



# What is the current status of the Etowah Aquatic HCP?

## JULY 2009

Between February and August 2007, 12 local governments submitted applications to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for Incidental Take Permits associated with the Draft Etowah Aquatic Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The HCP was created under the direction of a Steering Committee primarily comprised of representatives from the participating local governments with contributions from numerous individuals and organizations over the previous 5 years. Once the HCP was submitted, a review process was initiated within FWS, each step of which is outlined below.

1. Local governments submitted the HCP for FWS field office review and comment. While this was not a statutory requirement, it did allow the FWS to provide input to improve the applicant's HCP. The FWS recommended a number of changes to University of Georgia staff who then took these modifications to Steering Committee members for their approval.
2. The Steering Committee made changes to the HCP and requested that the field office begin processing the HCP. A complete copy of this submitted plan is found at [www.etowahhcp.org](http://www.etowahhcp.org).
3. The FWS Field Office then prepared an Environmental Assessment. An Environmental Assessment is an analysis to determine whether an action taken by the federal government would significantly affect the environment. In addition to evaluating the proposed HCP, the Environmental Assessment considered a number of alternative scenarios.
4. The FWS Field Office determined that all the documents were statutorily complete and formally transmitted them to the FWS Regional Office for review and processing.
5. The FWS Regional Office reviews all documents and provides comments back to the FWS Field Office. The revised documents are then forwarded to the Regional Office for final approval.

6. When the documents are considered complete by the FWS Regional Office, they will be forwarded to the Office of the Solicitor for review and comment. The Office of the Solicitor performs all the legal work for FWS.
7. All comments generated by the Office of the Solicitor will be sent to and addressed by the FWS Regional Office and FWS Field Office.

### **THE HCP IS CURRENTLY AT THIS STEP:**

8. The FWS Regional Office will submit a Federal Register Notice to the Office of the Federal Register for a 60 day publication. The Office of the Federal Register provides public access to many official texts including federal laws, regulations, and federal activities. At this point the formal public comment period will begin.
9. After the 60 day notice, all submitted comments will be considered by FWS and the HCP and Environmental Assessment will be revised as necessary.
10. The FWS Field Office and Regional Office will prepare a draft Statement of Finding, which will explain how they made their decisions on what and what not to include in the HCP and Environmental Assessment. The Incidental Take Permit will also be drafted at this time.
11. All of the final documents including the HCP, the Environmental Assessment, the Statement of Finding, and the Incidental Take Permits will be sent to the Office of the Solicitor for final review and comment.
12. The Deputy Regional Director of the FWS will sign the Incidental Take Permits and the review process will be complete.

Once the review process is complete, the local governments who submitted an application for an ITP will determine whether they want to move forward with acceptance of the Incidental Take Permit which includes formal adoption of the HCP. All the provisions of the final HCP, including the policies and ordinances contained in it, must be adopted to receive the Incidental Take Permit.

**For more information, please contact:**

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## ACTIVITIES IN 2008 - 2009

The University of Georgia has received an HCP Planning grant from FWS to support HCP efforts in the watershed during the period that the HCP is under review. These efforts include:

- Hiring an Outreach Coordinator who will organize and manage all HCP outreach efforts in the watershed
- Developing additional HCP education and outreach materials based on needs of local governments, the general public, and other stakeholders in the watershed
- Disseminating HCP information to local officials, members of the development community, the general public, and other stakeholders in meetings, presentations, and internet content
- Conducting technical training workshops for engineers, site designers, and plan reviewers on the stormwater management requirements of the HCP
- Conducting inspections and maintenance training workshops for local stormwater inspectors relating to stormwater best management practices (BMPs) that are included in the HCP
- Assisting local jurisdictions in code review to ensure that regulatory provisions in the local building codes do not make the provisions of the HCP unnecessarily challenging for developers

