



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CHARLESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Dorchester Reach Water Transmission Main

Dorchester County, South Carolina

September 2016

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

The Corps, working in cooperation with the Lake Marion Regional Water Agency, Santee-Cooper, and Dorchester County, is proposing to construct an extension to an existing potable water transmission main in the Town of Harleyville. This project would extend the water transmission main from Harleyville approximately 56,000 feet (10.6 miles) southward to near the Town of Ridgeville (see Figure 1). An Environmental Assessment (EA) of the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project was prepared by the Corps. The Corps' work on this project is being conducted under authority of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1992 (Public Law 102-580), which authorized the Corps 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, will 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 will 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 expansion of the 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.

The Corps evaluated several alternatives before development of the proposed project. These alternatives included the following:

Alternative 1 (proposed project) would connect new 20 to 16-inch potable water transmission main to an existing 16-inch water transmission main near the Town of Harleyville and extend the water transmission main to the southeast approximately 56,000 feet (10.6 miles) to a point near the Town of Ridgeville (Figure 1). The new line would terminate at the junction of US Highway 78 and SC Highway 27. From its junction with US Highway 178 the water transmission main is located within Department of Transportation right of way. Parts of the directional drill temporary platforms extend beyond the Department of Transportation right of way.

Alternative 2 would provide water the corridor between Ridgeville and Harleyville by extending the Lake Moultrie System to this area. Currently Dorchester County is not member of the Lake Moultrie Water Agency.

Alternative 3 would provide water to the Ridgeville area and the surrounding areas 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 Ridgeville 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.

The Corps criteria for evaluating the effect of the proposed project included the following:

- Important Farmland – This project will not result in the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses
- Formally Classified Lands – no significant impacts to formally classified lands are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.
- Wetlands– No practical non-wetland alternative exists. The considered actions do not conflict with applicable state and local standards concerning wetland protection and permitting and are covered under USACE nationwide permit number 12. The proposed project has avoided and minimized wetland impacts where possible. The proposed project will not significantly affect the natural and beneficial values of the impacted wetlands as approximately (1.17 acres) of the disturbed acreage will be allowed to return to a natural state after installation of the water transmission main. Approximately 3.64 acres will be mitigated for through the purchase of 38.22 wetland mitigation credits. No permanent fill material will be placed in wetlands. All permanent impacts are associated with clearing and will be mitigated to ensure no net loss of wetlands.

- Floodplains - No practical non-floodplain alternative exists. The considered actions do not conflict with applicable state and local standards concerning floodplain protection. The considered action will not significantly affect the natural and beneficial values of the floodplain
- Water Quality – no significant effects on water quality are expected as result of construction or operation of the proposed project. Directional drilling or jack and boring would be used at all stream crossings and would result in no impacts to streams from construction of the proposed project.
- Cultural Resources – no effects on cultural resources are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.
- Threatened and Endangered Species – no effects on threatened and endangered species are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.
- Noise – a short term increase in noise is expected during construction; however, these impacts will be temporary. No additional effects are anticipated a result of implementing the proposed project.
- Air Quality – A short term decrease in air quality in the immediate vicinity of construction is expected as a result of implementing the proposed project; however, these impacts will be temporary and localized. No additional effects are anticipated a result of implementing the proposed project
- 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.

The draft EA and FONSI are being distributed on September 22, 2016 for a 30 day comment and review period. The Final EA addresses the comments received during this review period. Since the Corps’ findings demonstrate that the project will not significantly adversely affect environmental resources or human health, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. The full Environmental Assessment can be downloaded from the internet at <http://www.sac.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/NEPADocuments.aspx>.

Date

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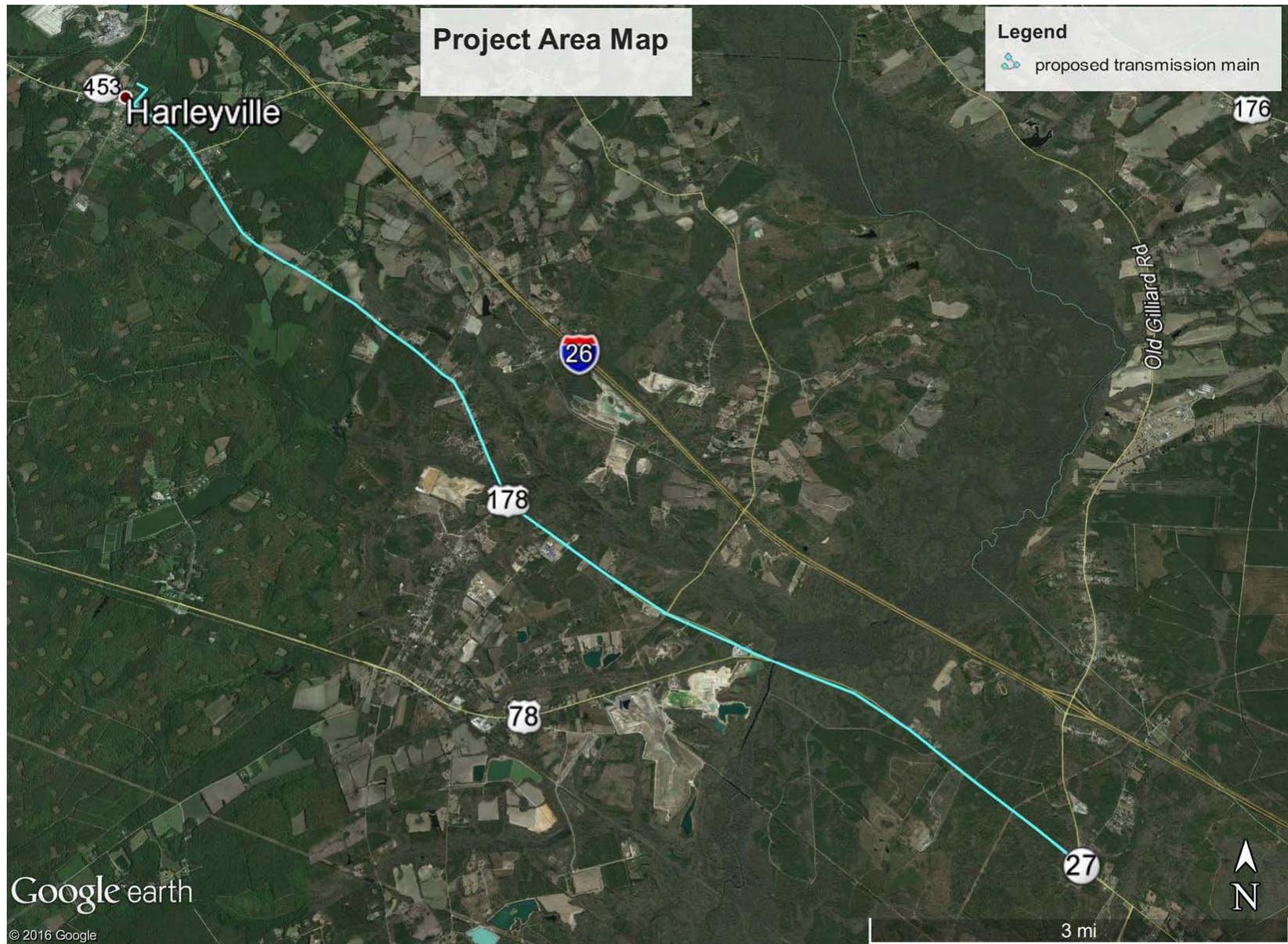


Figure 1 - Project Area Map. Proposed water transmission main placement shown in blue