



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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Waccamaw River, Horry County, South Carolina Flood Risk Management Study
Horry County, South Carolina

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District (Corps) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (IFR/EA) dated 4 September 2024, for the Waccamaw River Basin Flood Risk Management addresses flood reduction opportunities and feasibility in Horry County, South Carolina. The final recommendation will be contained in the report of the Chief of Engineers.

The Draft IFR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would reduce flood risk in the study area. The recommended plan is the National Economic Development (NED) Plan and includes:

- Addition of relief bridge/(cross drains) at Hwy 501 business, Hwy 501 bypass, and Hwy 905 in Conway, SC, to increase conveyance through these areas where potential bottlenecking is occurring
- Removal of two weirs along Socastee Creek—both 40 foot wide and 10ft tall, concrete sheet pile and with a rip rap 2-ft layer—in Socastee, SC.

In addition to a “no action” plan, 19 alternatives were evaluated across four distinct flood focus areas. The alternatives included floodwalls, benching, relief bridges (cross drains), a detention pond with a diversion canal, barrier removal, a floodgate, highway elevation, nonstructural alternatives including elevations and acquisitions, and comprehensive plans which included structural and nonstructural measures (see Chapter 5 of the Final IFR/EA entitled “Plan Formulation and Evaluation”). These alternatives, including the no action alternative, were evaluated and compared, and alternatives C3 and S3 were selected.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1:

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

	Less than significant Effects	Less than significant Effects as a Result of Mitigation	Resource Unaffected by Action
Land Use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geologic Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, Toxic, and Radiological Waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the IFR/EA will be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts.

Means of avoidance and minimalization may include:

(1) Relief bridge (cross drain) design considerations for those preferred by bats, where appropriate (i.e., would not create an ecological trap), which include parallel box beam and prestressed girder type bridges. Consideration will include potential to install bat boxes, bat condos, or bat roosts to provide habitat enrichment. Design will also consider benefits to fish, such as shorter culverts to ensure better sunlight, and deep enough water and ridges to allow an easier transition. O&M manuals should also include regular inspection for maintenance and to ensure debris and obstructions do not impede movement.

(2) Where necessary, construction activities will avoid removing trees from December 15th to February 15th (winter hibernation) and April 1st to July 15th (summer occupancy) to avoid impacts to bats.

(3) Erosion and sediment control Best Management Practices (BMPs) outlined in South Carolina Department of Environmental Services' (SCDES) Stormwater BMP Handbook will be incorporated into all construction actions to prevent introduction of sediment and pollutants into waterways.

(4) Relevant Nationwide Standard Conservation Measures (USFWS 2015) should be included in specifications where they would provide necessary protections for migratory birds.

(5) As stated in Section 6.8 of the draft IFR/EA, a programmatic agreement (PA) is currently in

development for additional cultural resources surveys in the Preconstruction, Engineering, and Design phase to determine effects to historic properties. A phase I survey will be needed for each project APE.

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the recommended plan.

Public review of the draft IFR/EA and FONSI will be completed on 4 October 2024. All comments submitted during the public review period will be responded to in the Final IFR/EA and FONSI.

Pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the recommended plan may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the federally listed Northern long-eared bat or any designated critical habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concurred with the Corps' determination on 31 July 2024.

Pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that historic properties may be adversely affected by the recommended plan. The Corps will consult with the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office and Tribes with interests in the study area. A Programmatic Agreement is being prepared. All terms and conditions resulting from the agreement shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to historic properties.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has been found to be compliant with the section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The work is to be conducted under the recommended plan is consistent with the types of activities authorized by Nationwide Permit 14 and 53. The issuance of NWP involves a programmatic review rather than a project-specific 404(b)(1) analysis. While a project-specific 404(b)(1) analysis is not required for NWPs, individual projects must still comply with the general and regional conditions specified in the NWP.

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that essential fish habitat may be affected by the actions and consultation requirements of sections 305(b)(2) through (4) of the MSA are ongoing in following with procedures outlined in 50 CFR § 600.920(f). All conservation recommendations as an outcome of consultation will be implemented to the extent practicable.

A water quality certification pursuant to section 401 of the Clean Water Act will be obtained from the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) Bureau of Water (BOW) prior to construction. Prior to release of the final IFR/EA, the Corps will send a letter to the BOW to request concurrence that the recommended plan appears to meet the requirements of the water quality certification, pending confirmation based on information to be developed during the pre-construction engineering and design phase. All conditions of the water quality certification will be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

A determination of consistency with the South Carolina Coastal Zone Management program pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 will be obtained from the SCDES Bureau of Coastal Management prior to construction. Prior to release of the final IFR/EA, the Corps will send a letter to the BCM to request concurrence that the recommended plan appears to be consistent with state Coastal Zone Management plans, pending confirmation based on

information to be developed during the pre-construction engineering and design phase. All conditions of the consistency determination shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to the coastal zone.

Prior to release of the final IFR/EA, the Corps will complete Parts I and III of the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form (Form AD 1006) and send a transmittal letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service requesting concurrence that the recommended plan appears to be consistent with the Farmland Protection Policy Act pending confirmation based on information to be developed during the pre-construction engineering and design phase.

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on this report, the reviews by other Federal, State and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the recommended plan would not cause significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Date

Patrick G. Ripton
Major, Corps of Engineers
Acting District Commander