

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

For

PIEDMONT WATERFRONT PARK

Presented for public review and comment
February 16th, 2022

Comments related to this assessment must be submitted in writing by
mail, or via email, and received ***on or before March 17th, 2022***, to:

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Chapter 1 – Purpose, Need, Background.

Anderson County, South Carolina, proposes phased construction of a nature park and kayak launch facility on 28.02 acres of land located at 550 River Road in Piedmont at the confluence of the Saluda River and Big Brushy Creek, approximately 4/10th mile north of the Piedmont Dam. The working title for this planned facility is “Piedmont Riverfront Park”. Anderson County is the owner of the property, having purchased it on July 1, 2020 with funding provided by Anderson County Council in its adopted budget for FY 20/21.

The county is seeking funding for Phase I of the project from the US Department of Interior National Park Service (NPS) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant program, administered in the state by the SC Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (SCPRT).

Phase I development will consist of:

- ADA-accessible kayak launch facility
- 5,000 linear feet of ADA-accessible paved sidewalk
- Improved parking area and access
- Initial development of nature paths, shoreline access trails, and habitat enhancements

Upon completion of all phases, the facility is planned to have: an improved landscape plan with canopy trees; improved access to all areas of the shoreline; a 2,800-foot natural surface trail; a paved sidewalk system; a restroom facility; primitive campsites; a pedestrian bridge and boardwalk; beach improvements; a gatehouse; an amphitheater/outdoor classroom; and five picnic shelters. In totality, more than 20 acres (2/3 of the site) will be left undisturbed or only lightly disturbed.

This document is an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared specifically for the project. It is intended to help interested and affected members of the public, including federal/state/local agencies and decisionmakers, understand the type and nature of the proposal so that an informed federal LWCF decision can be made. This chapter will provide a framework for the NPS to evaluate the environmental consequences of the proposed actions on the human environment.

An EA document is required to help the National Park Service (NPS) comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This EA will allow the NPS to determine if the Project will require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or if a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is warranted.

Phase I of the projected is anticipated to require three to four months of construction. Anderson County intends to have the facility functioning by the Spring of 2023. The proposed Phase I elements are the minimum necessary to develop a functional facility at the site. Suggested improvements beyond Phase I are conceptual in nature and will be refined and finalized in the fullness of time based on available funding and user input.

Piedmont Riverfront Park represents yet another stage in the development of the Saluda River Blue Trail, joining four other such facilities on the Saluda in Anderson County developed for public access and enjoyment. A consortium that includes public recreation providers, private sector interests, recreational enthusiasts, advocates for the physically challenged, environmental groups, and individuals has formed a Vision Plan for a 127-mile Blue Trail along the Upstate South Carolina portion of the Saluda River. The Blue Trail enhances recreational access for kayakers and others in the six Upstate South Carolina counties that border the Saluda River, including Abbeville, Anderson, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, and Pickens Counties. This six-county collaboration and public/private partnership represents a regional effort to promote and preserve our local natural resource by creating river access and resource awareness.

The project as presented here is consistent with the 2019 South Carolina State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and contributes to the furtherance of the following specific goals of the SCORP:

- **Goal 1: Improving Access to Public Recreation Areas**
- **Goal 2: Promoting Stewardship of Resources**
- **Goal 3: Ensuring Sustainable Economic Benefits**
- **Goal 4: Adapting to Changes in Recreation Demand**

The site served as a staging area for sand mining operations in the Saluda River by Metromont Materials under the auspices of a mining permit issued in 1974, valid for ten years. The site was purchased by Saluda River Holdings, LLC in 2018 and then purchased by Anderson County in 2020.

An unpaved access road with a teardrop-shaped cul-de-sac at its terminus which extended from the site entrance on River Road to a point near the banks of the Saluda was constructed by Metromont during its ownership and remains the sole means of conveyance through the site. This road will be improved and serve as the transportation system for the new facility. The entrance is gated and locked.

An access path extending from the southeastern point of the cul-de-sac to the shoreline was installed by Metromont to facilitate transfer of dredged sand for truck transport. This path still exists and will be used to provide access to an ADA-accessible kayak launch system and dock as well as the initial development of shoreline trails.

The remainder of the site is moderately wooded with understory and appears typical to similar forests in or near urbanized areas. Foundation remnants of a small office building are in place near the site entrance. A wastewater pump station operated by ReWa is adjacent to (but not on) the site near its southernmost corner with River Road.

The five pages to follow contain: 1) Vicinity Map; 2) LWCF Boundary Map; 3) Ortho Map; 4) Conceptual Site Plan – Phase I; 5) Conceptual Site Plan – All Phases

