

# Mountain Island Lake Perspective

## Catawba-Wateree Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement (CRA)

### Background

Mountain Island Lake was built in 1924 with the construction of Mountain Island Hydroelectric Station. The lake has approximately 3,281 acres of surface area and 89 miles of shoreline. The lake also supports Riverbend Steam Station by cooling the steam that drives the turbines and provides a dependable water supply for Mount Holly, Gastonia and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina. Full pond elevation is 647.5 feet above mean sea level.

Duke Energy provides two boating access areas on the lake and a tailrace fishing platform for bank fishing in cooperation with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

### Interests addressed in the CRA

**1. Lake Level Ranges** – Lake level ranges (located in the adjacent chart) have been established to protect fish habitat, public water system, industrial and power generation water intakes, recreation access and aesthetics. Ranges are

Mountain Island Lake Elevations (in feet on the 1st of the month)				
Month(s)	Existing Guide Curve	Minimum	Target	Maximum
Jan - Dec 31	96	94.3	96	100

bounded by normal minimum and normal maximum elevations with a normal target elevation in between. For Mountain Island Lake the normal target lake level is 96 feet year-round.

**2. Drought Management** – As part of the relicensing process, a Low Inflow Protocol has been established to "trigger" water use restrictions by large water intake owners. These water use restrictions apply to hydroelectric generation, public water system withdrawals and flows for recreation and aquatic life.

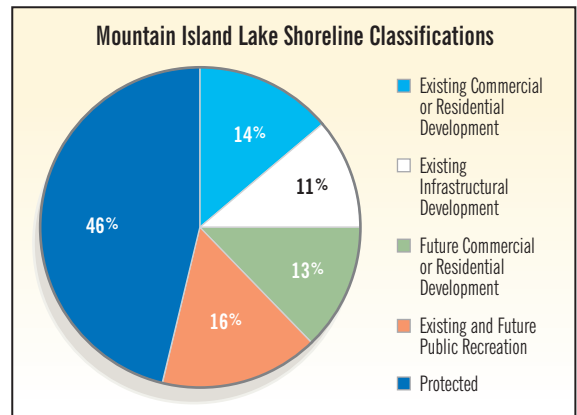
**3. Shoreline Management** – Duke Energy operates a comprehensive shoreline management program on all 11 lakes along the Catawba River. Duke Energy's program depends on the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) and Shoreline Management Guidelines (SMG) to balance private and public access with protecting the environmental, public recreational, cultural and scenic values. As part of the relicensing process, both the SMP and SMG have been updated. The updated SMP and SMG were implemented in September

2006. The SMG provide rules on what facilities are allowed and how they can be built/constructed/maintained.

Overall, the update to the SMP has resulted in more refined shoreline mapping and additional restrictions on construction activity within the project boundary of the reservoir. The SMP is a series of maps with shoreline classifications denoting locations where piers,

marinas, excavations and shoreline stabilization within the project boundary either already exist or can take place. Each shoreline classification has a separate set of restrictions and allowed activities.

**4. Public Information Systems for Lake and River Information** – Information including reservoir level ranges, water release times, generation schedules and maps to public access areas will be provided as a result of relicensing. River pad-



dlers and anglers will have access to information on releases from dams to paddle and fish. Information posted on signs will be provided in English and/or international symbols with signage in Spanish also available immediately downstream of the dams.

**5. New and Expanded Public Recreation Facilities/Access** – Recreational enhancements planned for Mountain Island Lake include:

### Stakeholders signing the Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement (CRA)

In addition to state resource agencies, Duke Energy and national special interest groups – many representatives of local entities and public citizens around Mountain Island Lake signed the CRA. These include:

- Catawba Lands Conservancy
- Catawba-Wateree Relicensing Coalition
- Centralina Council of Governments
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities
- City of Gastonia
- City of Mount Holly
- Gaston County Quality of Natural Resources Committee
- Lincoln County
- Mecklenburg County
- Mountain Island Lake Association
- Mt. Island Lake Marine Commission
- North Carolina Wildlife Federation

a. *Highway 73 Access Area* – Provide approximately two acres of land and approximately ten gravel parking spaces to support canoe/kayak launching.

b. *Lucia Access Area* – Provide for canoe/kayak access and approximately ten gravel parking spaces and lease area to NCDENR.

c. *Mountain Island Lake Trails Planning Assistance* – Provide trails planning and technical assistance to state and local governments to connect existing multi-use trail systems.

d. *Riverbend Access Area* – Install restrooms, bank fishing, a swimming area and a fishing pier, offer to City of Mount Holly for lease and evaluation of additional recreational development that may include a campground and bath house.

e. *Mountain Island Dam Canoe Portage* – Provide a portage trail with canoe/kayak access (take-out, put-in) and signage.

#### **6. *Habitat, Water Quality and Land***

***Conservation Enhancements*** – Duke Energy will continue operating the existing hydro units at Mountain Island Lake Hydro Station to support water quality. Duke Energy will also contribute \$1 million to the Habitat Enhancement Fund in each state to support, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and contribute \$4 to \$5.5 million to North Carolina state agencies dependent on the license term for additional land conservation.

#### **7. *Public Drinking Water Supply and Water***

***Conservation Programs*** – Water is vital to life and drives our region's economy and way of life. However, Catawba-Wateree relicensing process

studies indicate demands for water will more than double over the next 50 years. A group of approximately 20 water supply experts, including Duke Energy, have outlined water management objectives, identified tangible projects to protect our water supply and proposed a voluntary water conservation fund to finance these projects. The money will come from contributions paid by Duke Energy and other members of the Catawba-Wateree Basin Water Management Group. Contributors to the voluntary fund will determine the timing and priority of projects.



#### CONTACT

For more information and updates and other relicensing news, contact Duke Energy at [www.duke-energy.com](http://www.duke-energy.com).