

**JOINT**  
**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**CHARLESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS**  
**69A Hagood Avenue**  
**Charleston, South Carolina 29403-5107**  
**and**  
**THE S.C. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL**  
**Office of Environmental Quality Control**  
**Water Quality Certification and Wetlands Programs Section**  
**2600 Bull Street**  
**Columbia, South Carolina 29201**

REGULATORY DIVISION

Refer to: P/N #SAC-2006-1464-1IW-W

16 JUNE 2006

Pursuant to Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1341), an application has been submitted to the Department of the Army and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control by

**LE CREUSET OF AMERICA, INC.**  
**c/o S&ME, INC.**  
**134 SUBER ROAD**  
**COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29210**

for a permit to place fill material in a

**JURISDICTIONAL WETLAND**

at a location adjacent to the existing Le Creuset of America facility located on a 24 acre parcel within the Low Country Regional Industrial Park in Early Branch, Hampton County, South Carolina (Latitude 32.75061°, Longitude 80.94303°)

In order to give all interested parties an opportunity to express their views

**NOTICE**

is hereby given that written statements regarding the proposed work will be received by both of the above mentioned offices until

**12 O'CLOCK NOON, MONDAY, 17 JULY 2006**

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

The proposed work consists of placing 3,738 cubic yards of fill material into a 2.31 acre jurisdictional wetland using bulldozers and dump trucks. The purpose of the project is to expand the existing facility by adding warehouse space, office space, parking space and access in two phases. The applicant is also proposing mitigation for these impacts in the form of 19.9 credits to be purchased from the Sweetleaf Swamp Mitigation Bank.

**NOTE: Plans depicting the work described in this notice are available and will be provided, upon receipt of a written request, to anyone that is interested in obtaining a copy of the plans for the specific project. The request must identify the project of interest by public notice number and a self-addressed stamped envelope must also be provided for mailing the drawings to you. Your request for drawings should be addressed to the**

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
ATTN: REGULATORY DIVISION  
69A Hagood Avenue  
Charleston, South Carolina 29403-5107.**

The District Engineer has concluded that the discharges associated with this project, both direct and indirect, should be reviewed by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control in accordance with provisions of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. As such, this notice constitutes a request, on behalf of the applicant, for certification that this project will comply with applicable effluent limitations and water quality standards. The District Engineer will not process this application to a conclusion until such certification is received. The applicant is hereby advised that supplemental information may be required by the State to facilitate the review. Persons wishing to comment or object to Water Quality Certification must submit all comments in writing to the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control at the above address within thirty (30) days of the date of this notice.

This notice initiates the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Implementation of the proposed project would impact 2.31 acres of estuarine substrates and emergent wetlands utilized by various life stages of species comprising the red drum, shrimp, and snapper-grouper management complexes. Our initial determination is that the proposed action would not have a substantial individual or cumulative adverse impact on EFH or fisheries managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the NMFS.

The District Engineer has consulted the most recently available information and has determined that the project will have no effect on any Federally endangered, threatened, or proposed species and will not result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated or proposed critical habitat. This public notice serves as a request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for any additional information they may have on whether any listed or proposed endangered or threatened species or designated or proposed critical habitat may be present in the area which would be affected by the activity, pursuant to Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended).

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), this public notice also constitutes a request to Indian Tribes to notify the District Engineer of any historic properties of religious and cultural significance to them that may be affected by the proposed undertaking.

In accordance with the NHPA, the District Engineer has also consulted the latest published version of the National Register of Historic Places for the presence or absence of registered properties, or properties listed as being eligible for inclusion therein, and this worksite is not included as a registered property or property listed as being eligible for inclusion in the Register. To insure that other cultural resources that the District Engineer is not aware of are not overlooked, this public notice also serves as a request to the State Historic Preservation Office to provide any information it may have with regard to historic and cultural resources.

REGULATORY DIVISION

Refer to: P/N #2006-1464-1IW

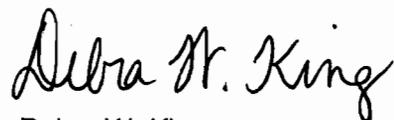
16 JUNE 2006

Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for a public hearing shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the activity on the public interest and will include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act and, as appropriate, the criteria established under authority of Section 102 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, as amended. 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 project must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the project 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 and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. A permit will be granted unless the District Engineer determines that it would be contrary to the public interest. In cases of conflicting property rights, the Corps of Engineers cannot undertake to adjudicate rival claims.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this project. 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 activity.

