

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS SAVANNAH DISTRICT 100 WEST OGLETHORPE AVENUE SAVANNAH. GEORGIA 31401-3604

October 15, 2019

Regulatory Division SAS-2015-00591

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE Savannah District/State of Georgia

The Savannah District has received an application for a Department of the Army permit, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C § 1344), as follows:

Application Number: SAS-2015-00591

Applicant: Georgia Southern University (GSU)

Post Office Box 8012

Statesboro, Georgia 30458

Agent: Mr. Troy Smith

Resource and Land Consultants

31 Park of Commerce Way, Suite 303

Savannah, Georgia 31401

<u>Location of Proposed Work</u>: The project site is located in waters and wetland within the southwestern quadrant of Veterans Memorial Parkway and Lanier Drive, in Statesboro, Bulloch County, Georgia (Latitude 32.4048 and Longitude -81.7865). These wetlands drain to Little Lots Creek a Traditional Navigable Waterway (TNW).

<u>Description of Work Subject to the Jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</u>: The applicant is proposing to fill 18.87 acres of wetland and 191 linear feet of stream for the expansion GSU's south campus. The expansion would consist of the construction of 30 new buildings totaling 948,020 square feet. Development plans consist of thirteen academic buildings (providing predominantly classrooms and faculty office space); 6 research/labs; 7 student housing buildings; and 2 general use and 2 special use buildings.

Infrastructure would be expanded to support the development. In addition to the nearly 1 mile of road constructed within the project area over the last few years, the applicant proposes to construct an additional 1.5 miles of two way traffic roads open to the general public. The development plans call for parking, water & sewer installation, stormwater management, recreation and green spaces.

Specifically, road construction would impact 8.73 acres of wetland and 191 linear street of stream impact. Site development (buildings, parking, etc.) would require 9.87 acres of wetland impact and infrastructure construction would require 0.27 acres of wetland impact. In addition, GSU would restore an existing 2.86 acre pond within the project area. The restoration plan calls for the stabilization and fortification of the existing dam, dredging the existing footprint and insuring stable banks around its perimeter.

The impacts associated with the campus expansion are proposed in seven phases. Phases 1 and 2 allow for the extension of Akins Blvd into the property, connecting with the existing on-site road network. This would require 7.79 acres of wetland impact and 191-If of stream impact. Phase 3 consists of constructing academic and housing buildings along Akins Blvd Extension and would require 4.00 acres of wetland impact. Phase 4 consists of the pond restoration and adjacent development. This phase requires 2.86 acres of pond impact and 2.55 acres of wetland impact. The northern spur road would be constructed between Akins Blvd Extension and John Proctor Rd in phase 5 and require impacts to 1.10 acres of wetland. Phases 6 and 7 would complete the development of the northern portion of the project area and would require 2.06 acres and 1.37 acres of wetland impact respectively.

To mitigate for the above impacts, the applicant has proposed the purchase of 15.11 wetland mitigation credits (i.e. 120.88 grandfathered wetland credits) and 143.25 stream mitigation credits (i.e. 1,719 grandfathered stream credits) from a Corps approved mitigation bank that services the Lower Ogeechee Watershed (HUC 03060202).

BACKGROUND

In 2017 and 2018, GSU obtained Corps nationwide permit concurrence for the construction of a road and utility network in the project area. All impacts outlined in these applications have been completed and mitigated with the purchase of wetland mitigation credits. To facilitate an efficient and safe traffic flow between the original (north) and the expansion (south) campus, the development plans calls for the extension of Akins Boulevard into the south campus; connecting it to the road system constructed under the nationwide permit concurrences. Akins Boulevard currently serves as the main entrance to the existing campus from Veterans Memorial Parkway (US 301 Bypass). The direct extension of Akins Blvd would allow for a signaled intersection at the parkway. This would allow for bus, automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic to safely navigate the area.

This Joint Public Notice announces a request for authorizations from both the Corps and the State of Georgia. The applicant's proposed work may also require local governmental approval.

STATE OF GEORGIA

Water Quality Certification: The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division will review the proposed project for water quality certification, in accordance with the provisions of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. Prior to issuance of a Department of the Army permit for a project location in, on, or adjacent to the waters of the State of Georgia, review for Water Quality Certification is required. A reasonable period of time, which shall not exceed one year, is established under the Clean Water Act for the State to act on a request for Water Quality Certification, after which, issuance of such a Department of the Army permit may proceed.

<u>State-owned Property and Resources</u>: The applicant may also require assent from the State of Georgia, which may be in the form of a license, easement, lease, permit or other appropriate instrument.

Georgia Coastal Management Program: Prior to the Savannah District Corps of Engineers making a final permit decision on this application, the project must be certified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division, to be consistent with applicable provisions of the State of Georgia Coastal Management Program (15 CFR 930). Anyone wishing to comment on Coastal Management Program certification of this project should submit comments in writing within 30 days of the date of this notice to the Federal Consistency Coordinator, Coastal Management Program, Coastal Resources Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, Georgia 31523-8600 (Telephone 912-264-7218).

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The Savannah District must consider the purpose and the impacts of the applicant's proposed work, prior to a decision on issuance of a Department of the Army permit.

<u>Cultural Resources Assessment</u>: The applicant is currently preparing a Phase I Cultural Resource Survey and Assessment of Effects.

Endangered Species: A preliminary review the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Protected Resource Divisions (NMFSPRD)'s list of Endangered and Threatened Species (IPaC) indicates the following listed species may occur in the project area: Eastern Indigo Snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*) and gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). According to the agent, there are no gopher tortoise burrows located on the project site. Therefore per the Savanah District Effects Determination Guidance for Endangered and Threatened Species (EDGES), the Corps has determined that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Eastern Indigo snake.

Pursuant to Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.), we request information from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service; or, any other interested party, on whether any species listed or proposed for listing may be present in the area.

<u>Public Interest Review</u>: The decision whether to issue a permit 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 protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Consideration of Public Comments: The Corps 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 this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement 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.

Application of Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines: The proposed activity involves the discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the United States. The Savannah District's evaluation of the impact of the activity on the public interest will include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, under the authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act.