Vicinity Map

Pickens

Dolly Cooper Park

153

81

Big Brushy Ck

Saluda River

Greenville

PIEDMONT RIVERFRONT PARK

86

8

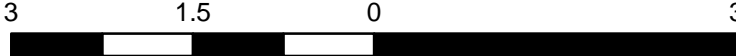
Timmerman Access

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West Pelzer Pelzer

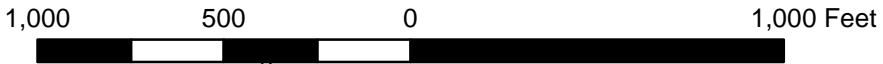
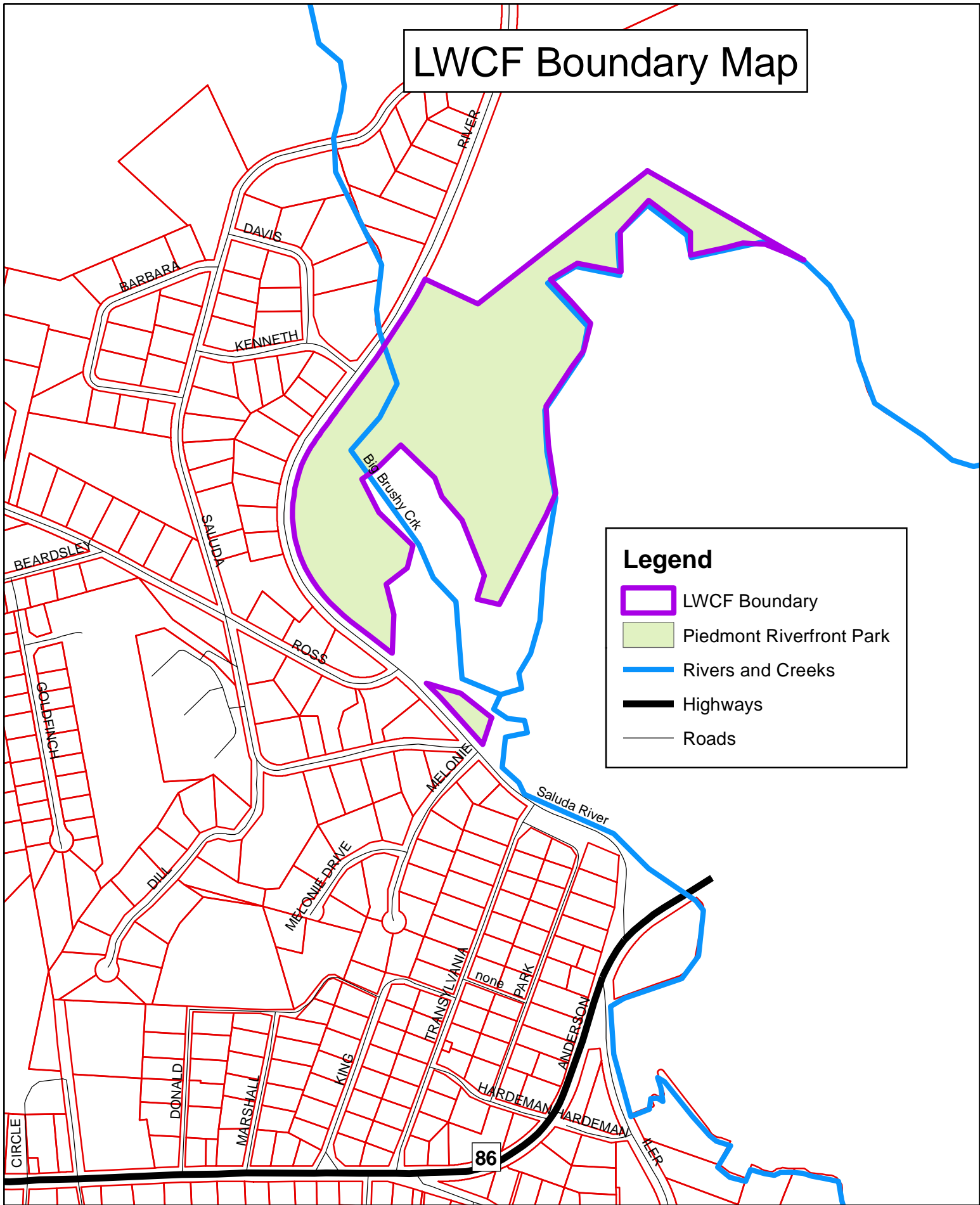
Williamston

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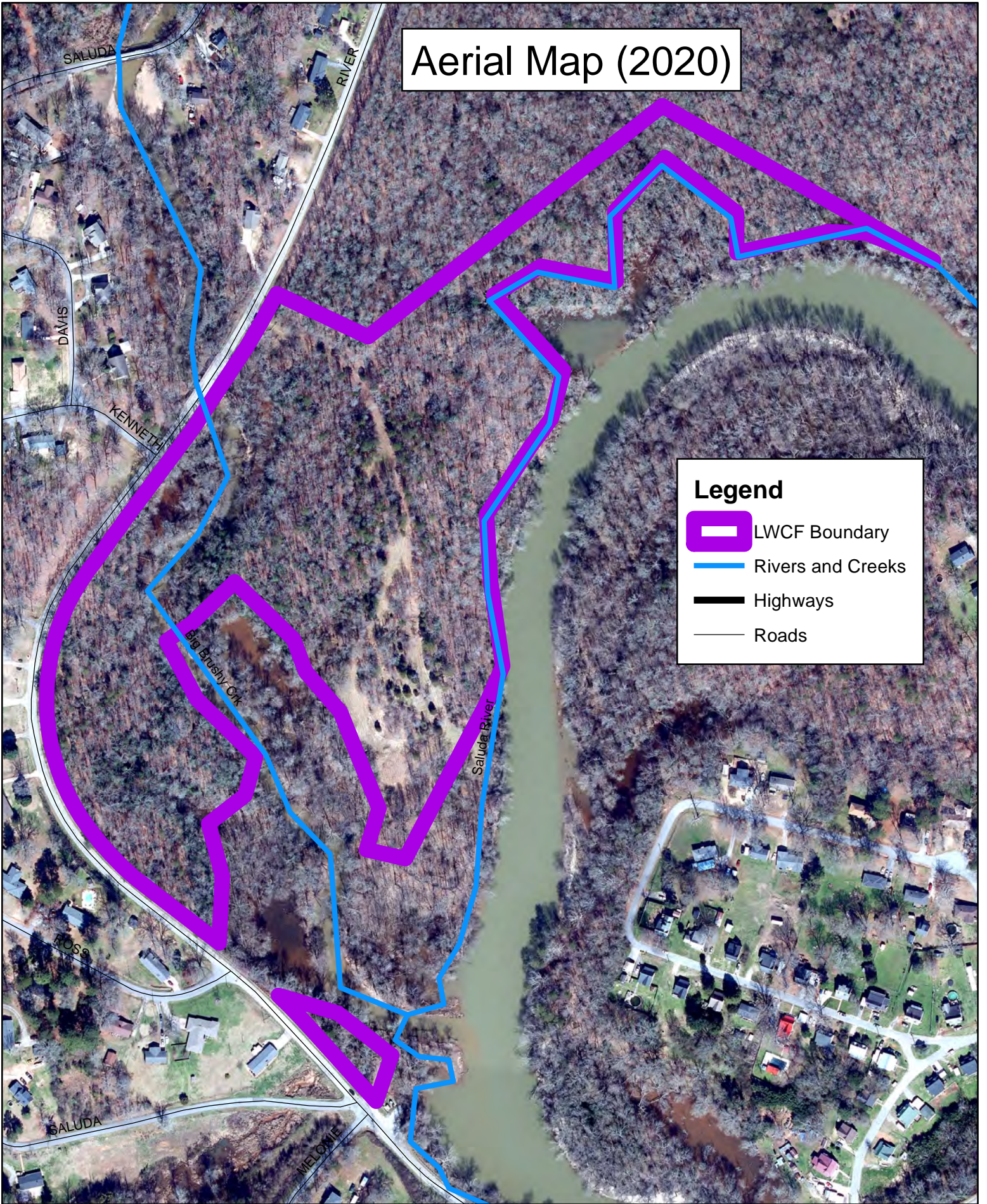


