DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, CHARLESTON DISTRICT
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CHARLESTON SC 29403

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ORANGEBURG-BERKELEY WATER TRANSMISSION MAIN

ORANGEBURG AND BERKELEY COUNTIES, SOUTH CAROLINA

October 2022

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District (USACE), to evaluate the effects of proposed Federal activities on the environment and human health and welfare. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) summarizes the results of the USACE evaluation and documents the USACE's conclusions.

USACE, working in cooperation with the Lake Marion Regional Water Agency, the South Carolina Public Service Authority (Santee Cooper), Berkeley County, and Orangeburg County, is proposing to construct an extension to an existing potable water transmission main near the Town of Holly Hill. This project would extend the water transmission main to the southeast approximately 84,300 feet (15.9 miles) to Volvo Cars Drive northeast of the Town of Ridgeville in Berkeley County. An Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project was prepared by USACE. USACE's work on this project is being conducted under authority of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1992 (Public Law 102-580), which authorized USACE to provide assistance to non-Federal interests for water and wastewater related environmental infrastructure projects.

The Lake Marion Regional Water Supply System, which the proposed project is a part of, would provide a uniform and secure supply of water, fully protective of public health, to its five counties and 11 municipalities. Many of the existing water supplies would be overwhelmed in the foreseeable future by projected growth. The Lake Marion Regional Water System would enhance public health by providing a reliable, high-quality water supply in compliance with drinking water regulations. The proposed Lake Marion Regional Water System would satisfy the immediate and future water supply, treatment, and transmission needs for a large portion of the five-county area.

A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), incorporated herein by reference, evaluated several conceptual alternatives that would provide potable water to the project area.

Lake Moultrie Extension

This alternative would provide water to the project area by extending the Lake Moultrie System to the Town of Holly Hill area. Currently, Orangeburg County is not a member of the Lake Moultrie Water Agency, and therefore, this is not considered to be a viable option.

Water Wells

This alternative would provide water to portions of Orangeburg and Berkeley by installing more water wells in the area. There are concerns about the increasing demand on groundwater and its effect on the capability of the aquifer to continue to produce high quality water in the area of the proposed project. These concerns have resulted in the State of South Carolina implementing a program that monitors all new groundwater wells that withdraw more than 3 million gallons per month (i.e., approximately 70 gallons/minute if operated continuously). Because of this increased demand on groundwater and the concerns about the effect on the aquifer as an additional source of potable water, groundwater is not recommended as a source of potable water for the project area.

The No Action Alternative is the same as the most probable future without constructing the proposed project. A basic alternative to any proposed plan of improvement is the "No Action" alternative. Adoption of this alternative implies acceptance of the existing conditions in the proposed project area.

Alternatives were evaluated based on compliance with environmental laws and regulations, compliance with executive orders, level of environmental impacts including impacts to climate, land use, water resources and aquatic habitat, terrestrial resources and wildlife, air quality and noise, cultural resources, endangered species, hazardous toxic and radioactive waste, and socioeconomics, cost effectiveness, engineering feasibility, and the ability of the Alternative to supply water to the area. The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative are the only Alternatives that were evaluated in detail in the draft EA. For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are below:

- **Climate** – minimal amounts of greenhouse gases would be created during construction of the proposed project. Best management practices would be followed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Most areas cleared for construction would be allowed to re-vegetate and those areas would be able to sequester carbon in the future.
- **Land Use** – the project area would impact 21.8 acres of land classified as prime farmland, however, this land is already compromised and not currently in agricultural use, therefore, the impacts are negligible.
- **Water Resources and Aquatic Habitat** – temporary changes to water quality and surface waters related to turbidity and sedimentation are anticipated during construction. Approximately 1.137 acre of freshwater wetlands and two small tributaries would be temporarily impacted during construction. Permanent clearing and conversion of 0.267 acre of wetlands would occur as a result of the project. No practicable non-floodplain or wetland alternative exists. Impacts to both wetlands and floodplains would be avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable.
- **Air Quality and Noise** – a short term increase in noise and temporary reduction of air quality is expected during construction; however, these impacts would be temporary and limited to the immediate areas of project construction.
- **Cultural Resources** – no adverse effects on cultural resources are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.

- **Threatened and Endangered Species** – no effects on three Federally listed species are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project. The project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the Northern long-eared bat.
- **Terrestrial Resources and Wildlife** – minor, temporary impacts on terrestrial resources and wildlife are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.
- **Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste** – no hazardous toxic or radioactive waste would be generated as a result of installation or operation of the proposed project.
- **Socio Economics and Environmental Justice** – no adverse effects on minority and low-income populations are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.
- **Cumulative Impacts** – no significant adverse cumulative impacts are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.

USACE has determined that the proposed action for the extension of a 20-inch water main will not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted, and the issuance of a FONSI is appropriate. The Final EA for the proposed action can be downloaded from the internet (in PDF format) at https://www.sac.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/NEPA-Documents/.

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Date

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