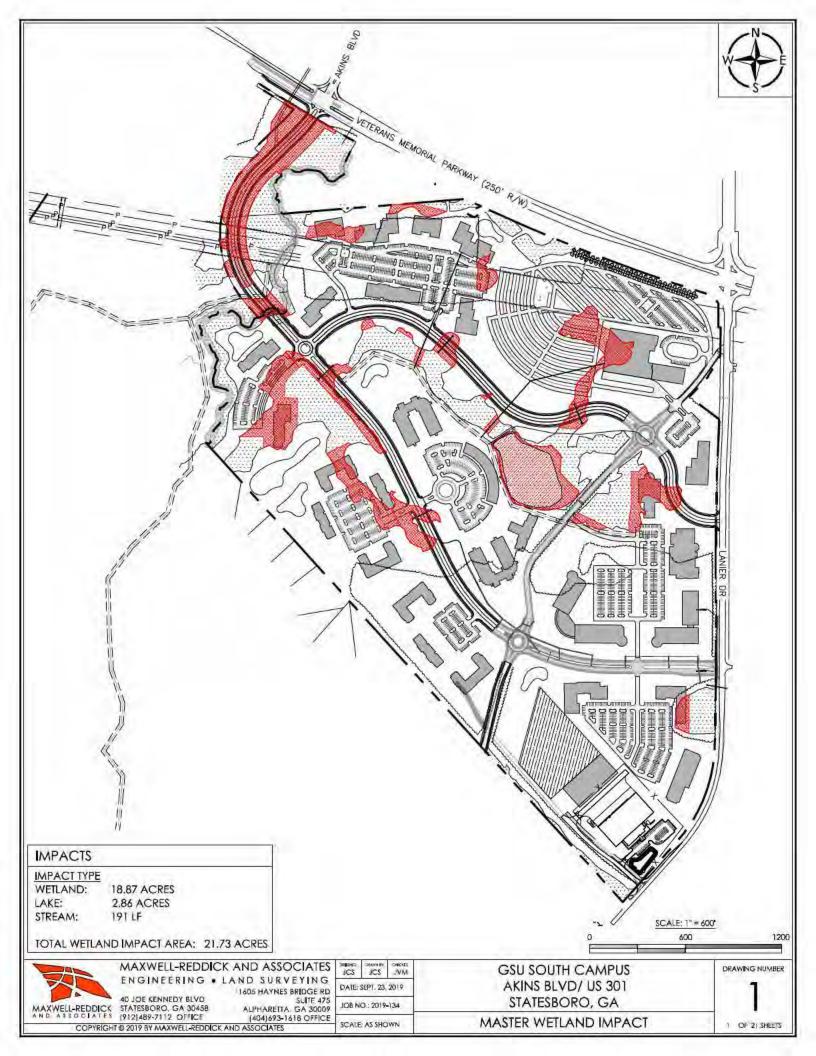
<u>Public Hearing</u>: Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this application for a Department of the Army permit. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for requesting a public hearing. The decision whether to hold a public hearing is at the discretion of the District Engineer, or his designated appointee, based on the need for additional substantial information necessary in evaluating the proposed project.

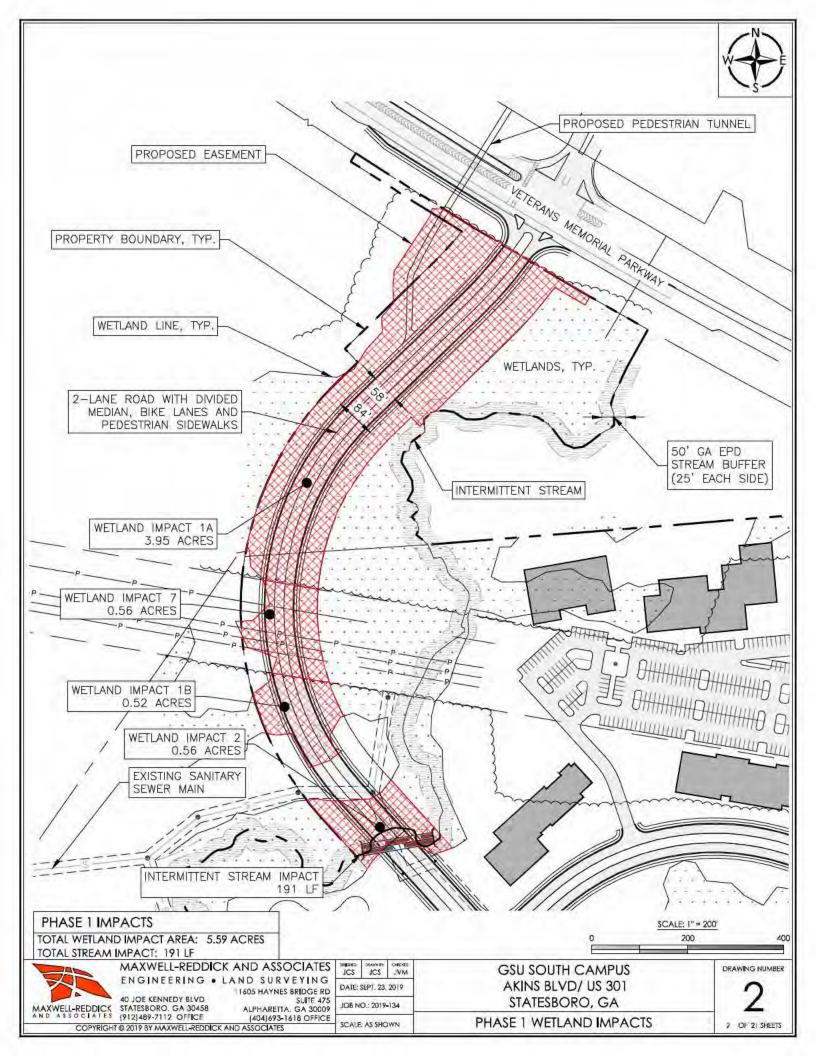
<u>Comment Period</u>: Anyone wishing to comment on this application for a Department of the Army permit should submit comments by email to <u>sarah.e.wise@usace.army.mil</u>. Alternatively, you may submit comments in writing to the Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, Attention: Ms. Sarah E. Wise, 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia 31401-3604, no later than 30 days from the date of this notice. Please refer to the applicant's name and the application number in your comments.

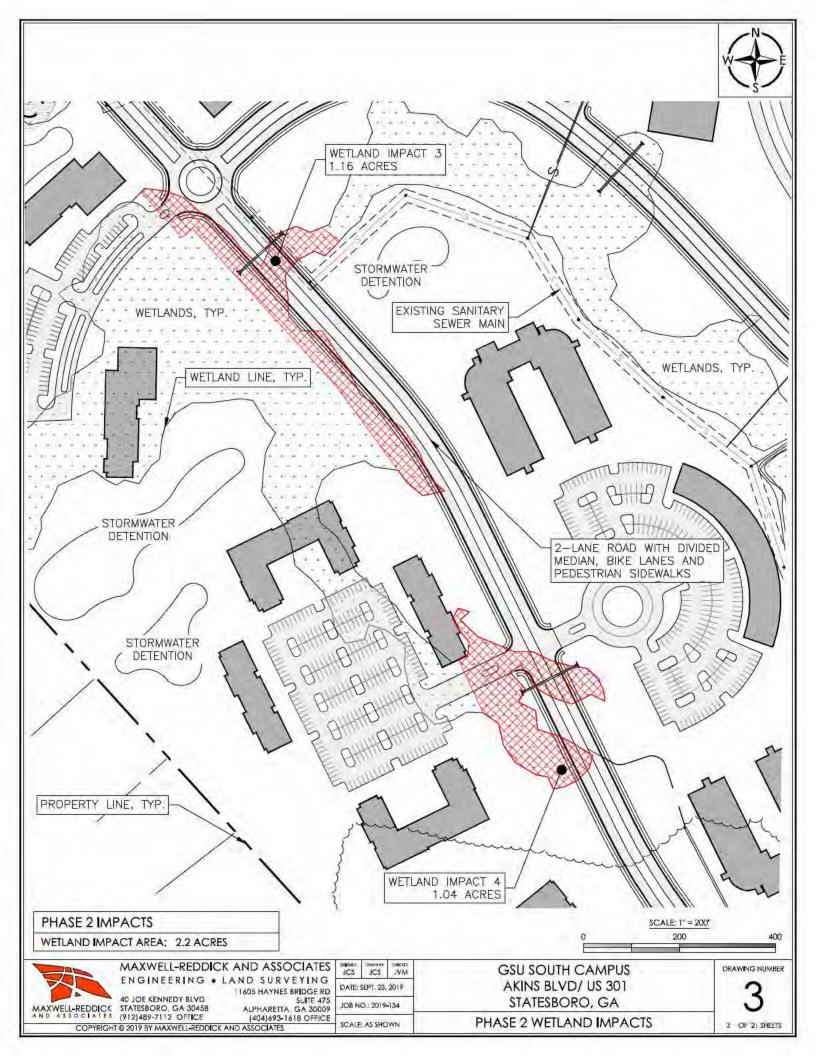
If you have any further questions concerning this matter, please contact Ms. Sarah E. Wise, Team Lead, Coastal Branch at 912-652-5550.

