



George County Board of Supervisors
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Lake George-Drought Resiliency application submitted to Corps and State

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After three years of hydrologic and climate data collection and analysis, the application for the Lake George- Drought Resiliency Project was officially submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Mobile District, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.

The permit application was submitted by the Pat Harrison Waterway District in cooperation with the George County Board of Supervisors and Jackson County Board of Supervisors.

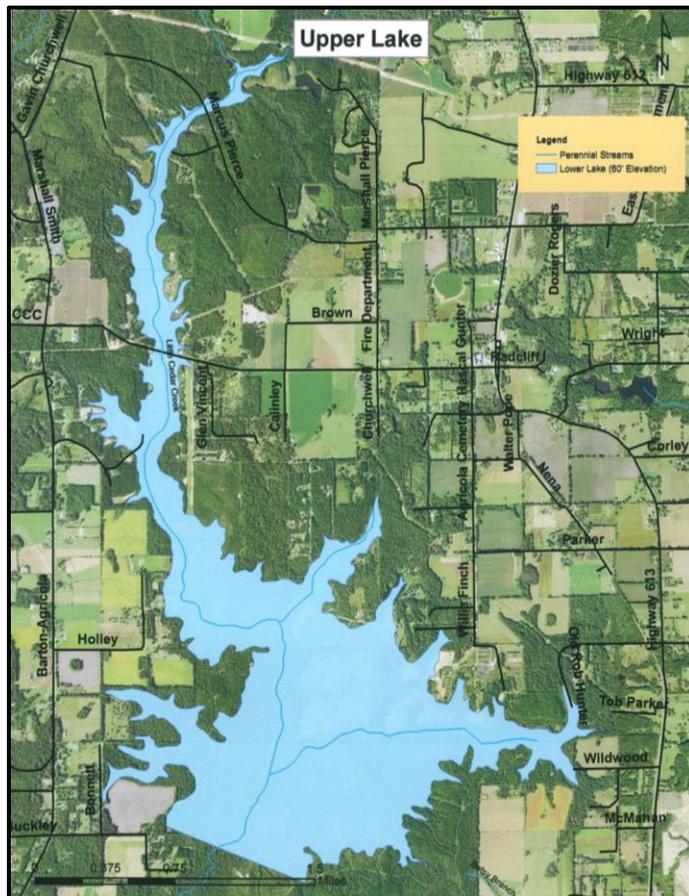
“Right out of the gate everyone will notice, this is not your standard lake proposal,” Supervisor Kelly Wright, District 2 said. “This project addresses the long term needs of the area’s water table and water flow levels on the Pascagoula River. The Lake George project has benefits for the entire region, not just one county.”

This application proposes a lake project in southeast George County crossing between the Barton and Agricola communities. The project consists of two lakes (upper and lower) directly connected by Big Cedar and Little Cedar creeks. The upper lake is 1,715 acres with a dam/spillway near Clarence Bonnett Road. The lower lake is 1,153 acres with a dam/spillway just south of the Jackson County line. The lower lake’s dam/spillway is more than two miles northwest of the Pascagoula River. Big and Little Cedar Creeks will continue flowing at normal levels during project construction.

The Lake George Project would raise the water table in George County and north Jackson County to help naturally maintain flows during droughts. During low flow periods, water stored in the Upper and Lower lakes would be released to flow approximately 2.5 miles down Big Cedar Creek into the Pascagoula River. No dams are proposed on the Pascagoula River.

Records show since the Pascagoula River’s 2000 drought of record, the River’s flows briefly fell below the minimum flow set by MDEQ at the Merrill Stream Gage in 2007, 2010, and 2011. Several federal agency reports agree that climate change will cause more frequent, severe, and longer droughts throughout the entire Pascagoula Basin.

“Over the course of this application, we have come to realize the Pascagoula River is changing. The data indicates low flow and drought conditions are going to become more frequent events,” explained Don Pittman, Pat Harrison Waterway District Board President.

