

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received JUN 28 1984
date entered AUG 1 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Pea River Power Company's Hydroelectric Facility

and/or common The Elba Hydroelectric Dam Project

2. Location

street & number Section 36, Township 5 North, Range 19 East NA not for publication

city, town Elba vicinity of 4 miles south of Elba cong. dis. 2

state Alabama code 01 county Coffee code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Leased from the City of Elba, AL to the Elba Hydroelectric Company, Inc.
Route 3, Box 10, Oneonta, AL 35121

street & number The City of Elba

city, town Elba NA vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Coffee County Court House - Probate's Office

street & number Town Square

city, town Elba state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970 - present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state AL

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Elba Hydroelectric facility is located on the Pea River which is part of the Choctawhatchee River basin system and is approximately four miles south of the city of Elba in Coffee County.

The facility consists of a reinforced concrete gravity dam with a principal spillway of the overflow type, a concrete weir auxiliary spillway, two low level sluices, intake gates to the forebay channel and a powerhouse and forebay channel. There has been no significant alterations to the structure.

The dam is a "run-of-the-river" with the principal spillway being a reinforced concrete gravity dam with an overflow-type spillway. This dam and spillway span the main portion of the Pea River from the forebay intake gates, on the west abutment, to the east bank of the river, a total length of 169 feet. The Ogee Weir type spillway is twenty-five feet tall. There are at present several metal I-beam supports across the top of the overflow spillway that were used to support wooden flash boards, which raised the impoundment level of the reservoir.

The east section of the spillway is the auxiliary or emergency spillway. It consists of a reinforced concrete buttressed wall six feet in height, with one section one foot thick and the remaining section being 1.5 feet thick and two hundred feet long. The foundation of this spillway is the natural rock found in this area.

The forebay structure is reinforced concrete. There are six wooden inlet gates that are no longer structurally sound. An overhead traveling crane, used in the operation of these inlet gates, is no longer on the structure.

The forebay channel runs 417 feet from the inlet structure to the powerhouse. The original channel was excavated down to a natural rock base and had sloping earth walls 2/3 of its length on the river side and full length on the bank side. A washout of the east side of the channel, near the powerhouse, resulted in the construction of a sloping concrete buttressed wall to replace the earth sidewall.

The powerhouse is a brick-walled building forty feet wide and ninety-seven feet long with concrete foundation walls approximately six feet thick. The floor inside the powerhouse is concrete approximately thirty feet below the top of the concrete foundation walls and is sixteen feet thick. The metal clad roof is supported by steel truss and is badly deteriorated. The building also contains eighteen wooden-framed windows. Only one of three original turbines and generators is still in the powerhouse.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1911–14 **Builder/Architect** M.T. Maxwell, J.L. McGehee, Jenkin Jones,
Henry James

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Elba Hydroelectric Dam facility is significant for its association with 1) the development of hydroelectric power in Alabama, 2) the industrial and commercial development of Troy, Alabama, and 3) the rural electrification of central and south Alabama.

- 1) The facility is one of the earliest private ventures (1911–1914) in Alabama of the use of waterpower to produce electrical power and transmit it by high voltage lines to more than one destination. This facility is representative of the type developed by large privately-owned power companies that soon replaced small uneconomical and unreliable municipally-owned steam and hydroelectric plants.
- 2) The facility was constructed to supply power to Troy, Alabama, which is thirty miles from the site. The facility provided surplus power that opened the way for improved municipal services, lower power rates for customers and an increase in new industries such as cotton gins, with all-electric machinery, a fertilizer plant, and woodworking mills.
- 3) Along with two other hydroelectric facilities, both completed in 1930 and still in operation, the Elba facility was one of the original hydroelectric generating facilities owned by the Alabama Electric Cooperative. The A.E.C., which began operation in 1944 with aid from the Rural Electric Administration, was the driving force behind the electrification of central and south Alabama.

Exception to the Criterion

The electrification of rural central and south Alabama took place less than fifty years ago. However, the major uplifting of farm life, the great increase in farm production, and the influx of major industries into the cooperative coverage area, all made possible by the availability of permanent, low-cost, reliable electrical power combine to make the Elba Hydroelectric facility of exceptional importance.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 27.9

Quadrangle name Ino

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	5	8	6	4	4	0	3	4	7	0	0	9	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

B

1	6	5	8	6	4	4	0	3	4	6	9	8	6	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

C

1	6	5	8	6	0	6	0	3	4	6	9	8	6	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

D

1	6	5	8	6	0	2	0	3	4	6	9	9	1	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

E

1	6	5	8	6	0	3	0	3	4	7	0	1	6	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

F

1	6	5	8	6	3	2	0	3	4	7	0	1	6	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

G

Zone	Easting		Northing											

H

Zone	Easting		Northing											

Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William M. Towns, Secretary, Elba Hydroelectric Co., & Michael Bailey

organization Alabama Historical Commission date March 10, 1983

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama 36130-

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date June 18, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

8/1/84


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Elba Hydroelectric Dam is significant in the following three ways: 1) The role it played in the development of hydroelectric power in Alabama; 2) its role in the industrial and commercial development of Troy, Alabama and surrounding area; and 3) its role in rural electrification in central and south Alabama.