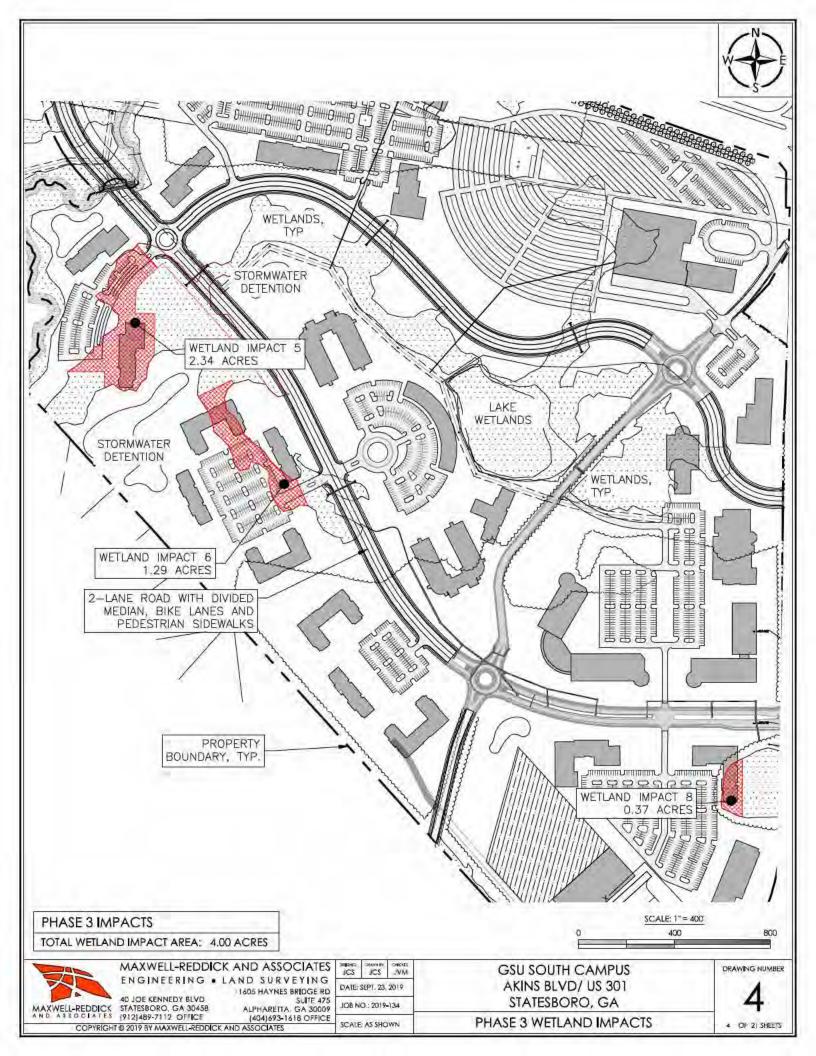
Enclosures:

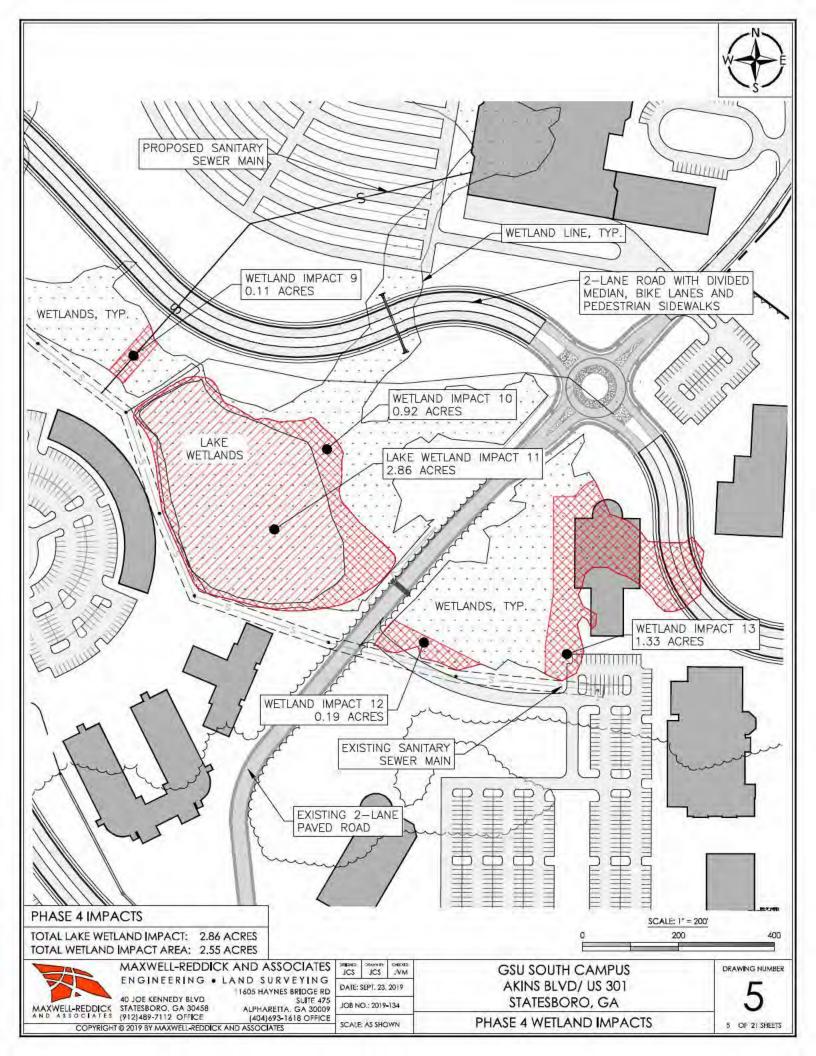
1. GSU South Campus, Akins Blvd/US 301, Statesboro, GA, dated September 23, 2019 (Sheets 1-21)