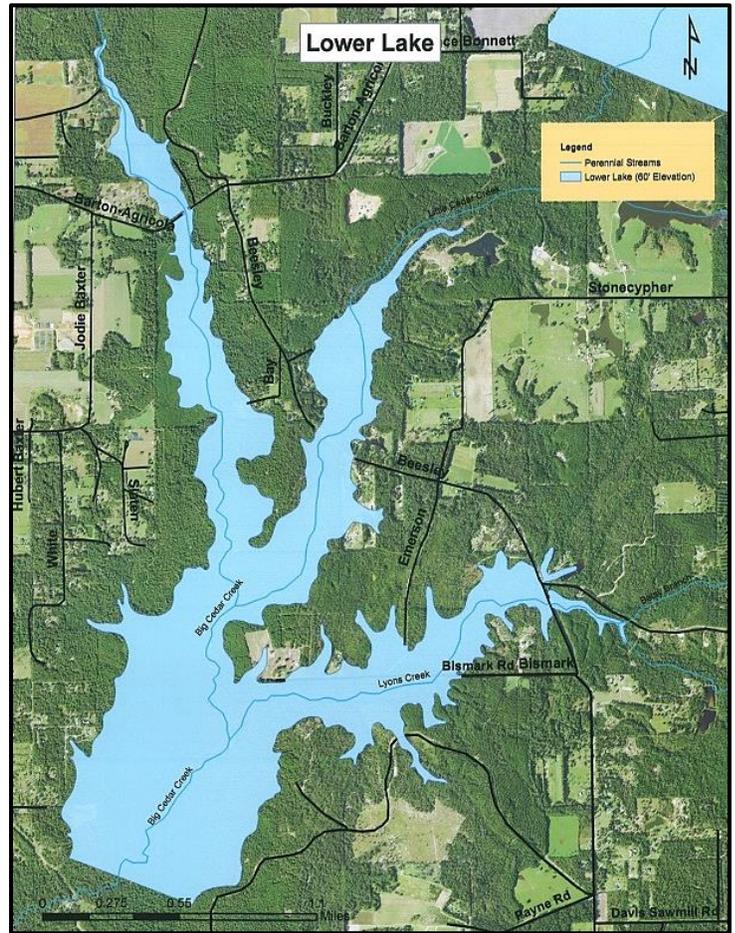


“This project is a viable solution. Without some action, these droughts will dramatically impact the River’s wetlands, threatened and endangered species’ habitats, water quality and economic activities, including eco-tourism.”

The Corps of Engineers will manage the permit process and is distributing the application and supporting materials to cooperating federal and state agencies and mailing the public notice to potentially impacted landowners.

The 20 page application form was supported by a 115 page Environmental Assessment which included an additional 11 appendixes of technical reports, and agency correspondence. The Corps of Engineers’ summarized all this information in a short five page Public Notice published September 4. The public can request the full application package from the Corps. The Corps is likely to schedule a Public Meeting on the project in the coming weeks.

“This is an extensive permit application with hundreds of pages of flow data from the Pascagoula River, Big and Little Cedar Creeks, along with climate information collected and analyzed by Mississippi State University over three years,” explains George County Board President Larry McDonald. “Several local groups have requested more time to review the research and data, we understand this need.”



Before the application was finalized, the George County Board of Supervisors hosted an informal community update on the Lake George Project in April. The center piece of the event was a detailed map showing the proposed location, size, and footprint of the project. More than 250 people attended the “Come & Go” style meeting and talked personally with County supervisors, representatives from the Pat Harrison Waterway District, and MSU field personnel.

The Lake George-Drought Resiliency Project is modeled after other Pat Harrison Waterway District public facilities. George County’s Pat Harrison Board Member Aubert Pitts says this project will not affect the Pascagoula River’s honorary title of “largest undammed, untamed river” in the continental United States citing there are already hundreds of small dams and several major reservoirs on the Pascagoula River’s tributaries.

“It’s important to note, there are currently 10 reservoirs on the Pascagoula River’s headwater tributaries which are over 100 acres in size. They range from the 3,800 acre Okatibbee Reservoir to the 125 acre Lake Perry in the Lower Leaf River watershed,” Pitts said.

George County has maintained a public display at the Administration Building with copies of the project map, frequently asked questions and comment cards since the community event. The County has provided almost 500 printed maps and received dozens of comment cards from residents. The public can also visit the County’s website www.georgecountymiss.com to view these items.

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