3 Miles





LWCF Boundary Map

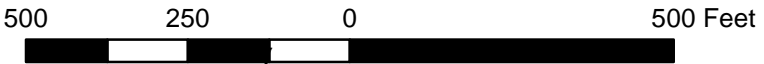


Aerial Map (2020)



Legend

-  LWCF Boundary
-  Rivers and Creeks
-  Highways
-  Roads



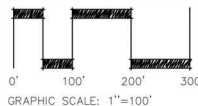


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 REVIEWED: BS
 DRAWN: BS
 2021-008 06-15-21
 PROJECT NO. DATE
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 SCALE

REVISIONS		
NO	DATE	ITEM



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**PIEDMONT RIVERFRONT PARK
 MASTER PLAN**
 ANDERSON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN
 PHASE ONE

SHEET NO.

1.0

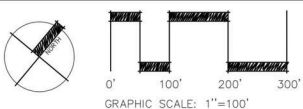


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**PIEDMONT RIVERFRONT PARK
 MASTER PLAN**
 ANDERSON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

SHEET NO.
1.0

Chapter 2 - Description of Alternatives

The purpose of this chapter is to propose and discuss any alternatives to the project as described, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

This analysis of alternatives takes into consideration the following factors:

1. Anderson County owns the property in question;
2. The site has no extant easements or rights-of-way, and the existing deed restriction forbidding mining operations is not applicable to the proposed use;
3. The project is consistent with publicly-stated county plans and objectives for recreational access on the Saluda River Blue Trail;
4. The project site lend itself to development as described herein.

Given these factors, only two reasonable alternatives present themselves: a “No Action Alternative” and a “Preferred Alternative”.

2.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the facility as described would not be constructed. The county would need to find other property suitable for development of the project, which will be of limited availability and unknown utility.

The county would probably find it prudent to sell the property in question, in which case some degree of residential development would likely take place. Assuming ten buildable acres on 28-acre site and, after deducting 20 percent of that acreage for internal road rights-of-way, common space, and other improvements (resulting in eight net acres), a single-family residential development with 8,000 square-foot lots (minimum lot size allowable per county ordinance) could have up to 43 dwelling units. Based on the county’s maximum multi-family density of ten units per acre, a condominium or apartment complex could have up to 80 units on this site. Such development would require more land disturbance and result in more impervious surface than would the described riverfront park.

Further, the No Action Alternative would not promote any of the goals offered in the South Carolina SCORP.

2.2 Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative consists of the construction and operation of Phase I of the Piedmont Riverfront Park, to include: an ADA-accessible kayak launch facility; 5,000 linear feet of ADA-accessible paved sidewalk; improved parking area and access, and; initial development of nature paths, shoreline access trails, and habitat enhancements.

Some clearing will be needed to install adequate parking and river access; however, tree canopies and understory trees will be preserved on over 96% of the site. A tree survey will be conducted prior to design to ensure root zones are protected.

New landscaping, predominantly with native plants, will be installed to add buffering and fill in canopy as needed.

The development of all suggested phases of Piedmont Riverfront Park would result in only 3.27 acres of impervious surface on the 28-acre site.

The Preferred Alternative will help meet goals and objectives related to the Saluda River Blue Trail and provide a significant regional amenity. The site will stimulate have an estimated direct economic impact of more than \$300,000 and an indirect impact approaching \$1 million annually.

The Preferred Alternative will provide users with numerous opportunities for outdoor, nature-based recreation, in keeping with American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) objectives related to “investments in parks, public plazas, and other public outdoor recreation spaces responsive to the needs of disproportionately impacted communities by promoting healthier living environments and outdoor recreation and socialization to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.”

The Preferred Alternative will be of substantial immediate utility by providing direct public access to more than one mile of shoreline on the Saluda River and Big Brushy Creek, and preserving in perpetuity several acres of wetlands and floodplain.

