

# **Environmental Assessment: Non-Capacity Amendment Application**

MIDDLE CHATTAHOOCHEE PROJECT  
Oliver Development  
FERC Project No. 2177

Georgia

Re-published as DOE/EA-2305

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**U.S. Department of Energy, Loan Programs Office –  
Title XVII Energy Dominance Financing Program**



**November 2025**

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**Lead Federal Agency:** U.S. Department of Energy

**Title:** Environmental Assessment for Non-Capacity Amendment Application, Middle Chattahoochee Project, Oliver Development, FERC Project No. 2177, Georgia

**Contact:** For more information on this Environmental Assessment, please contact:

Molly R. Cobbs  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Loan Programs Office, LP-30  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585  
Phone: 240-687-7266  
Electronic mail: [lpo\\_environmental@hq.doe.gov](mailto:lpo_environmental@hq.doe.gov)

### **Proposed Action**

The United States Department of Energy (DOE), Loan Programs Office (LPO), may provide loan guarantees for energy infrastructure projects under Section 1706 of Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, as amended by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. 16517) and the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)) (the Energy Dominance Financing or EDF Program). The purpose of the EDF Program is to finance projects and facilities in the U.S. that retool, repower, repurpose, or replace energy infrastructure that has ceased operations or enable operating energy infrastructure to increase capacity or output (42 U.S.C. 16517(a)(2) and Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)).

LPO is considering whether to issue a loan guarantee of a funding facility to the Georgia Power Company (GPC or Applicant) pursuant to its authority under the EDF Program. In its application, GPC has identified the **Oliver Generating Units 1-4 Upgrade Project (Project)** for inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of DOE's loan guarantee. The Project is located on the on the Chattahoochee River north of Columbus, Georgia in Muscogee County.

GPC proposes to upgrade the Oliver Development's four generating units, which includes replacing the turbine runners on all generating units and refurbishing the generators for Units 3 and 4. The Project does not require a reservoir drawdown.

The Project does not require new facilities to be constructed and would take place inside the existing powerhouse, on major project works, and within designated work areas, all on land owned by Georgia Power. Ground disturbance is limited to three temporary work areas that are required for contractor parking, material laydown, and construction trailers for workers. In addition, the Project will not interfere with GPC's ability to meet minimum flow requirements.

Existing roads will be utilized to access the powerhouse and work areas associated with the Project. The Project would extend the lifetime of the turbine units in the west powerhouse beyond the term of the current license, which expires December 31, 2034.

The purpose and need for DOE’s proposed action, the issuance of a Federal loan guarantee under the EDF Program, is to implement DOE’s authority under Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act, as amended. The purpose of the EDF Program is to finance projects and facilities in the U.S. that retool, repower, repurpose, or replace energy infrastructure that has ceased operations or enable operating energy infrastructure to increase capacity or output (42 U.S.C. 16517(a)(2) and Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)).

### **National Environmental Policy Act Review**

The decision whether to provide a loan guarantee (federal financial assistance) constitutes a major Federal action, which requires DOE to conduct an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347). In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ) Memorandum to the Heads of Federal Departments and Agencies, issued on February 19, 2025, and with Executive Order 14154 issued on January 20, 2025, DOE LPO is conducting this environmental review accordance with DOE’s NEPA implementing procedures consistent with the text of NEPA, E.O. 14154, and the CEQ memorandum. LPO is using the NEPA process to inform its decision whether to issue a loan guarantee to the Applicant to support the Project.

Pursuant to NEPA, an *Environmental Assessment (EA) for Non-Capacity Amendment Application, Middle Chattahoochee Project, Oliver Development* (September 2023) was prepared by the Applicant and was included as Attachment B in GPC’s License Amendment Application. DOE was not a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EA. Subsequently, DOE has conducted an independent review of the EA and has determined that the actions analyzed in EA and DOE’s proposed action are substantially the same. Additionally, the EA meets the standards for a sufficient environmental assessment under the DOE’s NEPA implementing procedures and LPO relied on the EA.

### **Required Consultations and Other Reviews**

#### *Endangered Species Act, Section 7*

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)<sup>1</sup> requires federal agencies to ensure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of such species.

