



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

SAVANNAH DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 889
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31402-0889

March 29, 2010

Planning Division

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE
Savannah District, US Army Corps of Engineers
and the
Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for increased development of Wildwood Park on the J. Strom Thurmond Lake, in Columbia County, Georgia.

Notice of the following is hereby given:

a. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, notice is hereby given that the Savannah District, US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District (Corps) proposes to increase the development of Wildwood Park on the J. Strom Thurmond Lake, in Columbia County, Georgia, revise the Thurmond Lake Master Plan to accommodate the proposal, and amend the lease that it has with Columbia County to operate the Park.

b. The Savannah District announces the availability to the public of a Draft EA and Draft FONSI concerning the action. Copies of the Draft EA and unsigned FONSI can be obtained from the following website: <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/pl.html>.

c. Written statements regarding the Draft EA and FONSI for the proposed action will be received at the Savannah District Office until

12 O'CLOCK NOON, APRIL 28, 2010

from those interested in the activity and whose interests may be affected by the proposed action.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed improvements to the park would accommodate Columbia County’s new visions and programs for the park, while maintaining its valuable existing features. The Plan includes the following features:

- **New Gatehouse:** primary gatehouse building with three entry lanes for faster processing of visitors during events
- **Visitor’s Center:** 1,600 square foot building with a 25-space parking lot adjacent to the new gatehouse
- **Outdoor Amphitheater:** fixed seating for 650 and lawn seating for 350 persons
- **Equestrian Campground:** 11-acre site with camping amenities, restrooms, campfire ring, picnic pavilion, trail access, and spaces for approximately 10 horse trailers and future room for five additional spaces
- **Super-Playground:** two-acre site built to the standards of the American Disability Act, 20-space parking area, small restroom building and drop off area
- **Day Use Area / Beach Relocation:** 26-acre site including beach pavilion with showers, picnic pavilion, picnic area, 50-car gravel parking area in the woods (expandable), open play area and improved beach area
- **Lodge Site:** 100-room lodge with a restaurant and meeting facilities with lakefront views, gift/general store, parking for 40 boat trailers with electric hookups and guard and parking for 135 cars
- **Cabin Site:** 42-acre site that includes 24 cabins and parking for each cabin providing more secluded accommodations for visitors
- **Natural and Team Building Area:** 264-acre site which includes rope courses, wilderness training, team building area and other low impact outdoor group activities
- **Archery Areas:** approximately 2,200 linear feet of relocated archery ranges being moved from other areas of the park
- **12 Miles of Hiking Trails**
- **2.6 Miles of Mountain Bike Trails**
- **6.1 Miles of Equestrian Trails**
- **8.1 Miles of 12-foot wide Paved Multi-Use Trails.**
- **Natural Areas** that will be preserved both for wildlife and aesthetic reasons

AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA:

Water Quality Certification: Savannah District has prepared a Draft EA and found that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be required for this action. The Draft EA is being coordinated concurrently with this Notice to Federal and State natural resource agencies for review and comment. A small amount (<0.5 acres) of wetlands would be filled. The work is also estimated to impact roughly 600 linear feet (less than 0.5 acres) of permanent and ephemeral stream. If those impacts cannot be avoided by refinements to the design, the District would use agency-approved Regulatory Standard Operating Procedures for Compensatory Mitigation to determine the extent of mitigation that would be needed to compensate for those impacts. The

Corps or Columbia County would acquire the required number of credits from an applicable existing nearby approved mitigation bank prior to any adverse impacts to those resources. A Section 404 Evaluation is included in the EA.

Stormwater Erosion Control Permit: Work would be performed on greater than 5 acres, so a Stormwater Erosion Control Permit would be required. The Draft EA is being coordinated concurrently with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division, Watershed Protection Branch for review and comment.

Stream Buffer Variance: Some work would be performed within 25 feet of a permanent stream, so a Stream Buffer Variance would be required. The Draft EA is being coordinated concurrently with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division, Watershed Protection Branch for review and comment.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:

Environmental Assessment: Savannah District has prepared a Draft EA and found that an EIS will not be required for this action. The Draft EA is being coordinated concurrently with this Notice to Federal and State natural resource agencies for review and comment. A small amount (<0.5 acres) of wetlands would be filled. The work is also estimated to impact roughly 600 linear feet (less than 0.5 acres) of permanent and ephemeral stream. Mitigation would be performed through purchase of credits from an approved mitigation bank. A Section 404 Evaluation is included in the EA.

Threatened and Endangered Species: There are 14 Federally protected species that are known to occur in Columbia County, Georgia. No observations of those species were made during a field investigation of the site. Potential habitat was identified for bald eagle, Dixie mountain breadroot, Georgia aster, Ocmulgee skullcap, and shoals spiderlily. The District reviewed the most recent information on Federally-listed endangered or threatened species and determined that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to affect Dixie mountain breadroot, Georgia aster, Ocmulgee skullcap, and shoals spiderlily. Additional surveys will be performed prior to construction during the flowering or fruiting periods of the four species listed above to confirm their non-presence on the site. This proposed action is being coordinated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

Cultural Resources: In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (P.L. 89-655, as amended) and 36 CFR, Part 800, Savannah District has evaluated the proposed action's potential effect upon historic properties. The District has determined the proposed action will have no adverse effect upon historic properties and has initiated consultation with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officers and eighteen Native American Tribes.

Public Interest Review: The decision whether to proceed with the project as proposed will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both the protection and use of important resources. The benefits which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof. Among these are conservation; economics; aesthetics; general environmental concerns; wetlands; historic properties; fish and wildlife; flood hazards; flood plains; land use; navigation; shoreline erosion/accretion; recreation; water supply and conservation; water quality; energy needs; safety; food and fiber production; mineral needs; consideration of property ownership; environmental justice; and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Consideration of Public Comments: Savannah District is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by Savannah District in its deliberations on this action. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts to endangered species, wetlands, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, socioeconomic effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Comment Period: Anyone wishing to comment to Savannah District on this proposed action should submit comments no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice, in writing, to the Savannah District, US Army Corps of Engineers, Planning Division, ATTN: Mr. William Bailey, PO Box 889, Savannah, Georgia 31402-0889, by FAX to 912-652-5787, or by emailing the comments to the following address: cesas-pd@usace.army.mil

Any person who desires to comment or object to the Georgia Water Quality Certification, Stormwater Erosion Control Permit, or Stream Buffer Variance must do so in writing to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division, 2 Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive, S.E., Suite 1252, East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334-9000.



William G. Bailey
Chief, Planning Division