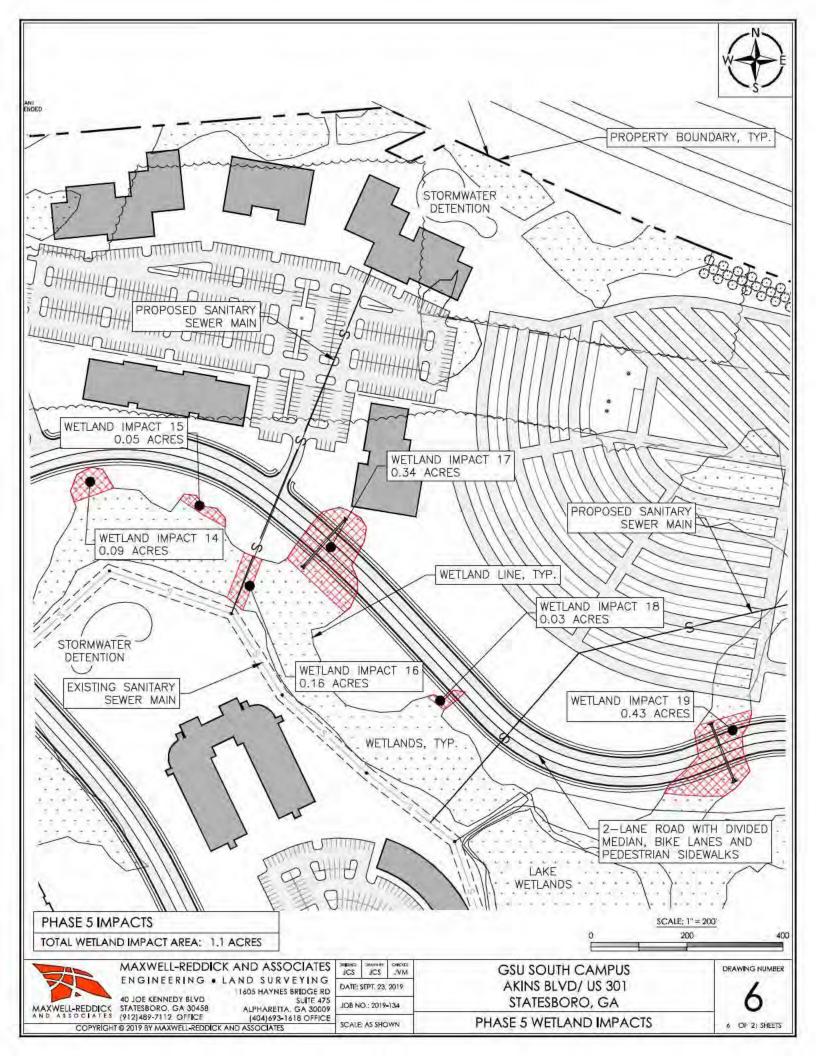


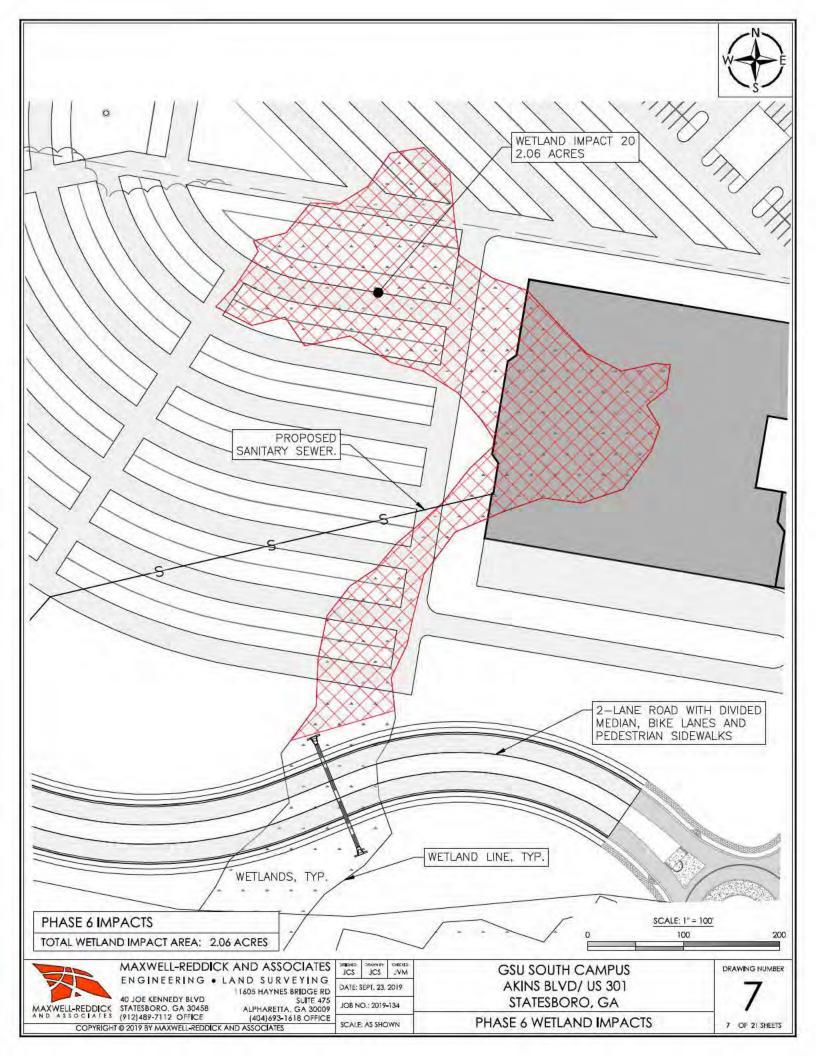


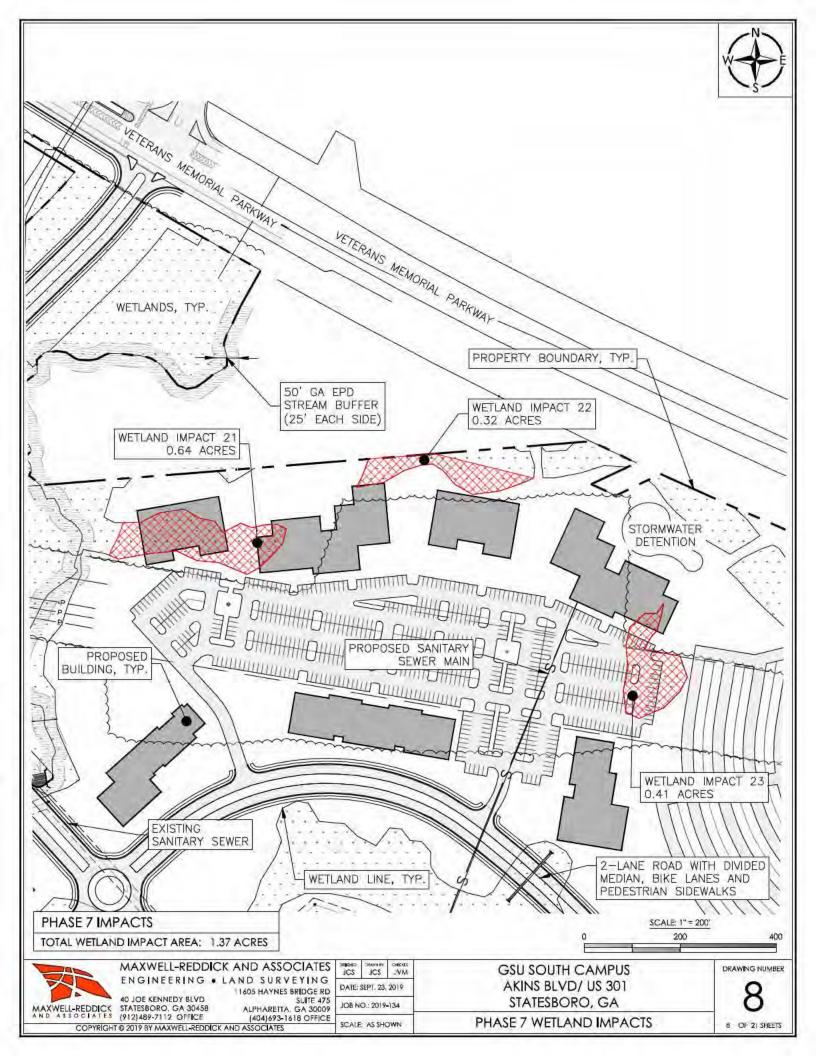


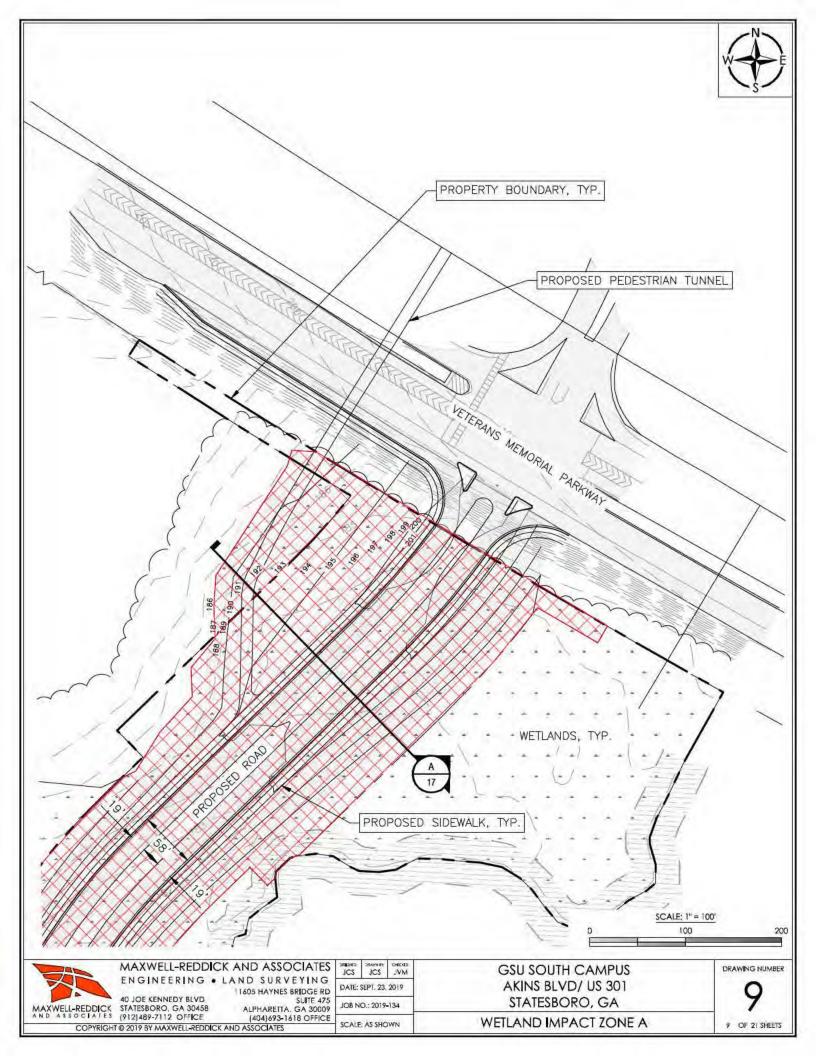


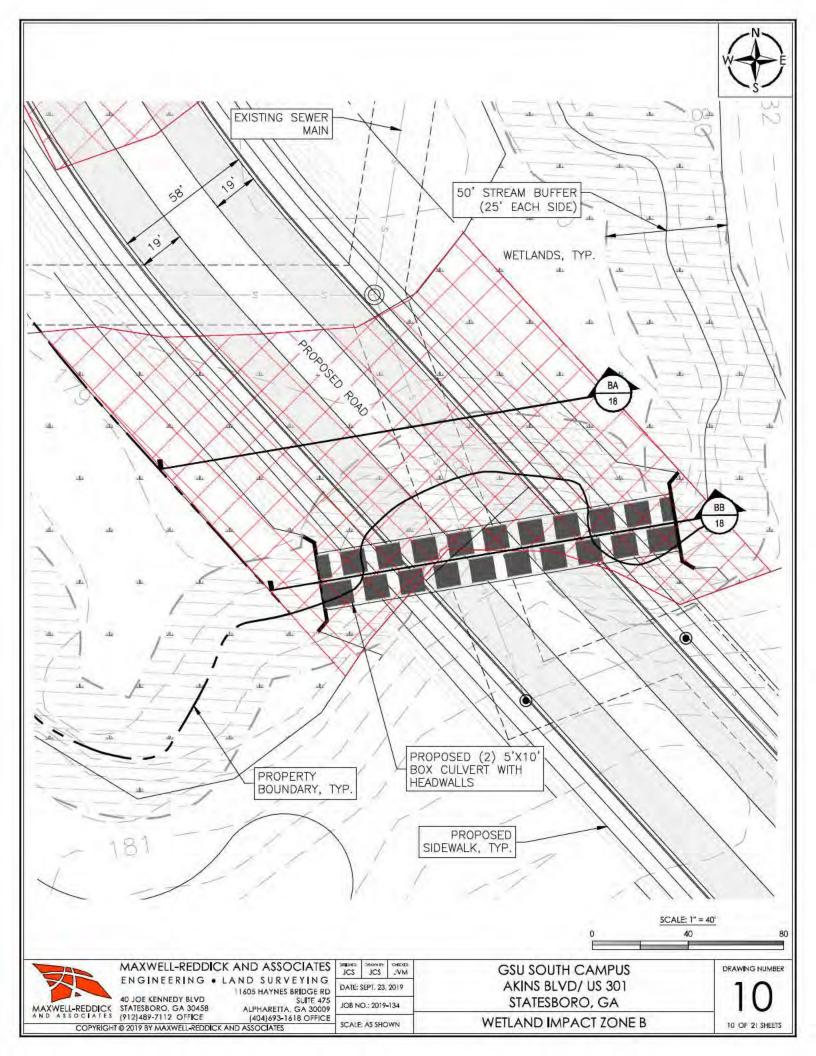


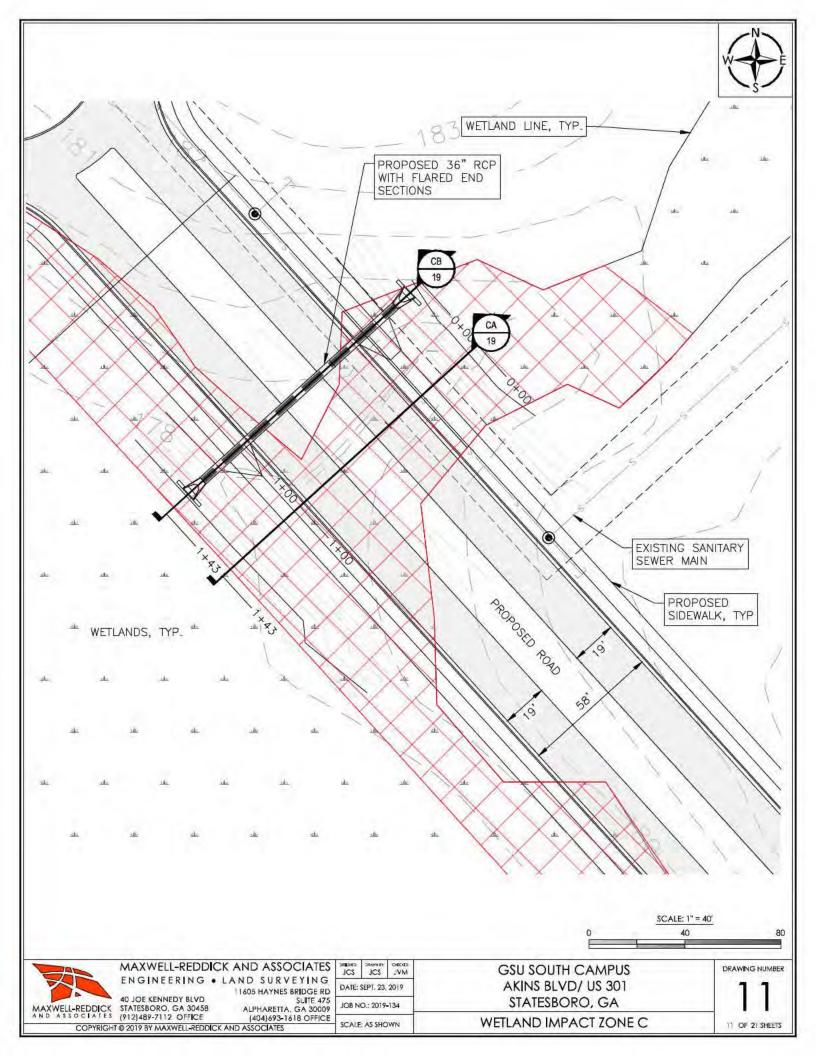


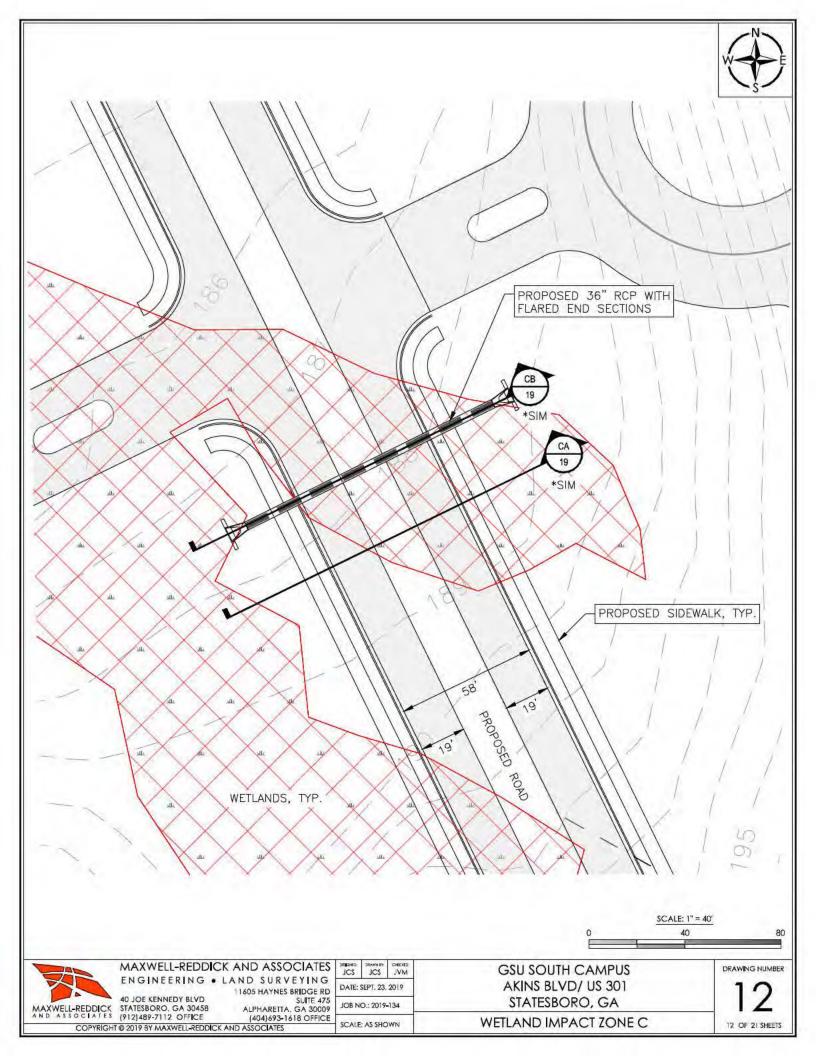


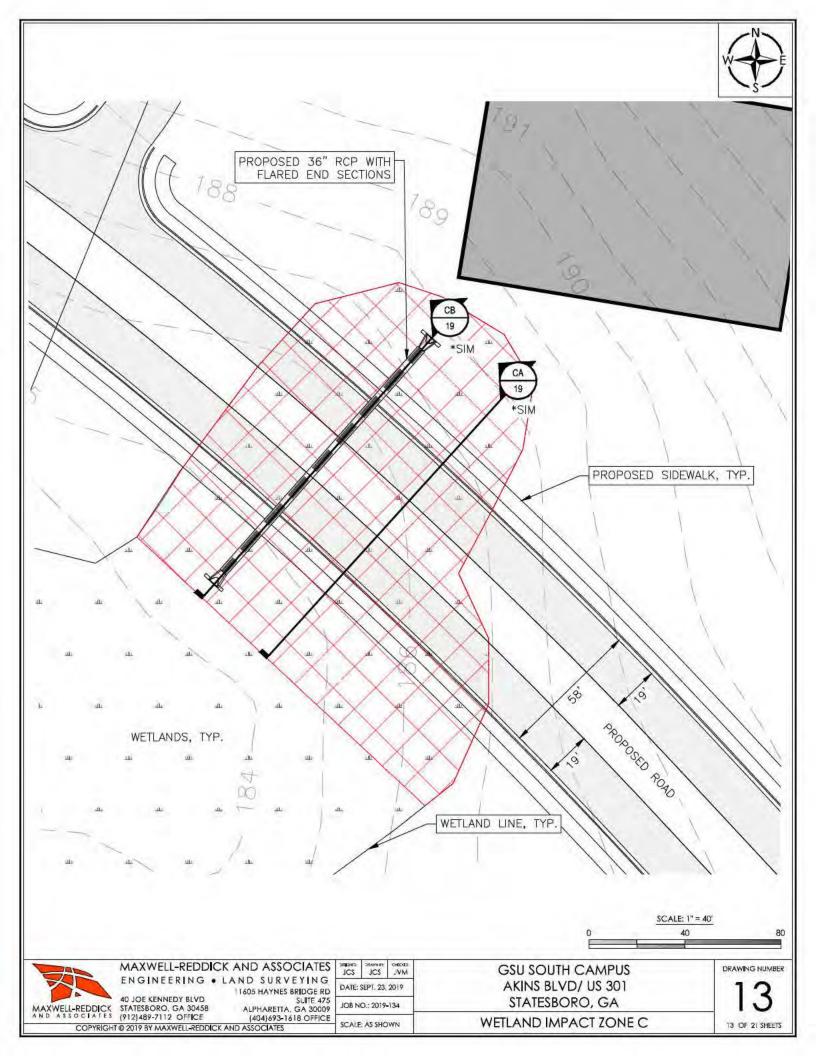


