

**STUDY PROGRESS REPORT
RARE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED SPECIES
MORGAN FALLS PROJECT (FERC NO. 2237)**

NOVEMBER 2005

1. INTRODUCTION

Georgia Power is conducting a study to characterize existing federal and state rare, threatened, and endangered (RTE) species of plants and wildlife that may be present in the Morgan Falls Project area for use in analyzing the potential effects of continued project operation. The study is being conducted according to the study plan for the Morgan Falls Project approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) on November 26, 2004. The results of the study will be presented in a RTE Species Study Report, which Georgia Power will distribute to participants by December 31, 2005, and file with the Commission by April 1, 2006. Georgia Power will use the information generated by the study to evaluate the environmental effects of its proposed project in the Preliminary Licensing Proposal, to be filed with the Commission by October 2, 2006.

The specific objectives of the RTE Species Study are to: list federal and state RTE plant and animal species with known records of occurrence near the project; identify habitat requirements; and describe distributions and habitat use of RTE species presently occurring near the project. RTE species include federal candidate and state species of concern. Information compiled in the Pre-Application Document is being reconsidered and updated for this study.

2. STUDY PROGRESS

2.1 Activities Completed

Review of Existing Information

- Obtained additional information on known occurrences of RTE species in the project vicinity from National Park Service, including state-threatened highscale shiner (*Notropis hypsilepis*) and federal candidate species Georgia aster (*Aster georgianus*).
- Prepared an updated tabular listing of RTE species with known records of occurrence near the Morgan Falls Project, their federal or state status, their global and state ranks, their habitat requirements, and county of known occurrence based on review of existing information sources.
- Analyzed distributions and habitat use of RTE species presently occurring near the project.

Field Survey

- Completed a field survey of the project area extending up to 2,000 feet beyond the project boundary between May 12 and 27, 2005, to identify potentially suitable habitats for RTE species.
- Recorded geographic coordinates and described habitat and demographic information for one RTE plant species (Georgia unusual species) observed during the field survey.

Reporting

- Began preparing the RTE Species Study Report.

2.2 Preliminary Findings

- No federally endangered or threatened species are presently known to occur in the Morgan Falls Project area.
- Georgia aster, a candidate species for proposed federal listing, has been documented from upland habitats in the Gold Branch Unit of the CRNRA outside of but within 2,000 feet of the project boundary.
- Highscale shiner, a Georgia threatened fish species, has been documented as recently as 1995 in free-flowing habitats of Big Creek near Roswell, Georgia, upstream of the project impoundment. The species has not been documented within the project boundary.
- Georgia Power biologists documented a new occurrence record of pink ladyslipper (*Cypripedium acaule*), a Georgia unusual plant species, in upland habitat of the Vickery Creek Unit outside of but within 2,000 feet of the project boundary. The species also presently occurs in the Island Ford Unit.

3. VARIANCE FROM STUDY PLAN AND SCHEDULE

- There has been no substantive variance to date from the study plan or schedule.

4. REMAINING ACTIVITIES

- Complete the RTE Species Study Report.