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Lake George-Drought Resiliency Application takes a step forward with Public Meeting

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The Pascagoula River Drought Resiliency Project is taking another important step forward with the Corps of Engineer's announced Public Scoping Meeting on Tues., January 24, 2017.

The project's permit application proposed a public lake project in southeast George County crossing between the Barton and Agricola communities to provide regional drought resiliency. The project consists of two public lakes (upper and lower) on Big Cedar and Little Cedar Creeks which are minor Pascagoula River tributaries.

"The George County Board of Supervisors and the Pat Harrison Waterway District look forward to participating in the Corps' public meeting together with other stakeholders and the interested public. This meeting is an important opportunity to discuss long-term regional drought resiliency to protect the Pascagoula River's environmental, ecological and economic services," Supervisor Larry McDonald, Board President, said.

The application showed that the Pascagoula River is changing. Hydrologic and climate data collected from the Pascagoula River and its basin indicated that droughts will become more frequent, more severe and last longer.

The Pascagoula River experienced a drought of record from Oct. 1999 till Sept. 2000 recording its lowest flow in 64 years at the Merrill Bridge gage. Since that record drought, the Pascagoula River has had other major droughts in 2007, 2010, 2011, Fall 2015 and Fall 2016.

"These droughts directly impact the Pascagoula River's flows. Without a proactive response, these droughts will have significant, adverse environmental, ecological and economic impacts on the Pascagoula River," McDonald explains.

The Lake George Project would raise the water tables to help naturally maintain stream flows. During prolonged droughts, water stored in the two lakes would be released to flow approximately 2.5 miles down Big Cedar Creek to maintain the Pascagoula River's flows. No dams/slipways are proposed on the Pascagoula River or any of its major tributaries.

The Corps determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be necessary to fully and openly evaluate the project. The EIS provides an open, scientific, public process to identify and evaluate alternatives to lessen the impacts of regional droughts on the Pascagoula.

The Pascagoula River Drought Resiliency permit has steadily progressed through the Corps of Engineers' official process in 2016. The Corps selected a highly respected third party engineering/environmental firm to prepare the EIS, create and maintain a project website (www.georgecountylakeseis.com), and organize the upcoming Public Scoping Meeting.