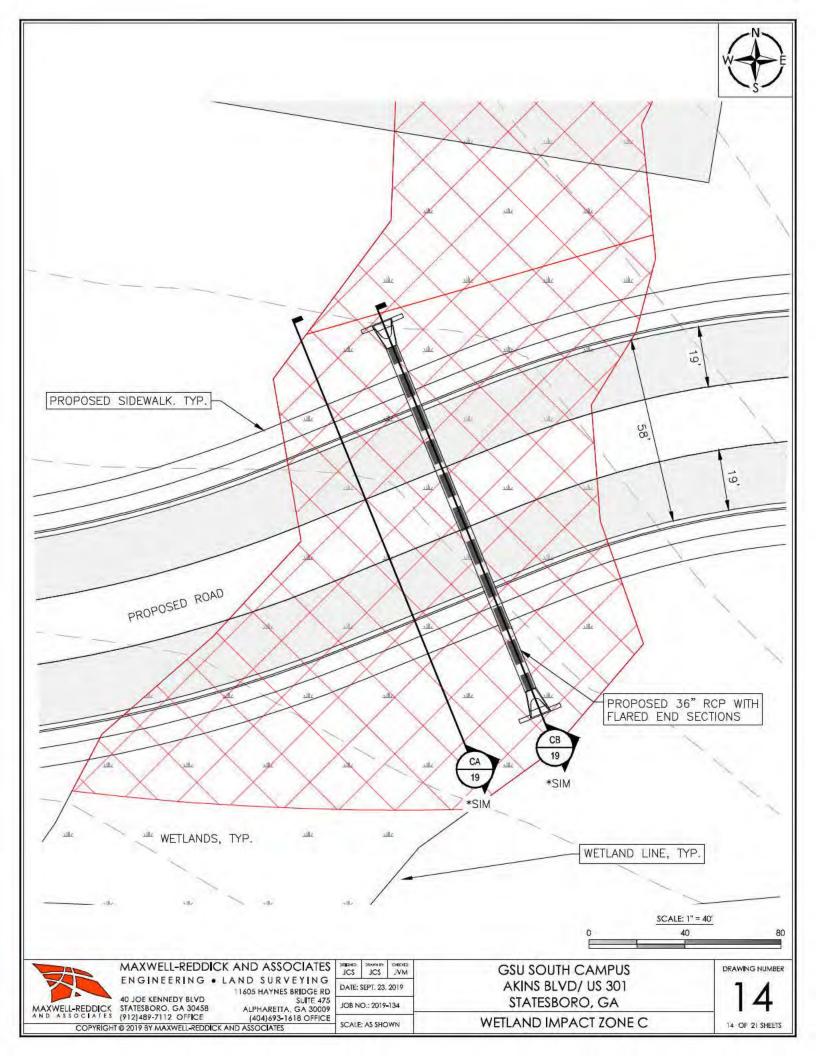


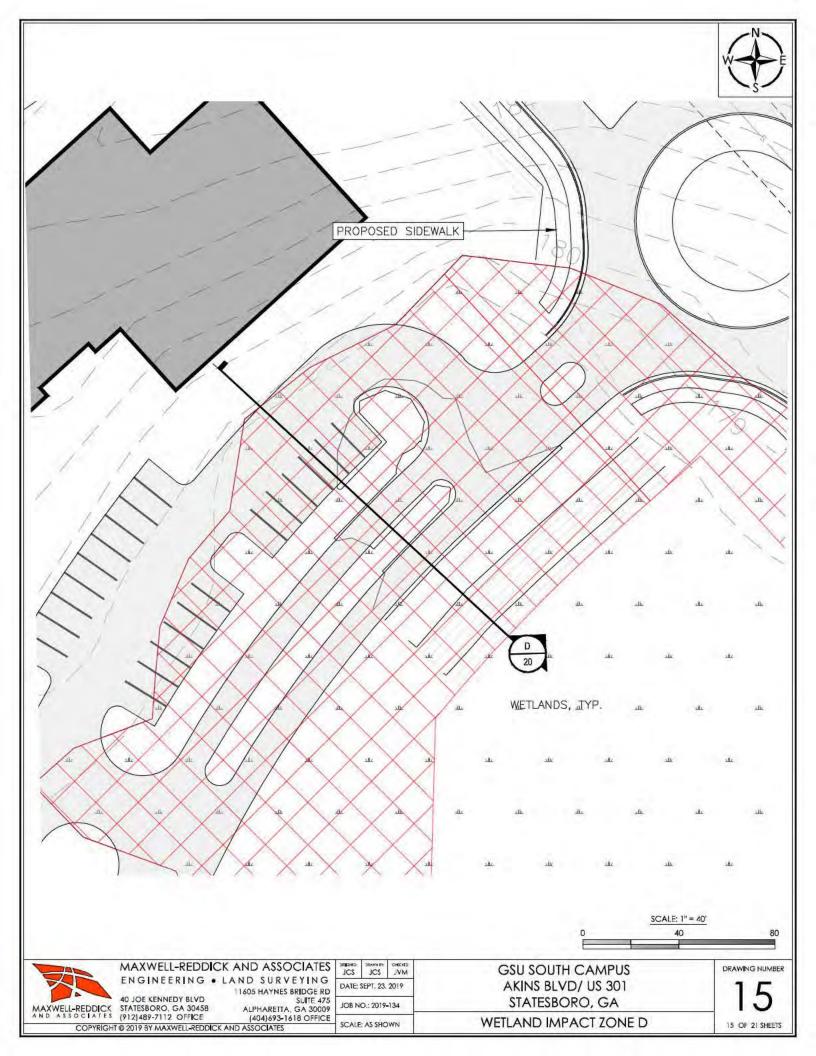


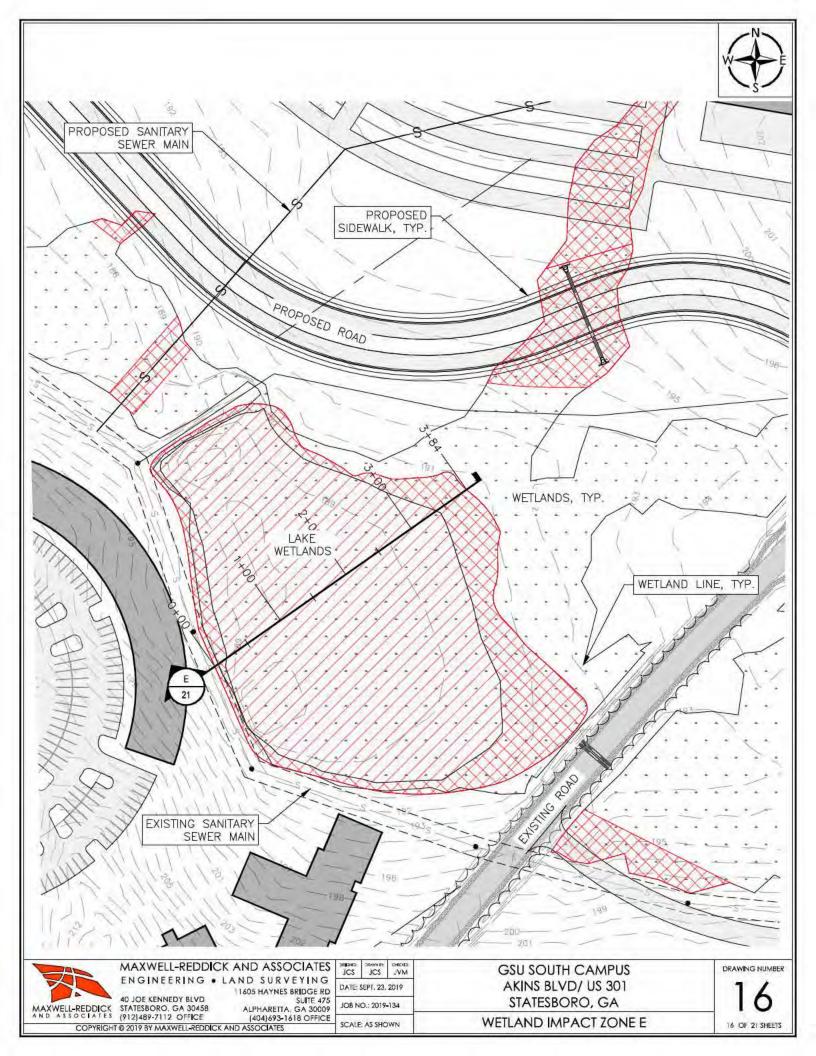




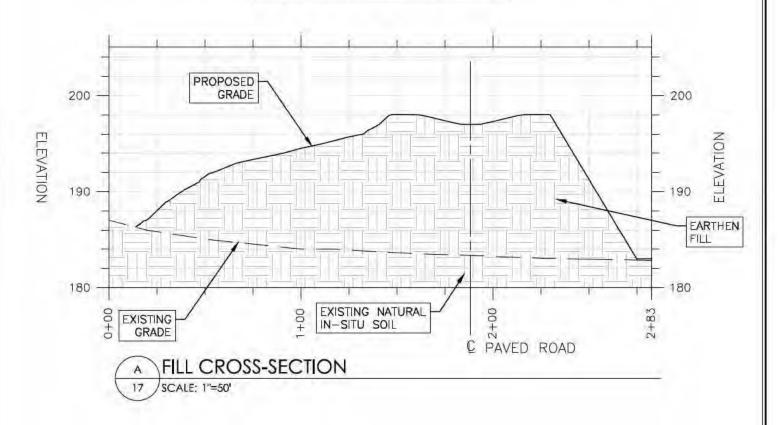








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DATE: SEPT. 23, 2019

JOB NO.: 2019-134

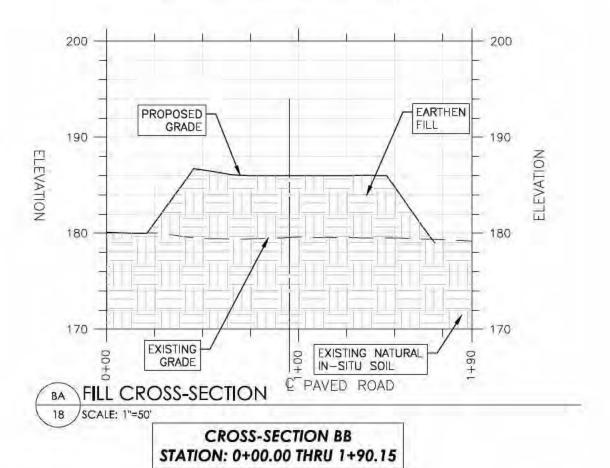