If there are any questions concerning this public notice, please contact me at 843-329-8044 or toll free at 1-866-329-8187.



Debra W. King  
Project Manager  
Regulatory Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The project site consists of an approximate 24-acre parcel owned by Le Creuset of America, Inc. The project site is located within the LowCountry Regional Industrial Park in Early Branch, Hampton County, South Carolina. The location of the project site is depicted on the attached Figure 1 (Vicinity Map) and Figure 2 (Topographic Map).

Le Creuset is the world's leading manufacturer of enameled cast iron cookware and Screwpull™ brand corkscrews. In addition to the enameled cast iron style, Le Creuset also produces stoneware, silicone, stainless steel, and enameled steel cookware and accessories. Le Creuset has been in the United States and has had a local presence since 1977. The company operated a finishing plant located in nearby Yemassee and distribution centers in various cities. In 1997, Le Creuset discontinued their finishing operations and consolidated all of their operations into the current location in Early Branch within the LowCountry Regional Industrial Park.

The current facility provides distribution for two divisions; a wholesale division which supplies product to major retailers and a retail division that operates forty stores. The current warehouse is approximately 56,250 square feet and supports pick and packing operations, credit returns, receiving and shipping through four loading docks. The current office building is approximately 11,425 square feet. Please refer to Figure 3 (Existing Conditions) for the location of the current operations. Current employment at the Le Creuset facility is approximately 85 to 90 people.

## **NATURE OF ACTIVITY (BLOCK 18 OF ENG 4345 FORM)**

The proposed project consists of an expansion of the existing Le Creuset facility. Proposed improvements include the following:

- Two 50,000 square-foot warehouses to be located south of the existing warehouse. The two warehouses will be metal-sided and located on concrete slab flooring.
- A 5,880 square-foot office expansion to be connected to the existing office building.
- A new entrance drive from Bob Gifford Boulevard. The new entrance drive will provide access to the proposed new warehouses and the truck parking area. The entrance drive will be approximately 30 feet in width.
- Truck parking area.
- Additional loading docks located on the southern end of the two proposed warehouses.
- 75 additional parking spaces to be located adjacent to the existing and proposed office buildings.
- A detention pond.

The first phase of the expansion will be a 50,000 square-foot addition to the rear of the existing warehouse building and will also include increased parking area to handle the additional people hired, an improved entrance drive and trailer parking to manage the increased traffic.

The second phase, planned to occur within three years of completion of the first phase, will be another 50,000 square foot warehouse which will be attached adjacent to the warehouse expansion and a possible office expansion. This will depend on the likely continued growth rate and possible future acquisitions.

## **PROJECT PURPOSE (BLOCK 19 OF ENG 4345 FORM)**

Le Creuset has reached their limits for continued growth without expanding. The proposed improvements will create additional warehouse, office and shipping capacities in order to meet the current market growth demands. The total sales for both the wholesale and retail divisions have increased substantially. Since 2004, sales have increased by 55%. During the first 4 months of 2006, Le Creuset has experienced 34% growth. Therefore, additional warehouse space, office space, employees and shipping capacity are needed to meet demand.

