



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
Division of Water Resources

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**Staff Summary of the proposed increase in Interbasin Transfer from the Catawba River Sub-Basin to the Rocky River Sub-Basin by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities**

**Background**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities (CMUD) is requesting an increase from the grandfathered Interbasin Transfer (IBT) of 16.1 million gallons per day (mgd) to 33 mgd (maximum day basis). The proposed IBT is based on additional water withdrawals from Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake in the source basin (Catawba River Subbasin). IBT will increase due to transfer of the water to the receiving basin (Rocky River Subbasin) via consumptive use in eastern Mecklenburg County and existing discharges at Mallard Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant [WWTP] and Water and Sewer Authority of Cabarrus County's [WSACC] Rocky River Regional (RRR) WWTP. CMUD is requesting a permitted IBT increase to 33 mgd, which will allow CMUD to meet projected water supply demands through the year 2030 in eastern Mecklenburg County. *This IBT does not include transfers associated with water or wastewater service provided to the Goose Creek watershed in the Town of Mint Hill in Mecklenburg County.*

In the source basin, storage in and flow through the Catawba-Wateree Project reservoirs, lost electrical generation, and reduced flow in the Catawba River immediately below the Wylie development would be the major resources directly affected. The indirect and cumulative impacts on fisheries and aquatic resources, water quality, threatened and endangered species and other resources would result primarily from changes in flow or lake levels. Operations of the Catawba-Wateree Project reservoirs were modeled using Duke Power's reservoir operations model during average, dry, and drought year conditions.

The model results indicated that there will be no changes in the surface water elevations of Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, or Lake Wylie due to the proposed increased IBT. Under normal and drought inflow conditions, Duke Power would manage the lakes and its power generation to offset increased water withdrawals to maintain the minimum release requirements and operating lake surface elevations. Direct impacts on water supply, water quality, wastewater assimilation, fish and wildlife resources, navigation, or recreation are not expected since there will be no significant changes in the hydrology of the system due to the increased withdrawal. The IBT will not require any increase in the currently permitted levels of wastewater discharges or any construction in either the source or receiving basins.

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There are no secondary impacts related to growth in the source basin due to the transfer of water. However, the IBT will provide additional water supply to support growth and development in the receiving basin. Mitigation measures presented in this IBT Petition are expected to mitigate secondary impacts related to growth and development. The proposed IBT will not result in significant cumulative impacts in either the source or receiving basins.

### **Staff Recommendations**

Based on the EA and materials submitted by the applicant the requested increase to 33.0 mgd is reasonable with conditions to address the secondary impact issues. Staff recommends proceeding with the public hearing and requesting comments on the following:

*The public is invited to comment on the applicants' petition and supporting environmental documentation.* The Commission is considering and seeking comments on three options with regard to the interbasin transfer request. The options, in no particular order, are: (a) grant the certificate for the 33.0 mgd interbasin transfer request; (b) deny the 33.0 mgd interbasin transfer request; or (c) grant the certificate including any conditions necessary to achieve the purposes of the statute or to provide mitigation measures. The public is invited to comment on the following possible conditions and to suggest any other appropriate conditions, including other limitations on the amount of the transfer.

1. Require Mecklenburg County to summarize progress in implementation of watershed management approaches of the Surface Water Improvement and Management Program (SWIM) on an annual basis. The Division of Water Resources shall have the authority to approve modifications to and need for continued reporting as necessary.
2. Require Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte to continue the stakeholder process to investigate water quantity control from single-family development and water quality control for all development until completed. To accomplish this end, the stakeholder group should consider evaluating the feasibility of single-family detention and recommending ordinance revisions based on technical, political, long-term maintenance, cost, and benefits related to the proposed ordinance changes.
3. The Goose Creek subbasin in Mecklenburg County is removed from the area to be served by the IBT. A moratorium on the installation of new IBT water lines (water lines crossing the ridgeline) into Goose Creek subbasin is in effect until the impacts of additional growth urban growth on the endangered species are fully evaluated. This moratorium will not impact Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utility's ability to fully utilize existing water lines.
4. Require applicants to develop a compliance and monitoring plan for reporting maximum daily transfer amounts, compliance with certificate conditions, progress on mitigation measures, and drought management activities. The Division of Water Resources shall have the authority to approve modifications to the compliance and monitoring plan and drought management plan as necessary.

**Other Considerations**

One of the concerns related to secondary impacts is how growth will impact the Carolina Heelsplitter in the Goose Creek subbasin (a small watershed in the Rocky River Subbasin). The Carolina Heelsplitter is a federally listed endangered mussel. The Carolina Heelsplitter has only six known populations, two in North Carolina and four in South Carolina. The WRC, the Town of Mint Hill and CMUD did not reach an agreement on mitigation measures to protect the Carolina Heelsplitter as part of the EA process. Therefore, the Goose Creek area is not included in this IBT petition.

Figure 1 on the next page is a map showing Mint Hill and the Goose Creek watershed.

The applicant and Mint Hill are working with WRC to try and find an acceptable solution to allow the moratorium to be lifted. Currently, CMUD, Mint Hill, WRC, and DWR are in a mediation process trying find a solution. If the mediation reaches an acceptable conclusion before the end of the comment period, CMUD is going to request an amendment to the petition to drop the moratorium and change the transfer amount from 33.0 mgd to 35.0 mgd. If we can not resolve the issues before the end of the comment period, the concerns will be handled in the EIS for the Three-County Regional Water Reclamation Facility.

Figure 1 - Goose Creek Watershed