The Elba Hydroelectric Dam is significant to the development of hydroelectric power in Alabama as the oldest known example of reinforced concrete hydroelectric dam construction in existence in the state. The development of hydroelectric power in Alabama began on November 11, 1902 when the first hydroelectric power dam was placed in operation. This dam was destroyed by flood in 1919. No less than thirteen small community hydroelectric facilities were completed in the next few years following the completion of the first dam. The generating capacity of these dams was too small to attract industrial customers and by the 1920s most had been replaced by larger, more reliable and more economical hydroelectric facilities or had been destroyed by flood.

In September 1911, Charles Henderson, organizer and President of the Pea River Power Company, President of the State Railroad Commission and later Governor of Alabama (1915-1919) took advantage of a 1901 legislative act that allowed the development of hydroelectric power within a four-mile radius of Elba, Alabama. Henderson contracted the Tuscaloosa Concrete and Supply Company to construct a reinforced concrete hydroelectric power dam on a site four miles south of Elba on the Pea River. The project, personally financed by Henderson for \$150,000 was intended to supply power to Troy, Dothan and surrounding communities in south Alabama. Construction of the facility began in late September 1911 and was completed in July 1913, five months before the completion of the Alabama Power Company's first major hydroelectric development at Lock 12 on the Coosa River. The contract for the completion of the powerhouse was awarded to the Troy Lumber and Construction Company and was completed by January 1914. Professor Edgar B. Kay, Dean of the School of Engineering at the University of Alabama and consulting engineer for the Alabama Railroad Commission, was adviser to the Pea River Power Company during the installation of the electric generating machinery in the powerhouse.

The facility first generated power in February 1914 and had a generating capacity of 3,000 horsepower.

The Handbook of the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industry, published in 1919, stated that the Pea River hydroelectric power development was one of only three or possibly four major hydroelectric power developments on Alabama rivers.

Before the completion of the power house at the Elba Dam, high voltage power lines were run from the dam site to a newly installed power station on South Oak Street in Troy. At the time of the completion of the Elba facility, Troy used between 60-75 kilowatts of power per hour, with maximum peak period usage of 250 kilowatts per hour. The new electric plant at Troy, supplied with power from the Elba power facility, was able to deliver 2,000 kilowatts per hour to its customers.

The surplus of available power generated from the Elba Hydroelectric Dam opened the way for industrial and commercial development of Troy and the surrounding area. A commercial organization of business men was started soon after the completion of the Elba facility. The objective of this organization was to improve existing business and industry in Troy and to attract new industry by informing potential industrial customers of the ample surplus of reliable electrical power.

As a result of the surplus of available power, Troy was able to improve municipal services such as upgrading the city water system by installing new electrical pumping equipment. There was also an increase in new industries such as new cotton gins, with all electric machinery, a fertilizer plant and wood-working mills.

The Elba Hydroelectric Power Dam is also significant for its role in rural electrification in central and south Alabama.

Statistical data for the 1930 U.S. Census reveals that only 2.7 percent of all Alabama farms had electricity. It was also evident, from the experience of Alabama Power Company's ill-fated rural electrification project of the late 1920s, that private electric companies could not supply power to rural customers economically. In an attempt to upgrade the living conditions of rural Americans, by the use of electricity, Congress organized the Rural Electric Administration. The purpose of the R.E.A. was to make loans available to private power companies or rural cooperative associations to assist in the process of rural electrification. When public power companies declined to assist, groups of farmers organized rural electric cooperatives.

One of the major problems faced by the co-ops was the availability of permanent, reliable sources of power provided at economical rates. Congress alleviated this problem by making funds available to local cooperatives for the development of power-generating facilities.