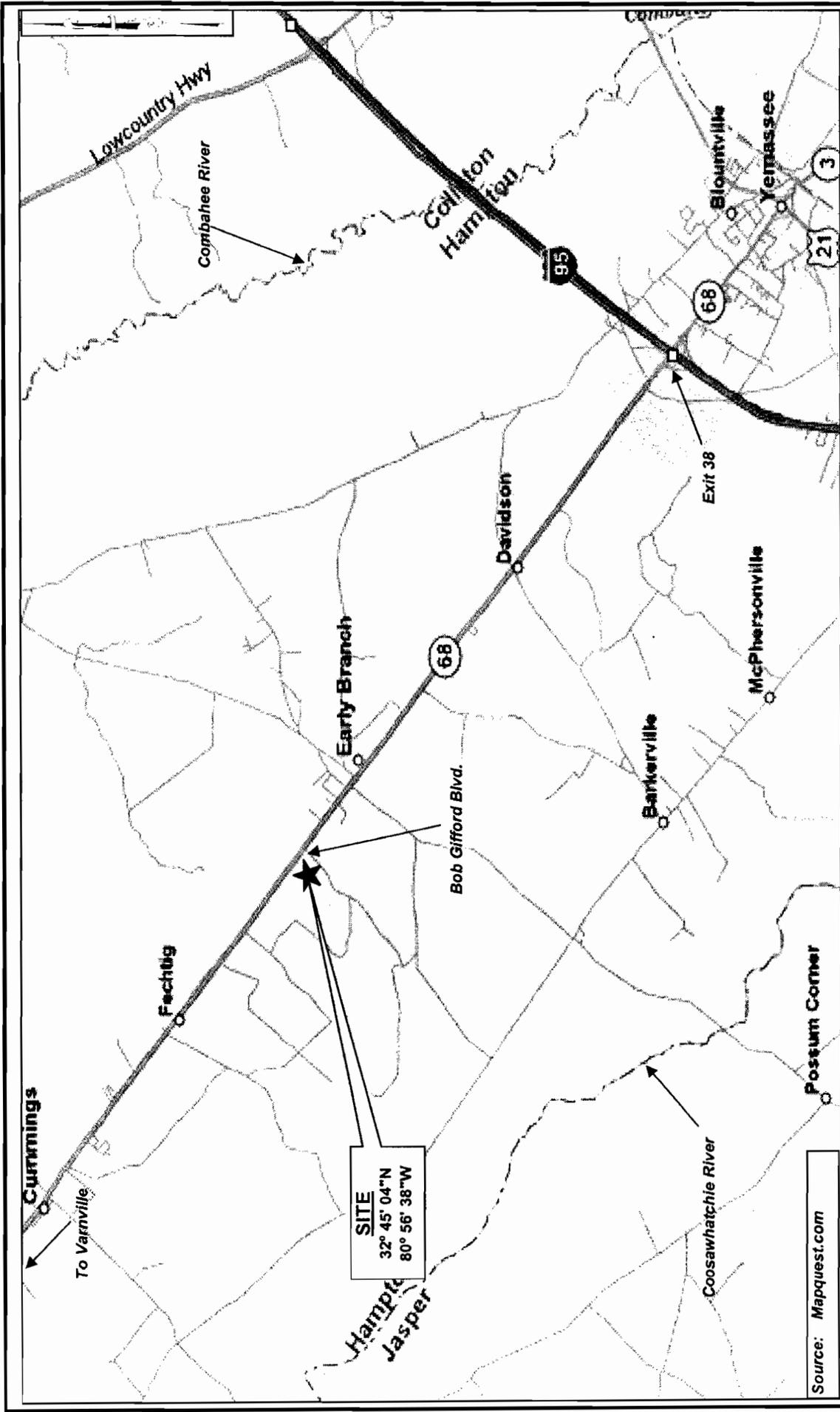
The growth has exceeded the current facilities capacity for storage and processing. In addition, the continued growth is changing the utilization requirements of the space. Le Creuset has ventured into the internet and imprinting business requiring an operation to rapidly pick and ship, one customer requires same day shipping as order receipt. The retail division requirements are also changing with the advent of improved merchandising. To test the concepts, the retail division needs a "mock" store inside the warehouse to prove out displays and product arrangement.

Currently, Le Creuset is managing the business through a series of problematic and inefficient processes. These processes require the business to tolerate additional management costs, late deliveries, complex coordination, increased cost of outsourcing, lost jobs due to outsourcing, lease cost for additional storage space, safety issues, and transportation obstructions. These problematic and inefficient processes include:

- Currently, Le Creuset is using more expensive third-party logistics to reduce traffic through the Early Branch facility. Third-party logistics have added cost and complexity to the current operations.
- Currently, Le Creuset is leasing warehouse space (36,000 square feet) in a Varnville facility approximately 15 miles from the Early Branch facility through December 2006. This has caused the purchase and operation of a tractor-trailer and thus additional labor to move the products and inventory shrink. In addition, the warehouse space in Varnville has been recently sold and will have to be partially vacated at the end of 2006. Existing warehouse space in the area is sparse.
- Le Creuset has had to add a pick and pack operation on the nightshift to meet demand. The night shift is a hindrance because it requires additional supervision and has a higher turnover rate among employees.