The Preferred Alternative is consistent with the following goals established in the 2019 South Carolina State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2015-2020, as outlined below:

- **SCORP Goal 1: Improving Access to Public Recreation Areas**
The project provides the public with direct access to the Saluda River and its shoreline. It compliments three other Saluda River access points developed by Anderson County over the last eight years, all ADA-compliant and accessible, and is in keeping with a multi-county planning effort known as the Saluda River Blue Trail.
- **SCORP Goal 2: Promoting Stewardship of Resources**
Anderson County’s acquisition of this property protected dozens of acres with river frontage from potential development and serves to protect one of the Upstate region’s treasured natural resources.
- **SCORP Goal 3: Ensuring Sustainable Economic Benefits**
More than 1.8 million people live within a 50-mile radius of the site, and independent research indicates that 7.2% of them participate annually in kayaking or a similar paddling activity. Attracting just 4.4% of those persons to the Saluda River Blue Trail would yield a direct impact of \$300,000 and indirect impact of

almost \$1 million annually, not including persons visiting the site to engage in boating, fishing, wildlife-watching, or passive outdoor activities.

- **SCORP Goal 4: Adapting to Changes in Recreation Demand**

According to the 2015 Special Report on Paddlesports, in 2014 21.7 million Americans — 7.4 percent of the population — enjoyed paddling. This represents an increase of more than 3 million participants (or six percent) since 2010.

Chapter 3 - Affected Environment

This chapter offers a description of the current state of resources that could be expected to experience environmental impacts from the project as described. The existing status of these resources will serve as baseline information to which impacts will be compared in Chapter 4 of this EA.

3.1 Air Quality

The US EPA has set National Ambient Air Quality Standards for pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment for compliance under the Clean Air Act (CAA) (USEPA 2017a). The CAA identifies primary and secondary standards. Primary standards provide public health protection, including protecting the health of "sensitive" populations such as asthmatics, children, and the elderly. Secondary standards provide public welfare protection, including protection against decreased visibility and damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings. National Ambient Air Quality Standards have been set for six principal pollutants or criteria air pollutants. These six pollutants are:

- Ozone (O₃)
- Lead (Pb)
- Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂)
- Particle Pollution (PM)
- Carbon Monoxide (CO)
- Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)

A review of the NEPAassist module for nonattainment areas by county (updated January 31, 2022) indicates that Anderson County, South Carolina in general, and the Piedmont Public Service District in particular, are currently meeting all standards. There are no nearby industrial areas, and automotive traffic in the area is not of high volume.

3.2 Circulation and transportation

Ingress and egress to the site is provided via an existing permitted driveway access to River Road, a two-lane state road designated as an urban collector. River Road connects 0.67 mi. S/SE to SC Highway 86 and 2.5 mi. due north to US Interstate 85. No local or minor streets are used to serve the site.

Access to the developed site will remain in its current location with appropriate site lines per SCDOT. Traffic volume will not decrease the current level of service for River Road.

According to Institute of Transportation Engineers Common Trip Generation Rates (Trip Generation Manual, 10th Edition, a public park generates 0.11 PM peak hour trips per acre, compared to 0.99 trips per dwelling unit for single-family detached residential use and 0.56 trips per dwelling unit for low-rise multifamily residential use. Using these standards, the

proposed facility will generate 3.08 PM peak hour trips based on the property's 28.02 gross acres. In comparison, and assuming ten buildable acres on the site and deducting 20 percent of that acreage for internal road rights-of-way, common space, and other improvements (or eight net acres), a single-family residential development with 8,000 square-foot lots (minimum lot size allowable per county ordinance) could have up to 43 dwelling units and would yield 42.57 PM peak hour trips. Based on the county's maximum multi-family density of ten units per acre, a condominium or apartment complex could have up to 80 units on this site, which would yield 44.80 PM peak hour trips.

3.3 Climate

As stated in an 2020 article published by The Wilderness Society titled [5 ways LWCF can help confront the impacts of climate change](https://www.wilderness.org/articles/blog/5-ways-lwcf-can-help-confront-impacts-climate-change) (<https://www.wilderness.org/articles/blog/5-ways-lwcf-can-help-confront-impacts-climate-change>), "LWCF has a valuable role to play in mitigating and adapting to climate shifts—whether allowing animals to migrate along an unbroken corridor or helping manage deadly wildfires". The five ways identified, and their respective applicability to this project, are:

- Manage dangerous wildfires
- Shielding communities from floods and storms
- Safeguarding clean water.
- Allowing animal and plant species to adapt
- Helping local economies stay afloat

3.4 Contamination or hazardous materials, even if remediated

Anderson County contracted for a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment prior to purchase of the site. According to the ESA, prepared by S&ME, Inc. and dated April 10, 2020:

“[T]his assessment has revealed no evidence of recognized environmental conditions (RECs) in connection with the subject property. In addition, a vapor encroachment condition (VEC) in connection with the subject property does not exist.”

An electronic copy of the ESA is available upon request via email to snewton@andersoncountysc.org.

3.5 Endangered species

The predominant vegetation on the site is mature hardwoods and pines. No endangered species have been identified. Endangered species have not been encountered during several site visits.

Wildlife observed at the project site is typical of forested area in an urban/suburban environment. Typical critters that might be observed include deer, raccoons, opossums, rabbits, squirrels, cardinals, chickadees, woodpeckers, and a variety of songbirds. As activities related to bird and wildlife-watching are part of project's site program, the applicants will be maintaining and improving upon all manner of wildlife habitat.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information, Planning, and Consultation (IPaC) system query was submitted to determine what federally listed species could potentially be in the project area. The agency provided a Species List prepared by South Carolina Ecological Services that indicated the presence of no critical habitats within the project area. SC Ecological Services' evaluation includes a total of thirteen species: one threatened mammal; one threatened bird; one threatened reptile; one candidate insect; four endangered and four threatened flowering plants; one candidate lichen. Please refer to the IPaC Species List on page 30 of this report.