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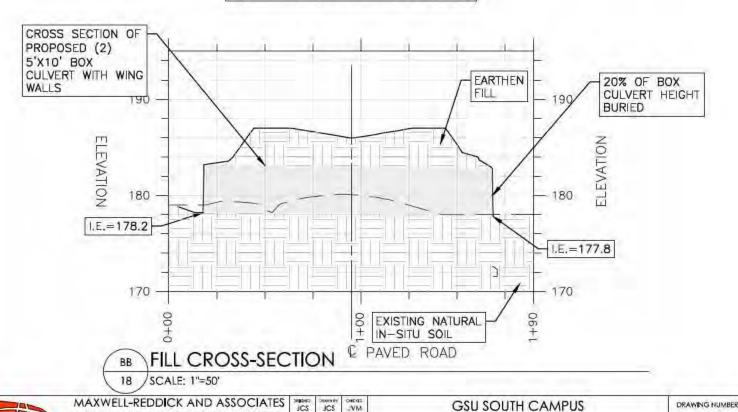
GSU SOUTH CAMPUS AKINS BLVD/ US 301 STATESBORO, GA

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WETLAND IMPACT PROFILE 1

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WETLAND IMPACT PROFILE 2

18 OF 21 SHEET

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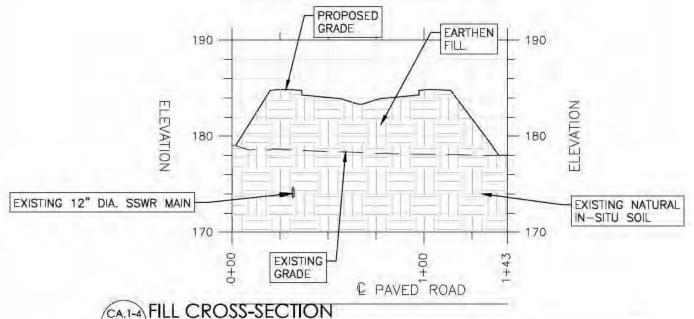
