

CANAL Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway (Tenn-Tom)		STATUS Under Construction;partly open		ACS
STATE/PROVINCE: Mississippi, Alabama				HAER
COUNTIES:				
LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): Tennessee River Pickwick L&D pond, to mouth of Tombigbee on Black Warrior River, Demopolis L&D pond.				
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS:				
		DATES IN USE	LENGTH CANAL SLACKWATER TOTAL	LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE
		1 b.1972	85 168 253	10/110x600*
		2		
		3		
		4		

The TENNESSEE-TOMBIGBEE WATERWAY, begun in 1972, is an ambitious project designed to link the Tennessee River basin with the Gulf of Mexico, via the Tombigbee River. Such a connection had been suggested as far back as the early 1700's, when Sieur de Bienville, who founded Mobile in 1702 (and New Orleans in 1718) included it in his report to the King of France; but the first real survey was not made until 1874. At that time it would have taken 40 locks to make the connection; now only 10 large locks, all but one with about 30' lifts, are needed for the 341' change in elevation. All will be 110 x 600' in the chamber, to take 3 barges abreast - the present standard on the Tennessee and Tombigbee rivers. The Tenn-Tom uses the Black Warrior-Tombigbee Waterway from Mobile up through Demopolis Lock and Dam; then the Tombigbee for 168 miles (the RIVER SECTION); then a 45½ mi. lateral canal (the CANAL SECTION) along the E side of the East Fork of the Tombigbee; and lastly, an 84' lift by Bay Springs L&D into the DIVIDE SECTION, a cut 39.3 mi. long and up to 175' deep with passing places every 4 mi., terminating at Yellow Creek on the pond of the Tennessee River's Pickwick L&D.

There are 4 locks and dams on the River Sections: GAINESVILLE L&D (mile 266 above Mobile, 36' lift) is at the lower end of a cut-off canal, 1 mi. NE of Gainesville AL on AL 39. ALICEVILLE L&D (mile 311, 27' lift) is 1 mi. SW of Pickensville AL. COLUMBUS L&D (mile 342, 27' lift) is about 4 mi. NW of Columbus, Mississippi; and ABERDEEN L&D will be just upstream of Aberdeen MS.

The Canal Section is between Amory and MS 4, paralleled a few miles to the E by AL 25, with five locks called A through E close to Amory, Smithville, Fulton, Fairview and Kirkville, respectively.

BAY SPRINGS L&D will be just N of MS 4, E of the Tishomingo-Prentiss County line; the 84' lift is one of the highest in the country, and will back up water for 39 miles through the Divide Section to the Tennessee River. This lock and the Divide cut are under the Nashville District; the rest is under the Mobile District. Requiring almost 3/4 as much earthmoving as the Panama Canal, the Divide Section should provide some very interesting displays of modern earthmoving techniques during the next few years. The deepest part of the cut should be near Holcut MS on MS 364, via MS 25 S from Iuka. Navigation is already open up to

Aliceville. The whole waterway is now under contract and scheduled for completion by 1986.

The Tenn-Tom project was one of the first major ones to test the effectiveness of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the move to include more esthetic, cultural and environmental considerations into project design and cost analysis. This has delayed the project but has focused more official thought and money on alleviating side effects of this mammoth undertaking. See THE TENNESSEE-TOMBIGBEE WATERWAY: A CASE STUDY IN THE POLITICS OF WATER TRANSPORTATION by W.H. Stewart Jr., Bureau of Public Administration, University of Alabama, University, AL (1971).

A free brochure on the Tenn-Tom is available from the Mobile District Box 2288, Mobile AL 36628, and another from the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority, P.O. Drawer 671, Columbus, MS 39701, which in 1978 donated more than 50,000 documents on the history of the project to the Mississippi University for Women in Columbus, MS. For a good bibliography on the Tenn-Tom see the ALABAMA PLANNING RESOURCE CHECK LIST, SERIES 2, free from the Alabama Development Office, State Planning Division, State Capitol, Montgomery AL 36130. Their SERIES 1 covers other river basins in the state.

NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:

Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:

See above. A history of the waterway by Dr. James Kitchens III has been commissioned by the Corps of Engineers, Mobile District. Above material from THE AMERICAN CANAL GUIDE Part 3,p.22 (1979); see this for map.

UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR,HAER,HABS, Local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.):

See above.

EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CEHR, National Register, etc.):

Waterway still subject of controversy. See for example "The Waterway that Cannot be Stopped" by R. Jeffrey Smith, SCIENCE,v.213, 14 August 1981,pp.741-744.

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DATE: **1 Oct81**

RETURN TO: **CANAL INDEX COMMITTEE, c/o P.H.STOTT, HAINES ROAD, MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549**