3.6 Environmental justice: minority and low-income populations

The Piedmont Census Designated Place (CDP) has a population of 5,411 persons according to the 2020 Census of the Population, of whom 9.4 percent are one-race African-American and 5.0 percent are of Hispanic origin. The percentage of African-Americans in Piedmont is significantly lower than that of Anderson County (14.9%), and the community's percentage of persons of Hispanic origin is similar to that of the county (4.7%).

Piedmont's percentage of persons in poverty (8.7%) is almost six percentage points lower than Anderson County's, as is the percentage of cost-burdened owner-occupied households (12.4% to 18.7%). The percentage of cost-burdened renter-occupied households in Piedmont (23%) is half that of Anderson County (46%), and the percentage of Piedmont households receiving SNAP benefits (12.1%) is identical to the county.

Further, the median household income in Piedmont (\$53,179) is higher than that observed in Anderson County (\$50,865).

Based on this and other data, it is difficult to describe Piedmont as a particularly vulnerable community with an at-risk population profile. Being an older textile community that felt the direct impacts of off-shoring, Piedmont is not without its issues and problems. Though its residential component may be sustainable, the community has many unused or underused commercial buildings and sites, all of which contribute to blight and a negative community image. The Piedmont Riverfront Park is expected to help contribute to improvements in these negative conditions.

Since the Saluda River Blue Trail is a regional destination amenity (as opposed to a neighborhood-level amenity) and the locations of sites along the trail are defined by the natural formation of the amenity itself, it might be reasonably concluded that the siting of this facility does not serve to deny access to any particular group of persons.

3.7 Geological resources

There are no mineral resources on the site, with the exception of sand.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Soils identifies Cartecay-Chewada complex, Catula sandy loam, Madison sandy loam, and Pacolet sandy loam on the site. Many of the soils are poorly drained sands but are typical of the areas along the Saluda River and can be built upon with design consideration. See soils map on page 47 of this report.

According to the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment prepared by S&ME, Inc for the subject property prior to acquisition by Anderson County:

“[T]he subject site lies within the Piedmont Geologic Province of South Carolina. The Piedmont Geologic Province is primarily comprised of biotite quartzofeldspathic gneiss and biotite-muscovite schist. Crystalline rock is overlain by a variable thickness of a highly weathered soil/rock mixture called saprolite that retains the structure of the weathered bedrock. In areas, weathering has resulted in a structureless soil termed residuum. In general, there is a gradual downward lithologic and textural change from residuum to saprolite to bedrock.

“In the Piedmont Geologic Province, the saprolitic and residual soils typically have high porosity but low hydraulic conductivity; thus, they do not readily transmit groundwater. The saprolite and residuum are considered leaky (semi-permeable) beds that may store and recharge groundwater to the underlying bedrock aquifer. Groundwater occurs within the saprolite and residuum between the clay, silt and sand grains. Groundwater also occurs within the bedrock along fractures, joints, and planes of weakness in the rock, and flows primarily through these zones in the rock.

“The movement of groundwater through the crystalline rock aquifers and overlying saprolite is strongly influenced by topography which generally controls the location of recharge and discharge zones. Groundwater within the Piedmont generally moves from topographically high areas (recharge zones) to topographically low areas within and along stream valleys (discharge areas). The flow of groundwater is also influenced by fracture zones which may occur in the bedrock (and may be retained within the saprolite), and foliation trends in the saprolite and partially weathered bedrock. These zones usually have the greatest hydraulic conductivity.”

3.8 Historic or cultural resources

The Piedmont PSD is rich in cultural and historic resources; however, the project site is home to none of these resources. A review of the SC ArchSite mapping database indicated no historic areas or structures in the project area. The ArchSite map is included on page 48 of this report. Project review materials have been sent for review and comment to the S.C. State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as well as the Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) of the Muscogee (Cree), Catawba, and Cherokee nations.

3.9 Invasive species

Invasive shrubs and vines typical for the area are present, but non-abundant, in the understory.

3.10 Land use plans or policies from other agencies including tribes

The site is currently an open space with tree canopy. Adjacent properties to the north are undeveloped. To the west is Glenview Estates Subdivision. Across River Road to the West and South are single-family residences.

Given local and regional demand for single-family residential construction, the probable “highest and best” use for this site, if not developed for recreation, is single-family residential.

The site is relatively rolling hills with steep slopes along the Saluda River. Gentle slopes from the interior of the site slope south and west to Big Brushy Creek and floodway areas (Zone AE).

Local development is regulated by Chapter 38 of the Anderson County Code of Ordinances, which prescribes development standards and land use policies. Development on this property will be subject to all relevant local codes and regulations. The site location is shown on the county’s most-recent Current Land Use map as being Agriculture/Resource Extraction due to its previous use as a staging area for a sand mining operation. The county’s most-recent edition of its Future Land Use map shows the property with a low-density residential classification. Though recreational use on this site as described herein is not incompatible with low-density residential use, the property will be reclassified as Recreational in the 2022 map update. Because of the nature of the project, a public hearing and approval by the Anderson County Planning Commission will be required. Variance requests for the project, if any, will require review and approval by the Anderson County Board of Land Use Appeals.

A grading permit, site plan approval, land use permit, and stormwater permit will be required from the Anderson County Development Standards Office.