In 1941 the newly organized Alabama Electrical Cooperative received Federal loans to develop electrical generating facilities. However, the U. S. entry into World War II postponed the co-op's original plans. In 1944 the controlling company of the Elba hydroelectric facility, the Alabama Water Service Company, a subsidiary of Federal Water and Gas Corporation, offered for sale to the A.E.C. the Elba facility, two hydroelectric facilities on the Conecuh River, transmission lines and substations. A.E.C. purchased the properties and these became the first hydroelectric facilities owned by the co-op. The power produced from these facilities was made available to fourteen rural co-ops and five towns in south Alabama and north Florida. The significance of rural electrification on the upgrading of farm life and businesses was reported by Joe Azbell in an article published in the January 27, 1952 Montgomery Advertiser-Journal.

"The primitive farm has gone the way of the penny postcard and an era of modern living with all the conveniences of urban life has been welcomed by hard-working farmers. For merchants electrification... has brought millions of clinking coins to their stores and spiralled business volume."

The A.E.C.'s 15th Annual Report, published in 1959, focused on the effects of electrification on agriculture and industry.

"Electricity has also played an important part in the agricultural revolution which has taken place in the last few years - a change where fewer and fewer farmers are producing more and more... In recent years this area has experienced strong, steady industrial growth and achieved a better balance between agriculture and industry... Industrial growth has spurred greater economic health throughout the entire south Alabama, north Florida area... There are reasons for this growth. Not the least is the availability of an adequate supply of low-cost electric power for all industrial operations."

The Elba Hydroelectric facility ceased power generation operations for the A.E.C. in 1966. The primary reason for the closing of the facility was the availability of inexpensive (at the time) fossil fuels, coal and natural gas, for steam-generating power plants that had greater generating capacity.

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Alabama Electric Cooperative, Fifteenth Annual Report, 1959
Andalusia, AL 1960

Brown, Deward Clayton, Electricity for Rural America: The Fight for the R.E.A.
Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn. 1980

Martin, Thomas Wesley, The Story of Power in Alabama since the Turn of the Century,
1900-1952
Birmingham Publishing Co. 1952

City Review and Business Directory, Troy, Alabama, 1927-1928

Hydro Power Feasibility Study, Elba, Alabama
GRW Engineers, Inc., Montgomery, 1981

"Work Begins on Dam" and "Electric Power for Pike County"
Elba Clipper, Elba, AL, Friday, September 26, 1911

"Power of Electricity Brings a New Era to Rural South Alabama"
Azbell, Joe, Montgomery Advertiser-Journal, Montgomery, AL, Jan. 27, 1952

"Dam to be Completed This Month"
Troy Messenger, Troy, AL, Wednesday, July 9, 1913

"Elba Current to be Turned on at Once"
Troy Messenger, February 4, 1914

"For Water/City to Spend \$20,000 on New Plant"
Troy Messenger, March 24, 1914

"New Ginnery to be Erected in Troy"
Troy Messenger, May 13, 1914

"Stave Mill, A New Industry for Troy"
Troy Messenger, Wednesday, August 30, 1916

"Local Firm Gets Large Contract, Big Power Plant to be Built by Tuscaloosa Concrete Co."
Tuscaloosa News, Tuscaloosa, AL, Tuesday, September 12, 1911