Le Creuset expects to add approximately 25 new jobs in the current year based on the proposed expansion. Hiring and training of 15 new employees has already taken place in anticipation of the proposed expansion. Additional employees will be hired in the coming years.

Due to the high demand for the improvements, work on the proposed project will start immediately upon the issuance of the 404 and 401 permits. According to the project engineers, the first phase of the project will require approximately five to six months to complete.



**SITE**  
 32° 45' 04" N  
 80° 56' 38" W

Source: Mapquest.com

<b>VICINITY MAP</b>		Project Title:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA EXPANSION PROJECT
Project Location:	EARLY BRANCH, HAMPTON COUNTY, SC	Applicant:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA, INC.
Date:	6/2/2006	Scale:	1" = 6500'
USACE P/N:	SAC-2006-1464-1IW		
			SHEET 1 of 5



COUNTY OF HAMPTON

318.46'

N 35°17'25" E 668.4'

COUNTY OF HAMPTON

WETLAND 2  
0.42 acres

WETLAND 3  
3.75 acres

WETLAND 4  
(NON-JURISDICTIONAL)  
0.02 acres

Le CREUSET  
of AMERICA

EXISTING WAREHOUSE AND OFFICE BUILDING  
56,250 SF

EXISTING OFFICE BUILDING  
11,425 SF

WETLAND 1  
2.31 acres

171.00'

500.00'

BOB CIFFORD BLVD 100' R/W



( IN FEET )

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

Project Title:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA EXPANSION PROJECT
Project Location:	EARLY BRANCH, HAMPTON COUNTY, SC
Applicant:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA, INC.
Date:	6/2/2006
Scale:	1" = 150'
USACE P/N:	SAC-2006-1464-1IW

COUNTY OF HAMPTON

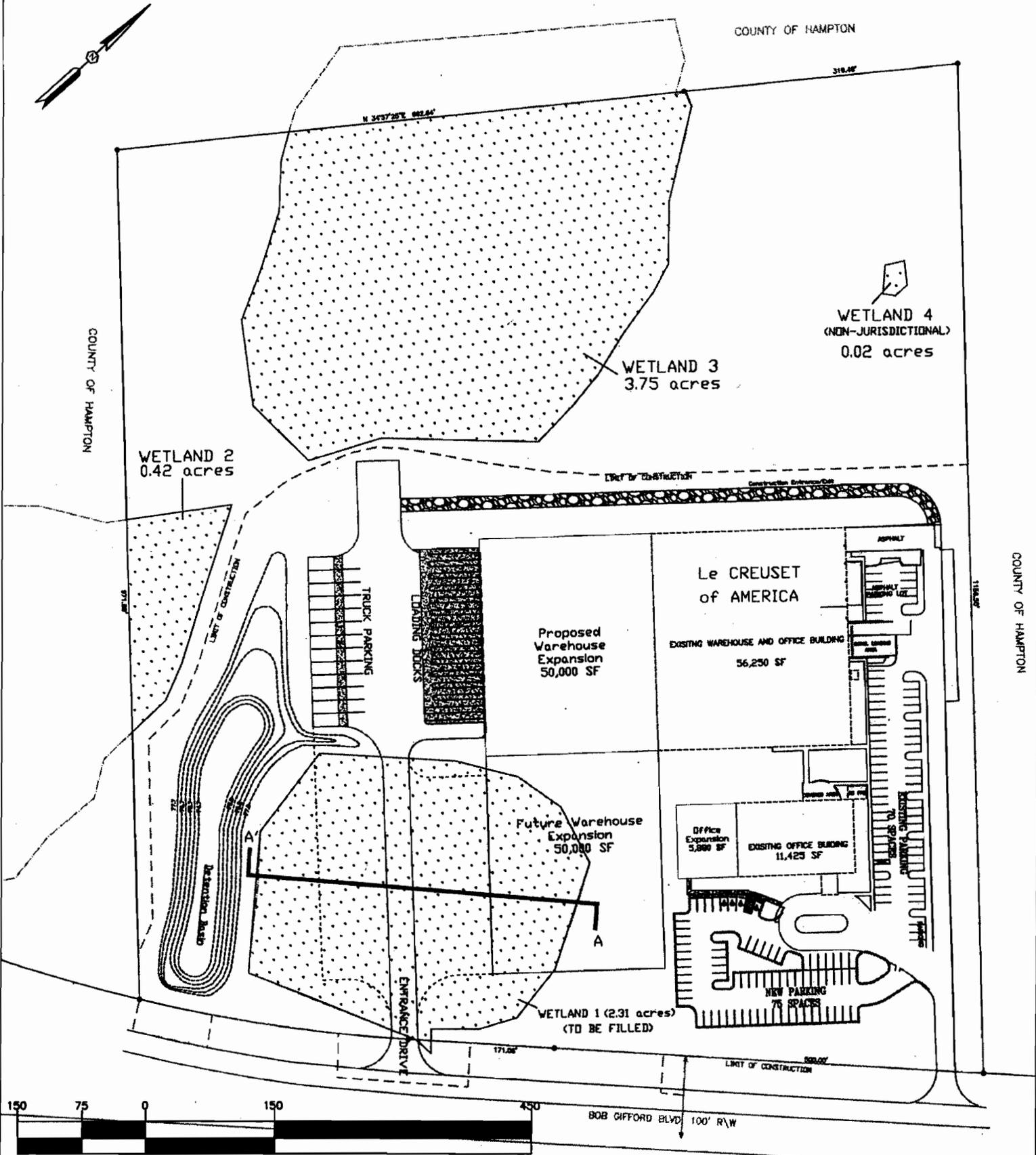
WETLAND 4  
(NON-JURISDICTIONAL)  
0.02 acres

