



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
February 4, 2010
News Release No. 10-06

Contact:
Billy Birdwell, Public Affairs Officer, 912.652.5014/5279
After hours: 912-677-6039, billy.e.birdwell@usace.army.mil
Jeanne Hodge, Public Affairs Specialist, 912.652.5770
Jeanne.hodge@usace.army.mil

Regional General Permits expedite process; protect environment

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA – Officials with the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Savannah District](#) announced today that they will begin accepting applications for several recently approved Regional General Permits for impacts to streams and wetlands. These RGPs allow for expedited consideration of certain types of publicly-funded projects in non-tidal waters throughout Georgia. Many such projects may be funded under the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) (ARRA). These RGPs quicken the permitting process while ensuring only minimal impacts to wetlands and streams. Private and commercial projects cannot use the new permits.

“Projects approved under the new permits must still meet all requirements of the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act,” said Russ Kaiser, Chief of the [Regulatory Division](#) for the Savannah District. “This special permit category expedites the process, but doesn’t lessen protections.”

The RGPs (numbered 105, 106, 107, and 108) support President Barack Obama’s efforts to spur employment and economic recovery. The permits allow local governments to move quickly and more efficiently to begin and complete public projects, which meet the basic goals of the ARRA, also known as the Stimulus Package, Kaiser said.

Contrary to some reports, the permits maintain statutory protections for streams and wetlands. Under the new process, certain categories of local government projects that would normally require an individual permit can be accomplished with a general permit – usually a faster process. Conditions limit the types and extent of impacts to the environment authorized under the RGPs on a project-by-project and watershed basis, Kaiser said. They also require mitigation before final approval.

“This is a transparent process,” Kaiser said. “The public remains informed. The permits offer balanced protection to the environment, and they may only be used for a limited number of projects and only for a limited time.”

To use one of the regional permits, an applicant must receive at least two approvals. One comes from the Corps of Engineers verifying that the project meets to the requirements of the RGPs. The applicant must also obtain a separate individual Water Quality Certification from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division. In some cases applicants may also need a Georgia Coastal Zone Consistency permit before beginning work.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Environmental Protection Division has agreed to provide an “expedited review” to qualifying projects. The EPD partners with the Corps of Engineers to protect streams and wetlands in Georgia. In addition to a permit from the Corps of Engineers, projects that impact streams, rivers, wetlands or similar environments often need additional permits from the state.

The Corps revised the RGPs after a public comment period and tightened potential thresholds applicants must meet. The Corps then held a workshop to give the public a chance to review and comment on the revised proposals.

“The RGPs won’t replace, supersede or increase the scope of any existing nationwide permits,” said [Col. Edward Kertis](#), commander of the Corps of Engineers’ Savannah District. “Rather, the RGPs make the permitting process more efficient while retaining all environmental protections for publicly funded projects while the ARRA is in effect. It allows the Corps the potential to authorize these activities, as well as other publically funded projects, under an RGP quickly with minimal impact to the aquatic environment. The public often complains about the sluggishness of our bureaucracy. We are trying to expedite things while simultaneously providing an equal level of protection than normal.”

Applicants can view Regional General Permits 105-108 at the Corps’ Web site;
<http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/News.htm>.

– 30 –