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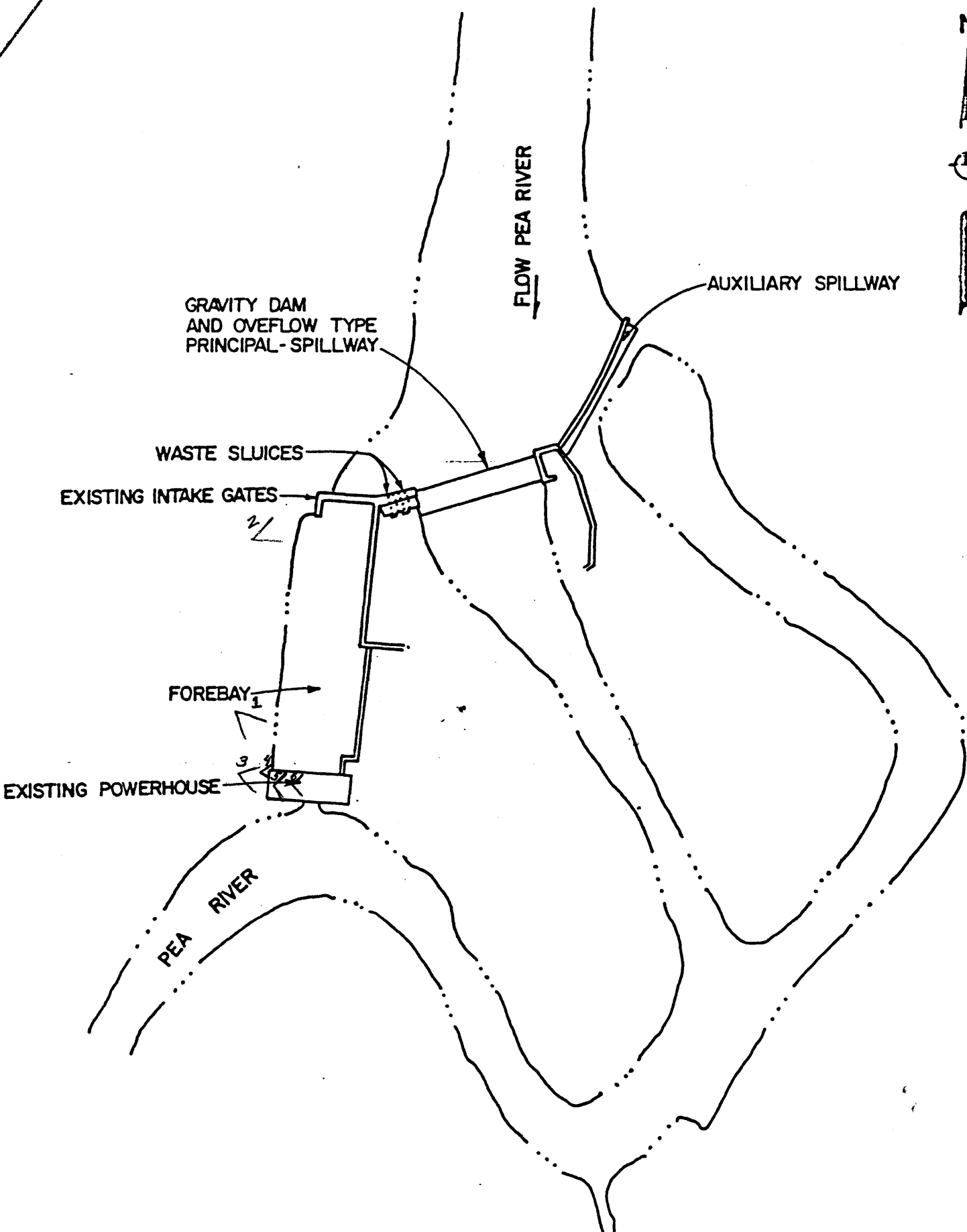
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CONTINUATION SHEET

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PAGE 1

Commencing at a concrete monument which is 560.7 feet Westerly from the Northeast corner of the Southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 31, Township 5 North, Range 20 East; thence South 750.0 feet to a concrete monument; thence West 1271.4 feet to a concrete monument (about 90 feet West from the West bank of Pea River); thence North 49 degrees 20 minutes West 266.6 feet; thence North 829.8 feet; thence South 68 degrees 56 minutes East 180.9 feet and South 68 degrees 01 minutes East 382.3 feet to a concrete monument on the West bank of Pea River; thence North 85 degrees 37 minutes East 450.0 feet; thence South 80 degrees 59 minutes East 508.2 feet to the point of beginning. Said land lying and being situated in the West half of the Northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 31, Township 5 N, Range 20 East and the East half of the Northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 36, Township 5 North, Range 19 East, all in Coffee County, Alabama, and containing 27.9 acres more or less. LESS AND EXCEPT an electric transmission line right of way over and across said lands of a width of 100 feet, being 50 feet wide on each side of the center line of said electric power transmission lines now belonging to Alabama Electric Cooperative, Inc., as the same are now located on said lands, together with the full right of ingress and egress to and from said right of way for the operation and maintenance of said transmission lines and the right to remove any timber or other obstructions from said lands that may interfere with Alabama Electric Cooperative's full use and enjoyment of said right of way; which said right of way is reserved to Alabama Electric Cooperative, Inc., its successors and assigns; and LESS AND EXCEPT a switching structure under said lines as the same is now located on said lands and fenced, together with the full right of ingress and egress to and from said structure for the operation and maintenance of same; which said fenced structure and the land upon which the same is situated is reserved to Alabama Electric Cooperative, Inc., its successors and assigns, and not conveyed herein or hereby. Lying, situated and being in Coffee County, Alabama.



GRAVITY DAM
AND OVEFLOW TYPE
PRINCIPAL- SPILLWAY

FLOW PEA RIVER

AUXILIARY SPILLWAY

WASTE SLUICES

EXISTING INTAKE GATES

FOREBAY₁

EXISTING POWERHOUSE

PEA RIVER

ELBA HYDROPOWER FACILITY
GENERAL LAYOUT
N.T.S.

Exhibit 3.6m