WETLAND 3  
3.75 acres

WETLAND 2  
0.42 acres

COUNTY OF HAMPTON

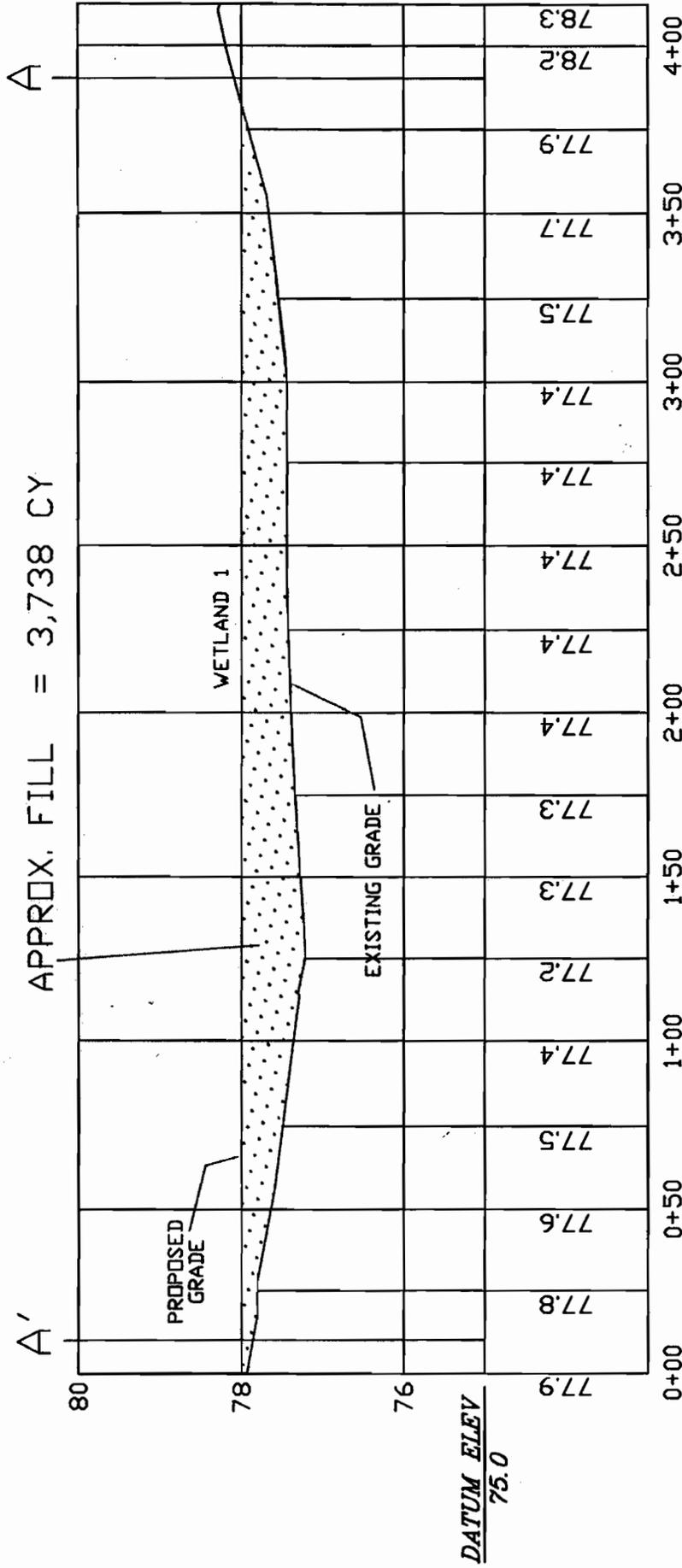
COUNTY OF HAMPTON



( IN FEET )

# PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Project Title:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA EXPANSION PROJECT	
Project Location:	EARLY BRANCH, HAMPTON COUNTY, SC	
Applicant:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA, INC.	
Date:	6/2/2006	
Scale:	1" = 150'	
USACE P/N: SAC-2006-1464-1IW		SHEET 4 OF 5



Vertical Scale: 1"=2'      Horizontal Scale: 1"=50'

CROSS SECTION - WETLAND 1

Project Title:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA EXPANSION PROJECT
Project Location:	EARLY BRANCH, HAMPTON COUNTY, SC
Applicant:	LE CREUSET OF AMERICA, INC.
Date:	6/2/2006
Scale:	AS SHOWN
USACE P/N:	SAC-2006-1464-1IW

## **MITIGATION**

Based on the USACE's 2002 Standard Operating Procedures mitigation worksheets for wetland systems, 19.9 mitigation credits are required to compensate for impacts to jurisdictional wetlands. Please see the attached mitigation worksheets for credit calculations.

### **1. On-Site**

Adequate on-site mitigation is not available in terms of restoration or enhancement. Le Creuset does not wish to place restricted covenants to preserve or buffer enhance the remaining 4.19 acres of wetlands on the site due to uncertainty of future expansion needs in the next eight to ten years.

