
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
of Modifications to the
RAW WATER STORAGE
IMPOUNDMENT
APPENDIX F: JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE
SAVANNAH HARBOR EXPANSION PROJECT
Chatham County, Georgia and Jasper County, South Carolina

July 2013



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
*Savannah District
South Atlantic Division*



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

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

July 12, 2013

Planning Division

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

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for modifications to the Raw Water Storage Impoundment (RWSI) as part of the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP).

Notice of the following is hereby given:

a. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344), notice is hereby given that the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District proposes to modify the construction, operation, and maintenance of a Raw Water Storage Impoundment (RWSI), which is part of the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP).

b. The Savannah District announces the availability to the public of a Draft EA and Draft FONSI concerning the proposed action. Copies of the Draft EA and unsigned FONSI can be obtained from the following website: www.sas.usace.army.mil, or by emailing the following address: CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil.

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, AUGUST 12, 2013

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Previous environmental studies concluded that the SHEP would increase chloride concentrations in Abercorn Creek and a RWSI was included in SHEP to mitigate for those effects. The structure would store low chloride raw water for use when higher chloride levels occurred at the City of Savannah’s water intake in Abercorn Creek. Construction of the impoundment was approved during public and agency coordination of the SHEP EIS.

After SHEP was approved, Savannah District began detailed engineering and environmental design studies as part of its preparation of contract drawings and specifications. As those studies progressed, it became apparent that alternate locations should be considered to minimize environmental effects and maximize the efficiency of the RWSI. The following table summarizes the changes that are proposed as a result of the detailed studies:

Changes in RWSI from 2012 SHEP EIS

Issue	SHEP EIS	RWSI EA
Project Purpose	Mitigate chloride impacts to City of Savannah Abercorn Creek water intake	Unchanged
Location	Parcel 3 of GPA’s Savannah International Trade Park near Mulberry Grove	New location (Site 4)
Threatened & Endangered Species	No effect	Unchanged
Wetlands	Potential for impacts to small amount of wetlands	13.5 acres (2.1 acres under restrictive covenant)
Size	Approximately 35 acres	33 acres
Cultural Resources	No effect	Unchanged

The primary changes to the approved design are its location and the extent of wetland impacts that would occur.

The RWSI is now proposed for construction at a site between the City of Savannah’s raw water pumping station at Abercorn Creek and its Industrial and Domestic Water Treatment Plant in Port Wentworth, Georgia. The selected parcel of land (117 acres) is between the City’s raw water pipeline and Interstate 95. The property would be acquired by the non-Federal sponsor (NFS) for SHEP and used to construct and operate an above-ground raw water storage impoundment on approximately 33 acres of the property. A 3,300-foot access road (1.7 acres) located on top of the existing raw water pipeline is included in the proposed action. Borrow material will be required for the construction of the earthen dikes around the impoundment and will be obtained from an off-site source.

The 33-acre RWSI facility includes an earthen dike surrounding the impoundment that is approximately 3,400 feet in total length, with a maximum height of 29 feet, requiring a total material volume of approximately 440,000 cubic yards. The impoundment would have a maximum storage capacity of 62.5 Million Gallons per Day (MGD). It includes the placement

of a High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) liner; associated piping and valves; a mechanical mixing system; a 1 megawatt generator with fuel storage; a pump station and electrical building; a powdered activated carbon system with a silo and feed equipment; a groundwater well, a hydropneumatic tank, and fencing around the entire facility. Influent and effluent pipelines will be required between the impoundment and the existing City of Savannah water lines. The proposed action also includes upgrades to 19 existing pipeline air release valves and construction of 3 new valves (most from 6 to 8 or 10 inches) on the City of Savannah's existing raw water pipeline. Although USACE Civil Works activities are not governed by the USACE Section 404 regulatory permitting process, upgrades to existing valves (and new valves that may be required) that occur within wetlands would be installed following the conditions in the Nationwide Permit 12 (Utility Line Activities). After construction of the RWSI and associated features is completed, the facility would be turned over to the City of Savannah for operation and maintenance.

AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA:

Water Quality Certifications: The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division (EPD) issued water quality certification for the SHEP project along with the mitigation plan that included this RWSI project with certain contingencies. The Georgia DNR-EPD (Drinking Water Program) reviewed and approved (with listed conditions) construction of the RWSI by letter dated February 4, 2013. The conditions (detailed in Section 4.1 of the EA) will be integrated into the proposed action along with all other conditions associated with environmental clearances for this project.

