

Celebrating Habitat

Collaborative FERC Relicensing Creates New Partnerships

The Collaborative Relicensing Process

Spanning the North Carolina/Tennessee state line is the four-dam Tapoco Hydroelectric Project located on the Little Tennessee and Cheoah Rivers. The project is owned and operated by Alcoa Power Generating, Inc., a subsidiary of ALCOA, Inc., and generates over 300 megawatts of power. When ALCOA chose FERC's Alternative Licensing Process to relicense their facility, it brought together many stakeholders to participate in this collaborative process.



Tapoco Project, Cheoah Dam



Signing Ceremony at Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Comprehensive Settlement Agreement

The relicensing Settlement Agreement includes a land exchange between ALCOA, Inc. and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which results in a net gain of 100 acres for the Park, facilitated by legislation introduced by Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Representative John J. Duncan (R-TN). The agreement provides permanent easements on nearly 6,000 acres of land currently owned by Alcoa, including 5,500 acres linking the Park with the Cherokee National Forest. An additional 4,000 acres will be protected in an easement for the duration of the new FERC license issued in January 2005, valid for 40 years.



Dusky-tailed darter (endangered)

Conservation Significance

The Tapoco Project sits between Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Nantahala and Cherokee National Forests, on the Tennessee and Cheoah Rivers. This region has tremendous biological diversity, and is habitat for four endangered fish, which are directly affected by the hydropower operation. The agreement provides for fish passage for both the endangered fish species and recreationally important species, such as the smallmouth bass and rock bass, and will enhance the native biological diversity in the region.

The stakeholders include:

- Alcoa Power Generating Inc.
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians

- Tennessee State Resource Agencies
- North Carolina State Agencies
- local governments
- homeowner associations
- national and local non-governmental organizations

Contact information

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Fisheries & Habitat Conservation