### **2. Off-Site**

The applicant's preferred option to satisfy their mitigation requirements is payment into the Sweetleaf Swamp Mitigation Bank. A Memorandum from the Sweetleaf Swamp Mitigation Bank confirming credit availability (19.9 credits) is attached with this permit application.

## **PROTECTED SPECIES**

A Protected Species Assessment was completed by S&ME for the entire LowCountry Regional Industrial Park in 2005. The Protected Species Assessment determined that, based on the literature and pedestrian field review, the site does not provide suitable habitat for protected species with documented populations in Hampton County. Field reviews did not reveal the presence of federally protected species on the site. S&ME' opinion was that the proposed development of the project area is not likely to impact listed protected species. A copy of the Protect Species Assessment is attached with this permit application.

## **HISTORIC/CULTRAL RESOURCES**

A Cultural Resources Reconnaissance Survey was conducted by TRC in June 2005 for the entire LowCountry Regional Industrial Park. The TRC survey did not reveal any cultural resources on the site or in the surrounding vicinity. The TRC survey was sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review. The SHPO replied that the survey adequately addressed cultural resource issues and concurred that historic properties will not be affected by land-disturbing activities. A copy of this SHPO confirmation letter and TRC's Cultural Resources Reconnaissance Survey letter is attached with this permit application.