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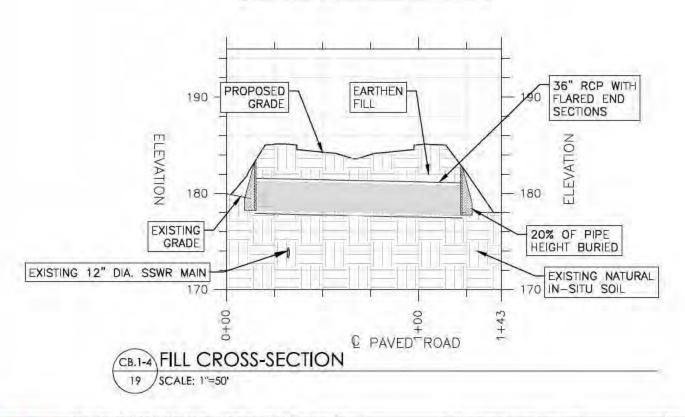
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ALPHAREITA, GA 30009

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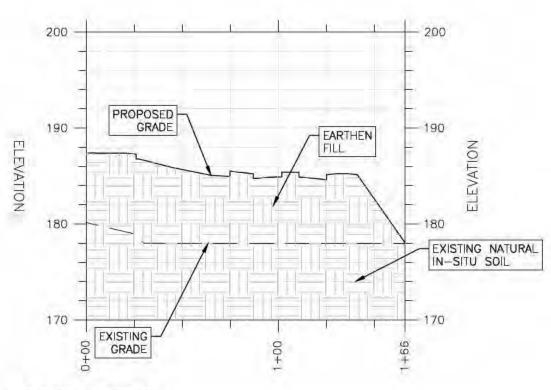
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19 OF 2) SHEETS

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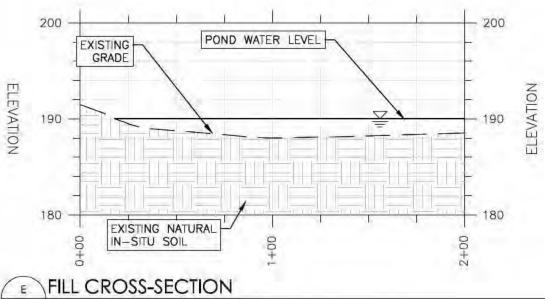
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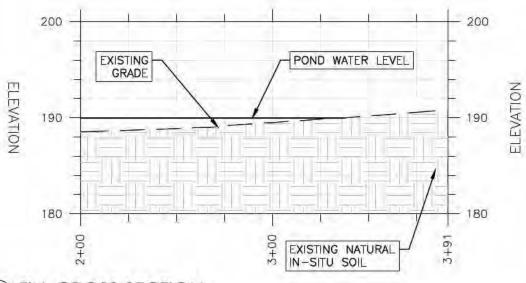
WETLAND IMPACT PROFILE 4

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21 OF 2) SHEETS

WETLAND IMPACT PROFILE 5