The proposed kayak launch improvements will require approval by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Anderson County has extensive experience in dealing with USACE permitting matters from its previous kayak launch installations on the Saluda as well as other projects located on Lake Hartwell, including development by the county of the Green Pond Landing and Event Center.

3.11 Lightscapes

Outside the context of a planned event, access to the site will be permitted only from sunup to sundown. Any illumination used at the site will be for security purposes only and will be of as low-intensity as is practicable.

3.12 Migratory birds

According to the Species List prepared by FWS and SC Ecological Services, the Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*) has a probability of presence in February and breeds elsewhere. This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA. No other migratory birds are listed as having probability of presence at the project area, according to the report.

3.13 Recreation resources

The project will provide a new, formal, dedicated public access point to the Saluda River, supplanting any number of “informal” such access points in the vicinity (two of which are on the site itself) which are generally on private property and cause concerns for the actual

property owners. The informal access points are prone to litter, trespassing, and improper vehicular access, and they serve to contribute to shoreline erosion.

As mentioned, this project is part of a larger, multi-county plan to promote and provide access to the Saluda River.

The project will also offer new opportunities for passive recreational enjoyment.

3.14 Socioeconomics: changes to tax base or competition with private sector

The nature of the project as a more regional attraction as opposed to a neighborhood amenity in the context of a “walkable, mixed-use” community, combined with the fact that undisturbed woodlands and major roadways will continue to serve as a buffer with neighboring low-density residential developments, suggest that the project and its associated activities will have minimal if any impact on property values and their associated tax base.

A simple windshield survey of the Piedmont community confirms the presence of several disused or abandoned storefronts. The regional attraction inherent to the project suggests that visitors will help to stimulate additional retail and service activity in the area, thus promoting an enhanced tax base for the Piedmont Public Service District.

3.15 Sound (noise impacts)

Standards for noise levels are established in Chapter 38, Section 199 of the Anderson County Code of Ordinances and are as follows:

Location Receiving the Noise	Hours of the Day	Maximum Sound Level in A-Weighted Decibels (dBA)
At a nonresidential lot line	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	74 dBA
	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	69 dBA
At a residential lot line	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	70 dBA
	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	65 dBA

Surrounding land uses are single-family residential and agricultural, and the two adjacent roads are arterial roads. Any noise generated at the site is expected to be insignificant, given the nature of the proposed use and natural buffering.

3.16 Unique ecosystems, such as biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites, old growth forests, etc.

Though every ecosystem, as with all creatures great and small, is a special and unique universe in its own right, this site does not share characteristics associated with biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites, old growth forests, or similar wonders.

3.17 Water quality and/or quantity

Drinking water for residents in Piedmont is typically obtained in the region from Greenville Water, which emanates from a neighboring upstream watershed, and this project would have no impact on such.

It bears mention that downstream from the project site, the Saluda River provides drinking water to the Anderson County municipalities of Belton and Honea Path as well as several hundred residents of unincorporated Anderson and Abbeville counties. The project will serve to ensure to prevent some potential unwarranted discharges from the site into this important source of drinking water.

Tree canopy and understory will be preserved to the extent possible, helping to preserve both air and water quality. All stormwater runoff is required to be treated for quality and quantity on site for settling to remove pollutants.

Anderson County, in accordance with SCDHEC Permit #SCR030000 has prepared and executed TMDL monitoring and assessment of the Upper River Saluda Basin. Due to upstream agricultural land use, Anderson County monitors Big Brushy Creek and the Saluda River for E. Coli. See TMDL Sampling Map on page 49 and “How’s My Waterway?” Waterbody Report on page 50 of this document.

According to the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment prepared by S&ME, Inc for the subject property prior to acquisition by Anderson County:

“In the Piedmont Geologic Province, the saprolitic and residual soils typically have high porosity but low hydraulic conductivity; thus, they do not readily transmit groundwater. The saprolite and residuum are considered leaky (semi-permeable) beds that may store and recharge groundwater to the underlying bedrock aquifer. Groundwater occurs within the saprolite and residuum between the clay, silt and sand grains. Groundwater also occurs within the bedrock along fractures, joints, and planes of weakness in the rock, and flows primarily through these zones in the rock.

“The movement of groundwater through the crystalline rock aquifers and overlying saprolite is strongly influenced by topography which generally controls the location of recharge and discharge zones. Groundwater within the Piedmont generally moves from topographically high areas (recharge zones) to topographically low areas within and along stream valleys (discharge areas). The flow of groundwater is also influenced by fracture zones which may occur in the bedrock (and may be retained

within the saprolite), and foliation trends in the saprolite and partially weathered bedrock. These zones usually have the greatest hydraulic conductivity.”

3.18 Water: coastal barrier resources or coastal zones

Not applicable to this project.

3.19 Water: marine and/or estuarine

According to NEPAssist, there is no estuarine/marine wetland on the site.

3.20 Water: stream flow characteristics

Stream flow along this section of the Saluda River is impacted by operations of the Piedmont Dam, owned by Enel Green Energy. Constructed in 1888 to provide energy for the four textile mills operating in Piedmont at the time, the Piedmont Dam still provides hydroelectric power.

Aquenergy, LLC, a subsidiary of Enel Green Energy, operates the facility in a run-of-river mode by maintaining the impoundment surface elevation at or above 767.2 feet, which is designed to minimize fluctuations of the impoundment and ensure continuous release of the 15-cfs minimum flow. As currently constituted, the Piedmont Dam consists of an impoundment, dam, intake canal, powerhouse, tailrace, bypassed reach, transmission line, and appurtenant facilities.