The Georgia DNR-EPD intends to certify the proposed modifications to the RWSI at the end of 30 days in accordance with the provisions of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, which is required to conduct an activity in, on, or adjacent to the waters of the State of Georgia. Copies of the proposal and supporting documents will be available for review and copying at the office of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division, Water Protection Branch, 4220 International Parkway, Suite 101, Atlanta, Georgia 30354, during regular office hours. A copying machine is available for public use at a charge of 25 cents per page. Any person who desires to comment, object, or request a public hearing relative to State Water Quality Certification must do so within 30 days of the State's receipt of application in writing and state the reasons or basis of objections or request for a hearing. The proposal can also be viewed at the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, Planning Division, 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:

Environmental Assessment: Although the RWSI was approved during the SHEP EIS coordination, Savannah District has prepared a Draft EA since it is proposing a change to the location of the structure presented in the EIS. The RWSI is part of the mitigation that was approved during public and agency coordination of the SHEP EIS. The Draft EA is being

coordinated concurrently with this Notice to Federal and State natural resource agencies for review and comment.

Wetlands: The proposed action is a modification to the RWSI design that was approved in the 2012 SHEP EIS. Detailed design studies conducted by the Corps after the impoundment was approved indicate that modifications are needed to the location and design of the RWSI. The Corps considered several alternate sites to identify the location that best meets the overall project needs. A parcel near Interstate 95 and the City of Savannah's raw water pipeline was identified as the best location. Engineering and environmental studies indicate that the proposed use of the site would result in unavoidable impacts to existing wetlands. The preferred alternative (Site 4) would adversely impact 13.5 acres, 2.1 acres of which are protected by a restrictive covenant. The existing restrictive covenant would need to be amended. The impacted wetlands that are not under restrictive covenant (11.4 acres) were completely clearcut in 2011 and 2012. The proposed wetland mitigation plan would compensate for these adverse impacts. Total mitigation requirements in association with the proposed project impacts (including restrictive covenant removal) would require purchase of an estimated 95.19 wetland credits from a wetland mitigation bank servicing the project area.

Additional detail on wetland impacts and the compensatory wetland mitigation plan can be found in Section 4.3 and Appendix G of the EA.

Nine other alternative locations were evaluated but were not selected due to various combination of the following issues and constraints: (1) safety of nearby residential developments; (2) adverse impacts to floodplains and conflicts with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management); (3) land use compatibility; (4) proximity to the raw water pipeline (5) proximity to the City's municipal and industrial water treatment facility; (6) high potential for impacting wetlands; and (7) high potential for impacting cultural resources. Optimally, the RWSI site should be located adjacent to the existing raw water pipeline and as close as possible to the City's municipal and industrial water treatment facility, thereby maximizing the use of the existing pumps at Abercorn Creek and minimizing new pipeline and pumping costs. More detail on the alternative analysis is contained in Section 2 of the EA.

Since a discharge of fill material into waters of the US is included in the proposed action, an evaluation is required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This Section 404(b)(1) evaluation is located in Appendix E of the EA. On the basis of the Section 404 guidelines, the proposed site for the discharge of fill material during the construction is specified as complying with the requirements of these guidelines, with the inclusion of appropriate and practical conditions to minimize pollution or adverse effects on the aquatic ecosystem.

Threatened and Endangered Species: Savannah District conducted an Endangered Species Act listed species survey and concluded that no protected species are likely to be adversely affected by the proposed action and no critical habitat has been designated in the project impact area. Within the project impact area, there is much disturbance to existing habitat from silvicultural activities and a lack of suitable habitat for listed species. As a result, the project impact area is not expected to contain any listed species. Consequently, the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect any listed species.

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 would have no adverse effect upon historic properties. Coordination with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (GA SHPO) was initiated when the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division (HPD) received a report entitled *Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment of the Proposed Raw Water Storage Impoundment Facility, Chatham County, Georgia* prepared by Southeastern Archaeological Research, Inc. and dated September 12, 2012. There were no archeological sites, isolated finds, or historic structures identified during the survey on the project site. On November 7, 2012, the GA SHPO responded with a letter concurring that the proposed action (RWSI and associated access road) would have no effect on historic properties as defined by 36 CFR Part 800.4(d)(1).

In the event that human remains and/or cultural materials are discovered during clearing, construction, or other activities related to the proposed undertaking, all work would cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The Corps would then notify the SHPO and appropriate Native American tribes.

Coastal Zone Management (CZM): Construction projects are subject to consistency with the Georgia Shore Protection Act (O.C.G.A. 2-5-230, et seq.) and the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act (O.C.G.A. 12-5-280, et. seq.) if there are impacts to tidal wetlands or shoreline features. Since the site of the proposed action is not within or adjacent to tidal waters or the shoreline, this project would not be expected to have any impact to coastal resources. Therefore, USACE believes this project is fully consistent with the enforceable policies of the Georgia Coastal Zone Management (CZM) program.

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, floodplains, 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: USACE 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 USACE 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.

Comment Period: Anyone wishing to comment to USACE on this proposed action should submit comments, in writing, no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice to the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, ATTN: Mr. William Bailey (PD), 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia 31402-0889 or by email to CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil.



William G. Bailey
Chief, Planning Division