



JUL 15 2009
United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
176 Croghan Spur Road, Suite 200
Charleston, South Carolina 29407



July 14, 2009

Mr. Eric J. McClanahan
S&ME, Inc.
620 Wando Park Boulevard
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Re: Protected Species Report
Early Branch Certified Industrial Site
Early Branch, Hampton County, South Carolina
S&ME Project No. 1131-09-247
FWS Log No. 2009-I-0534

Dear Mr. McClanahan: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your June 25, 2009, letter requesting review of the above-referenced project. The Protected Species Report was performed to enable the site to become part of the South Carolina "Certified Industrial Site" program. The proposed site is located approximately 5.6 miles northwest of Yemassee on SC Highway 68 in Early Branch, South Carolina and is approximately 1400 acres in size and consists of MeadWestvaco timberland. The following comments are provided in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 661-667e), and section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (Act), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543).

Based on our review of the submitted protected species assessment and protected species databases, it does not appear that suitable habitat for federally listed species is present on the proposed site; however, we are concerned about degradation of South Carolina streams and water quality. The proposed site contains tributaries to both the Coosawhatchie River and the Combahee River. The nearest water quality monitoring station on the Coosawhatchie River, as well as a station close-by downstream, are currently listed on the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control (SCDHEC) 303(d) list of impaired waters for aquatic life use and fish consumption. The nearest water quality monitoring station downstream of the proposed site on the Combahee River is also currently listed on the SCDHEC 303(d) list for fish consumption. Sediment runoff from construction, as well as thermal fluxes, petroleum runoff, and flashy hydrology resulting from expanses of impermeable surfaces, can further compromise water quality in this basin.

TAKE PRIDE[®]
IN AMERICA 

In order to protect wildlife and their habitats the Service recommends using Best management practices (BMPs) that will ensure that development is conducted in an environmentally responsible manner. BMPs can reduce, but not eliminate, the loading of common storm-water pollutants. Designs that collect runoff and allow it to infiltrate the soil have the highest documented pollutant-removal efficiency, eliminating nearly all lead, zinc, and solids and more than 50 percent of total phosphorous. Ponds and wetlands, which allow contaminants to settle out of the water column or to be broken down by sunlight and biological activity, can remove more than 70 percent of bacteria.


We offer the following recommendations to help address secondary and cumulative impacts associated with this proposed project and to help minimize impacts to fish and wildlife resources:

- Avoid fill or adverse modification of streams and wetlands on site.
- Minimize clearing and grading and only perform these operations in the context of an overall stream protection strategy.
- Protect waterways by preventing clearing adjacent to waterways, and stabilize drainage ways.
- Phase construction to reduce the time and area that disturbed soils are exposed.
- Stabilize soils as rapidly as possible (<2 weeks) by establishing a grass or mulch cover.
- Protect steep slopes, and avoid clearing or grading existing steep slopes as much as possible.
- Establish appropriate perimeter controls at the edge of the construction site to retain or filter concentrated runoff from relatively short distances before it leaves the site.
- Sedimentation impacts should be minimized by regular inspection of erosion control measures, and sediment control devices should be maintained in good and effective condition at all times. Erosion and sediment controls should be reassessed after storms. The incorrect installation of erosion control structures and those not properly maintained can result in sedimentation impacts to nearby streams and wetlands.

After review our data and the information provided, it is the Service's opinion that the proposed action is not likely to have reasonably foreseeable adverse effects on resources under the jurisdiction of the Service that are currently protected by the Act. In view of this, the Service believes that the requirements of Section 7 of the Act have been fulfilled relative to the proposed action, and no further consultation is necessary at this time. However, obligations under Section 7 of the Act must be reconsidered if: (1) new information reveals that the proposed project may affect listed species in a manner or to an extent not previously considered, (2) the proposed project is subsequently modified to include activities which were not considered during this consultation; or (3) new species are listed or critical habitat designated that might be affected by the proposed project.

Your interest in ensuring the protection of endangered species is appreciated. If you have further questions or require additional information, please contact Elizabeth Lesley of this office at (843) 727-4707 ext. 308. In future correspondence concerning this project, please reference FWS Log No. 2009-I-0534.

Sincerely,



Timothy N. Hall
Field Supervisor

TNH/EJL