The dam creates a 53.4-acre impoundment at a normal pool elevation of 767.2-foot mean sea level. The impoundment extends about 1 mile upstream on the Saluda River and thus impacts the LWCF project site, which is 2,300 linear feet upstream. The gross storage capacity of the impoundment is 248 acre-feet, while the useable storage capacity is described as negligible.

3.21 Water: wetlands and floodplains

The site is divided by Big Brushy Creek with floodplains and wetlands existing on-site from both Big Brushy Creek and the Saluda River. See Flood Plains map on page 52 of this report.

NEPAssist identifies the presence of riverine and freshwater forested/shrub wetland in and adjacent to the project area, in addition to floodplains. See FWI Wetlands map on page 53 of this document.

Prior to schematic construction documentation, jurisdictional wetlands will be identified on-site to ensure compliance with USACE permitting requirements.

Chapter 4 - Environmental Impacts

This chapter analyzes the degree to which the resources described in Chapter 3 above will be impacted by the proposal. According to best practices for the EA process, the analysis should be presented for the interested and affected public, agencies, and decisionmakers to understand the potential for impacts, both beneficial and adverse, and should include qualitative and quantitative data that considers the degree of the potential impacts.

4.1 Air Quality

Neither the Preferred Alternative nor the No Action Alternative would be of significant threat to air quality, although the No Action Alternative would more consistently produce higher volumes of traffic-related emissions from vehicles due to the likelihood of residential development. Tree canopy and understory will be preserved to the extent possible under the Preferred Alternative, helping to preserve both air and water quality.

Based upon these factors, the Preferred Alternative will have less impact on air quality

4.2 Circulation and transportation

Neither the Preferred Alternative nor the No Action Alternative would have a significant impact on traffic circulation, although the No Action Alternative would more consistently produce higher volumes of trips per day due to the likelihood of residential development. Based upon this factor, the Preferred Alternative will have less impact on circulation and transportation.

4.3 Climate

In comparing the Preferred Alternative with the No Action Alternative:

- Manage dangerous wildfires- this item is not practically applicable due to the low risk of wildfires in the area
- Shielding communities from floods and storms- the Preferred Alternative will preserve in perpetuity the site's existing wetlands and floodplain; the No Action Alternative is more likely to result in impairments to wetlands and floodplains due to the probability of residential development.
- Safeguarding clean water- Downstream from the project site, the Saluda River provides drinking water to the Anderson County municipalities of Belton and Honea Path as well as several hundred residents on unincorporated Anderson and Abbeville counties. The Preferred Alternative will serve to ensure to prevent potential unwarranted discharges from the site into this important source of drinking water; the No Action Alternative is more likely to result in impairments due to the probability of residential development.
- Allowing animal and plant species to adapt- the Preferred Alternative will preserve approximately twenty total acres of woodland and natural habitat; such could not be guaranteed under the No Action Alternative.
- Helping local economies stay afloat- More than 1.8 million people live within a 50-mile radius of the site, and independent research indicates that 7.2% of them

participate annually in kayaking or a similar paddling activity. Attracting just 4.4% of those persons to the proposed facility would yield a direct impact of \$300,000 and indirect impact of almost \$1 million annually, not including persons visiting the site to engage in boating, fishing, wildlife-watching, or passive outdoor activities. Such tourism-related activity, primarily imported from other parts of the region, stimulated by the Preferred Alternative will be of practical and immediate benefit to the merchant and service businesses located in and near the village of Piedmont.

It could be that residential development would have a stimulating economic impact; however, the existing retail conditions in the village have not improved under existing market conditions, and the marginal increase in population from residential development is not likely to change that. In addition, there are several known local companies that provide kayak rental, river guide, and related services, and the Preferred Alternative will facilitate their operations.

4.4 Contamination or hazardous materials, even if remediated

This appears to be an item of no impact, based on:

- No known Recognized Environmental Conditions on the site
- Neither the Preferred Alternative nor residential development resulting from the No Action Alternative are realistically considered to be generators of contaminated or hazardous materials.

The property would be under local public ownership under the Preferred Alternative and would typically be better positioned to address any RECs or related issues that might be observed during or after development.

4.5 Endangered species

Residential development resulting from the No Action Alternative would likely drive most animals from the site, whereas the Preferred Alternative would retain a greater percentage of existing habitat. Further, under the Preferred Alternative, Anderson County will be operating under federal guidelines if the project receives LWCF funding and thus will be bound to implement any measures prescribed for the protection of endangered, threatened or listed species.

Anderson County will perform a biological assessment prior final design and construction to identify species of concern. Because it will be developed as a resource-based park, displacement of animals of every type will be kept to a minimum.

4.6 Environmental justice: minority and low-income populations

Based on the data presented above in Chapter 3.6 and other observed data, it is difficult to describe Piedmont as a particularly vulnerable community with an at-risk population profile. Being an older textile community that felt the direct impacts of off-shoring, Piedmont is not without its issues and problems. Though its residential component may be sustainable, the community has many unused or underused commercial buildings and sites,

all of which contribute to blight and a negative community image. The Piedmont Riverfront Park is expected to help contribute to improvements in these negative conditions.

Since the Saluda River Blue Trail is a regional destination amenity (as opposed to a neighborhood-level amenity) and the locations of sites along the trail are defined by the natural formation of the amenity itself, it might be reasonably concluded that the siting of this facility does not serve to deny access to any particular group of persons.

Between the competing alternatives under consideration here, the Preferred Alternative holds sway due to the fact that it makes a natural amenity available to all persons regardless of race, identity, or socioeconomic status, while a private residential development resulting from the No Action Alternative will, by its very nature, limit the availability of assets to a select few.

