Recreational Activities** The loss of water and the potential loss of good water quality as a result of dams can lead to a reduction in the availability of recreational activities such as fishing, swimming, and boating. Water based recreational losses can often be seen in other downstream rivers. Recreational impacts will be felt not only in the Duck River, but in the downstream Mulberry Fork, where the Birmingham Canoe Club hosts an annual white water racing event that is nationally recognized and provides income for Cullman County and surrounding areas.

**Decreases Water Quality** Dams can negatively impact water quality both below the dam and in the reservoir itself. Clean water is important for the protection of human health and for Alabama's native species and unique heritage. Dams can affect many aspects of water quality such as dissolved oxygen, temperature, bacteria, water clarity, sedimentation, and nutrients, among others, which are directly linked to human health, fish and wildlife habitat, and aesthetics. Two segments in the upper reach of the Duck River system are already polluted due to agricultural operations and the polluted water could make water treatment difficult and costly.

**Harms Native Species** Dams cause the water behind it to slow down, significantly altering the type and amount of available living spaces (habitat) to aquatic species and even land-based wildlife, such as deer, raccoons, birds, amphibians, and reptiles. Dams prevent essential nutrients from reaching downstream fisheries and can impact the reproduction cycles of fisheries. Unimpeded river flow is essential for the survival of native species. Alabama is nationally known for our freshwater species diversity and the Duck River has potential habitat for rare and threatened species.

**Diminishes Our Unique Natural Heritage** All of the issues mentioned above can have significant impacts on streams, which are an integral part of Alabama's natural heritage. This damage can prevent the use and enjoyment of our rivers by future generations. North Alabama is unique in its geology, culture, and attractions. The natural beauty of Cullman County can be seen all along the Duck River. Those aspects are worth preserving.

### **Groups Supportive of Preserving Duck River**

Alabama Rivers Alliance	Alabama Environmental Council	WildLaw
Birmingham Canoe Club	Black Warrior Riverkeeper	American Whitewater
Huntsville Canoe Club	Wild South	Sierra Club
American Rivers	Friends of the Mulberry Fork	