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Corps Approves Request from Georgia Environmental Protection Division to Reduce Releases from Lake Lanier

Mobile, Ala. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, has reviewed and approved a request from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA EPD) for a temporary reduction in the minimum flow requirement at Peachtree Creek until April 30, 2009. In its request, GA EPD indicated that the flow reduction has the potential to add more than 11 billion gallons of water in storage at Lake Lanier.

The request to reduce flows from 750 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 650 cfs was coordinated with other state and federal agencies, as well as basin stakeholders, and was determined to have no long-term significant environmental or human impacts. More than 700 comments from concerned stakeholders from throughout the basin were received and evaluated as part of the analysis of the GA EPD request.

Corps hydrologic modeling shows that only minor differences in river flow would occur between Lake Lanier and West Point Lake for the reduced flows and no changes downstream of West Point Lake. Depending on the precipitation that occurs between now and April 30, the reduced flows could result in a higher lake level of 0.8 foot to 1.1 feet at Lanier with minimal impact, one to two inches lower, on lake levels at

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West Point. GA EPD analysis also showed that water quality should not be adversely affected by the request.

“Our analysis shows that the flow reduction can occur during the cooler time of the year without adversely affecting water quality,” said E. Patrick Robbins, Public Affairs Officer, Mobile District. “In addition, GA EPD will implement additional monitoring and reporting requirements at downstream locations during the period of reduced flows and utilize an adaptive management approach during the period of reduced flows. In light of the continuing drought, the measure should help improve storage at Lake Lanier without adversely affecting the basin.”

Georgia EPD’s request represents a temporary contingency measure in response to drought conditions experienced beginning in 2007 and the possibility of continued drought conditions into 2009.