



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, CHARLESTON DISTRICT
69A HAGOOD AVENUE
CHARLESTON SC 29403

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

CALHOUN REACH TRANSMISSION MAINS

CALHOUN COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

November 2024

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), and Calhoun County, is proposing to construct an extension to an existing potable water transmission main near the Town of Elloree. This project would be conducted in two phases with the first extending the water transmission main to the north and west approximately 70,522 feet (13.4 miles) to the town of Cameron, as well as about 988 feet (0.2 miles) off Old Number Six Hwy to the Calhoun County EMS Station. The second phase would extend from Cameron Rd northwest about 41,225 feet (7.8 miles) to the Town of St. Matthews near Wertz Crossroad. An Environmental Assessment (EA) of 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 Final Environmental Assessment (EA), incorporated herein by reference, evaluated several conceptual alternatives that would provide potable water to the project area.

Provide Service from Nearby Systems

This alternative would provide water to the project area by extending nearby water supply systems including the Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities, City of Sumter, and the Lake Moultrie Water System. These alternatives were deemed not feasible as (1) each facility is located on the perimeter of the

LMRWA service area and (2) each system would have to be expanded to meet the future needs of the LMRWA.

Construction of Additional Wells

This alternative would provide water to portions of Calhoun County 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, the construction of additional wells was eliminated from consideration due to feasibility concerns.

No Action

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.

Evaluation

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

- **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.
- **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.
- **Cultural Resources** – No adverse effects on cultural resources 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.
- **Land Use** – The project area would impact 6.3 acres of land classified as prime farmland, however, most of this land is within roadway right-of-way and is does not constitute permanent conversion. Remaining affected farmland for station constructions are also considered exempt given the small acreage impact. Therefore, the overall effect to land uses would be minor.
- **Water Resources and Aquatic Habitat** – Temporary changes to water quality and surface waters related to turbidity and sedimentation are anticipated during construction. Approximately 0.0096 acre of freshwater wetlands and 28 linear feet of freshwater streams would be temporarily impacted during construction. No practicable non-floodplain or wetland alternative exists.

Impacts to both wetlands and floodplains would be avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable.

- **Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice** – No adverse effects on minority and low-income populations are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project.
- **Terrestrial Resources and Wildlife** – Minor, temporary impacts on terrestrial resources and wildlife are expected as a result of implementing the proposed project. Implementation of nationwide standard conservation measures would avoid and minimize potential pathways of impact.
- **Threatened and Endangered Species** – The project is expected to have no effect on the West Indian manatee. The project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the red-cockaded woodpecker and tricolored bat. Implementation of seasonal tree clearing restrictions would avoid and minimize potential pathways of impact.
- **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 12-inch water main would 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 environmental commitments and BMPs to reduce and/or eliminate the potential for adverse environmental effects during implementation of the project are provided in Section 8 of the Final EA, and 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/>.

Date _____

PATRICK G. RIPTON
Major, EN
Acting Commander, U.S. Army Engineer District, Charleston