**ADVERSE IMPACT FACTORS FOR WETLANDS & OTHER  
WATERS OF THE U.S. EXCLUDING STREAMS**

FACTORS	OPTIONS					
Lost Type	Type C 0.2		Type B 2.0		Type A 3.0	
Priority Category	Tertiary 0.5		Secondary 1.5		Primary 2.0	
Existing Condition	Very Impaired 0.1	Impaired 1.0		Slightly Impaired 2.0	Fully Functional 2.5	
Duration	Seasonal 0.1	0 to 1 yr. 0.2	1 to 3 yr. 0.5	3 to 5 yr. 1.0	5 to 10 yr. 1.5	Over 10 yr. 2.0
Dominant Impact	Shade 0.2	Clear 1.0	Dredge 1.5	Drain 2.0	Impound 2.5	Fill 3.0
Cumulative Impact	0.05 x ( $\sum AA_i$ )					

**REQUIRED MITIGATION CREDITS**

Factor	Wetland 1 (Fill)	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6
Lost Type	2.0					
Priority Category	0.5					
Existing Condition	1.0					
Duration	2.0					
Dominant Impact	3.0					
Cumulative Impact	0.1					
Sum of R Factors	R <sub>1</sub> = 8.6	R <sub>2</sub> =	R <sub>3</sub> =	R <sub>4</sub> =	R <sub>5</sub> =	R <sub>6</sub> =
Impacted Area	AA <sub>1</sub> = 2.31	AA <sub>2</sub> =	AA <sub>3</sub> =	AA <sub>4</sub> =	AA <sub>5</sub> =	AA <sub>6</sub> =
R x AA =	19.9					

TOTAL REQUIRED CREDITS =  $\sum (R \times LL) =$

19.9

**MITIGATION FOR WETLANDS & OTHER WATERS OF THE U.S.**  
**SUMMARY WORKSHEET**

Mitigation Summary Worksheet For Permit Application # SAC-2006-1464-1IW  
*Le Creuset of America*

**I. Required Mitigation**

A. Total Required Mitigation Credits =	<b>19.9</b>
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**II. Non-Banking Mitigation Credit Summary**

	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Acres</b>
B. Creation	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
C. Restoration and/or Enhancement (Non-Buffer Enhancement)	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
D. Restoration and/or Enhancement (Buffer Enhancement)	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
E. Total No Net Loss Non-Bank Mitigation = B + C + D	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
F. Preservation	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
G. Total Proposed Non-Bank Mitigation = E + F	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**III. Banking Mitigation Credit Summary**

	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Acres</b>
H. Creation	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
I. Restoration and/or Enhancement (Non-Buffer Enhancement)	<b>10.0</b>	<b>Determined by Bank</b>
J. Restoration and/or Enhancement (Buffer Enhancement)	<b>0</b>	
K. Total No Net Loss Bank Mitigation = H + I + J	<b>10.0</b>	<b>Determined by Bank</b>
L. Preservation	<b>9.9</b>	<b>0</b>
M. Total Proposed Bank Mitigation = K + L	<b>19.9</b>	<b>Determined by Bank</b>

**IV. Grand Totals**

	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Acres</b>
N. Total Preservation Mitigation = F + L	<b>9.9</b>	<b>Determined by Bank</b>
O. Total Non-Preservation Mitigation = E + K	<b>10.0</b>	<b>Determined by Bank</b>
P. Total Creation = B + H	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Q. Total Restoration and/or Enhancement (Non-Buffer Enhancement) = C + I	<b>10.0</b>	<b>Determined by Bank</b>
R. Total Proposed Mitigation = G + M	<b>19.9</b>	<b>Determined by Bank</b>

## MITIGATION FOR WETLANDS

The Total Mitigation Credits (Row R) should be equal or greater than the total Required Mitigation Credits (Row A) for the proposed mitigation to be acceptable. The other requirements given in the SOP must also be satisfied, e.g., in the credits column, Row O must equal at least 50% of Row A, and the addition of Row P and Row Q must equal at least 25% of Row A. If the answer to either of the questions below is no, then the proposed mix and/or quantity of mitigation is not in compliance with the policy and the plan should be revised or rejected, unless a variance is approved.

	Yes	No
$PMC \geq RMC$ or in words Are the Credits in Row R greater than or equal to Row A?	X	
$PMC_{\text{Non-Preservation}} \geq \frac{1}{2} RMC$ or in words Are the credits in Row O greater than or equal to 50% of Row A?	X	
$PMC_{\text{Creation + Restoration/Enhancement (Non-Buffer Enhancement)}} \geq \frac{1}{4} RMC$ or in words Are the Credits in Row P plus the credits in Row Q greater than or equal to 25% of Row A?	X	