On November 4, 2025, LPO received an official species list indicating potential for nine federally threatened, endangered, candidate, or experimental non-essential species with potential to occur in the Project area: northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*); tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*); whooping crane (*Grus americana*); alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*); monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*); fringed campion (*Silene polypetala*); Georgia rockcress (*Arabis georgiana*); Michaux’s sumac (*Rhus michauxii*); and

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<sup>1</sup> 16 U.S.C. § 1536.

relict trillium (*Trillium reliquum*). There is designated critical habitat for the Georgia rockcress in the project area.

Using Determination Keys developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, LPO reached a no effect determination for the northern long-eared bat and tricolored bat.

Given that Project activities would occur within the existing powerhouse, on major project works, and on associated previously disturbed work/laydown areas and would not require any tree cutting, vegetation clearing, reservoir drawdown, or disturbance of substrates in the reservoir, LPO has reached a *no effect* determination for all species and designated critical habitat for its action.

#### *National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106*

Under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA),<sup>2</sup> and its implementing regulations,<sup>3</sup> federal agencies must take into account the effect of any proposed undertaking on properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), defined as historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (Advisory Council) a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking.

On October 11, 2023, GPC provided an overview and assessment of the Project to the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), represented by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs – Historic Preservation Division (HPD). The Project consists of replacing all turbines and replacing the Unit 3 and 4 generators at the circa (ca.) 1959 Oliver Dam hydroelectric development. In a letter dated November 14, 2023, the Georgia HPD concurred that the Oliver Dam is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criteria A and C, and that the four-unit semi-outdoor powerhouse, gravity type dam, 33 taintor gates, one-story office building, and 100-ton gantry crane are character-defining features (CDF) of the NRHP-eligible dam. Additionally, HPD found that the historic turbines are also CDF of the NRHP-eligible dam.

The FERC, Georgia SHPO, and GPC developed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to resolve adverse effects, stipulating the completion of Level II Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation and the development and publication of web-based educational and interpretive material. Tribes were invited to comment by letter issued June 4, 2024, and no comments were received. On September 16, 2024, FERC staff provided the MOA for signature to the Georgia SHPO. On November 26, 2024, the Georgia SHPO signed the MOA. Execution of the MOA fulfilled the FERC's obligations under the NHPA.

GPC's application for a Federal loan guarantee from DOE LPO for the Project introduces an additional Federal nexus triggering a review of this undertaking under Section 106 of the NHPA. While the FERC remains the lead federal agency for the undertaking, DOE LPO consulted with the FERC and the Georgia SHPO to 1) document DOE LPO's concurrence with the terms of the

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<sup>2</sup> 54 U.S.C. § 306108.

<sup>3</sup> 36 C.F.R. pt. 800 (2021).

existing MOA; and 2) document FERC's and SHPO's concurrence that the existing MOA sufficiently resolves the adverse effects on historic properties, in consideration of the additional Federal involvement of DOE LPO.

DOE LPO has reviewed the MOA to ensure it addresses all aspects of the Project that are within the scope of DOE LPO funding and has determined that the DOE LPO's potential issuance of a Federal loan guarantee does not alter the undertaking, the Area of Potential Effects (APE), or the undertaking's effects on historic properties as previously established by the FERC and SHPO. The mitigation measures that have been documented in the MOA are adequate to resolve the undertaking's adverse effects on historic properties, and the addition of Federal funding provided by DOE LPO for this undertaking does not cause any additional effects on historic properties.

On October 30, 2025, DOE LPO provided its formal concurrence with the terms and provisions of the executed MOA for this undertaking. On October 31 and November 3, 2025, FERC and the SHPO, respectively, provided their concurrence that there is no need to amend the MOA or to add DOE LPO as a Signatory to the MOA to fulfill DOE LPO's responsibilities under the NHPA.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based on DOE/EA-2305, DOE has determined that providing a federal loan guarantee to GPC for the **Oliver Development Generating Units 1-4 Upgrade Project** will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The preparation of an environmental impact statement is therefore not required, and DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact. This Finding of No Significant Impact should not be construed as a final decision about the issuance of a loan guarantee.

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Todd Stribley  
NEPA Compliance Officer  
DOE Loan Programs Office

November 13, 2025  
Date