



Tennessee Valley Authority Act (1933)

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This act of May 18, 1933, created the Tennessee Valley Authority to oversee the construction of dams to control flooding, improve navigation, and create cheap electric power in the Tennessee Valley basin.

President Roosevelt signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act on May 18, 1933, creating the TVA as a Federal corporation. The new agency was asked to tackle important problems facing the valley, such as flooding, providing electricity to homes and businesses, and replanting forests. Other TVA responsibilities written in the act included improving travel on the Tennessee River and helping develop the region's business and farming. The establishment of the TVA marked the first time that an agency was directed to address the total resource development needs of a major region. TVA was challenged to take on—in one unified development effort—the problems presented by devastating floods, badly eroded lands, a deficient economy, and a steady out-migration. The most dramatic change in Valley life came from the electricity generated by TVA dams. Electric lights and modern appliances made life easier and farms more productive. Electricity also drew industries to the region, providing desperately needed jobs.

Today, TVA is the largest public power company in the United States. The agency also carefully runs the nation's fifth-largest river system in order to control flooding, make rivers easier to travel, provide recreation, and protect water quality. As a Federal public power corporation, the TVA serves about 80,000 square miles in the southeastern United States. This area includes most of Tennessee and parts of six other states—Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. TVA's facilities for generating electric power include 29 hydroelectric dams, a pumped-storage plant, 11 coal-fired plants, 3 nuclear plants, and 4 combustion-turbine installations. These facilities provide over 27,000 megawatts of dependable generating capacity. TVA typically produces more than 130 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity a year, making it the largest electric power producer in the country. TVA provides electric power to 160 local, municipal, and cooperative power distributors through a network of about 17,000 miles of transmission lines.



Document Citation: An Act to improve the navigability and to provide for the flood control of the Tennessee River; to provide for reforestation and the proper use of marginal lands in the Tennessee Valley; to provide for the agricultural and industrial development of said valley; to provide for the national defense by the creation of a corporation for the operation of Government properties at and near Muscle Shoals in the State of Alabama, and for other purposes, May 18, 1933; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11, National Archives.

Photograph, Tennessee Valley Authority Douglas Dam on the Franch Broad River, 1942; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Public Domain Photographs, 1882-1962 [NLR-PHOCO-A-66278(25)]; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.