4.7 Geological resources

The site topography is suitable for recreational development as described in the Preferred Alternative. The varying terrain aides in site opportunities; the majority of flat work development is in existing gentle sloped areas to maintain existing drainage patterns. There are no mineral resources on the site, with the exception of sand. If developed per the Preferred Alternative, stormwater retention will be designed for the types of fine sand encountered. Additionally, silt fences to control erosion are required around construction sites in this area.

The No Action Alternative would eventually result most likely in residential development, which would require more manipulation and disturbance of geological resources.

4.8 Historic or cultural resources

Residential development resulting from the No Action Alternative would likely mean that the discovery of historical and/or cultural resources on the site might be overlooked. Under the Preferred Alternative, Anderson County will be operating under federal guidelines if the project receives LWCF funding and thus will be bound to implement any measures prescribed for the protection of cultural, tribal nation, or historic artifacts.

4.9 Invasive species

Under the Preferred Alternative, management of the understory will be the responsibility of Anderson County and can be performed in a comprehensive manner with trained and licensed personnel. Under the No Action Alternative, residential development would mean management by individual property owners, many of who will ignore the problem while others will address it using various “over-the-counter” products which are prone to overuse and misapplication, leading to the increased population of herbicides and similar products intruding into the wetlands and waters.

4.10 Land use plans or policies from other agencies including tribes

All development on the subject property, be it by the county or a private party, will be governed by Chapter 38 of the Anderson County Code of Ordinances, which prescribes

development standards and land use policies. Development on this property will be subject to all relevant local codes and regulations.

As with earlier examples given here, the Preferred Alternative would mean that the county, as the developer, must closely adhere to federal regulations regarding land use and would likely to be following a higher standard of stewardship as a result.

Recreational development under the Preferred Alternative is supportive of and compatible with existing and future residential development in the community. Walk-in pedestrian gates are planned and all development will be inwardly oriented and buffered from adjacent homes. Health or safety problems are not expected to be generated by this project.

4.11 Lightscapes

Residential development, being the likely outcome of the No Action Alternative, would mean additional impacts on the existing lightscape due simply to the number of individual homeowners involved. Under the Preferred Alternative, access to the site will be permitted only from sunup to sundown, and any illumination used at the site will be for security purposes only and will be as low of an intensity as is practicable.

4.12 Migratory birds

Residential development resulting from the No Action Alternative would likely disturb habitat for migratory and other bird species, while the Preferred Alternative would retain a greater percentage of existing habitat. Further, under the Preferred Alternative, Anderson County will be operating under federal guidelines if the project receives LWCF funding and thus will be bound to implement any measures prescribed for the protection of endangered, threatened or listed bird species.

Anderson County will perform a biological assessment prior final design and construction to identify species of concern. Because it will be developed as a resource-based park, displacement of birds of every type will be avoided.

4.13 Recreation resources

The Preferred Alternative will provide a new, formal, dedicated public access point to the Saluda River, supplanting any number of “informal” such access points in the vicinity (two of which are on the site itself) which are generally on private property and cause concerns for the actual property owners. The informal access points contribute to litter, trespassing, and improper vehicular access, and they serve to contribute to shoreline erosion.

Under the No Action Alternative, no new public access will be provided, and the problems described above with informal access will continue.

4.14 Socioeconomics: changes to tax base or competition with private sector

As described earlier, the Preferred Alternative is a more regional attraction as opposed to a neighborhood amenity in the context of a “walkable, mixed-use” community, which would serve to promote access and use only for a few. Adjacent residential areas are middle-

income. The construction of the Preferred Alternative should help to stabilize and improve real estate values through preservation of open space. Additionally, residential growth is projected throughout the immediate area, and a community park will be needed in the near future to serve the growing population.

Residential development promoted by the No Action Alternative will serve to enhance property tax collections, while the Preferred Alternative will likely be of more benefit to local retail and service concerns, affecting not only property tax but also sales tax collections.

Neither alternative is expected to compete with the private sector in any meaningful way, nor is either expected to have any kind of measurable socioeconomic impact, notwithstanding the fact that the Preferred Alternative will offer a resource access to all persons regardless of socioeconomic status.

4.15 Sound (noise impacts)

Surrounding land uses are single-family residential and agricultural, and the two adjacent roads are arterial roads. Any noise generated at the site by the Preferred Alternative is expected to be insignificant, given the nature of the proposed use and natural buffering.

Noise impacts associated with the No Action Alternatives will be comparable to those in place in the surrounding area prior to development.

4.16 Unique ecosystems, such as biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites, old growth forests, etc.

This appears to be an item of no impact, based on the existence of no known or suspected unique ecosystems in the project area.

4.17 Water quality and/or quantity

The site would continue to operate under public management were the Preferred Alternative chosen. This fact helps ensure greater protection of the site and its waters and therefore would be advantageous to the No Action Alternative. Tree canopy and understory will be preserved to the extent possible under the Preferred Alternative, helping to preserve both air and water quality. All stormwater runoff is required to be treated for quality and quantity on site for settling to remove pollutants.

4.18 Water: coastal barrier resources or coastal zones

Not applicable to this project.

4.19 Water: marine and/or estuarine

According to NEPAssist, there is no estuarine/marine wetland on the site; thus, this standard is not applicable to this project.

4.20 Water: stream flow characteristics

As mentioned, stream flow along this section of the Saluda River is impacted by operations of the Piedmont Dam. With that said, the presence of the dam and its impoundment makes this particular site optimal for its intended use under the Preferred Alternative. Because the impoundment regulates stream flow, the waters in and around Piedmont Riverfront Park are ideal for novice or casual paddlers. The same condition makes it possible for more experienced kayakers to paddle a distance upstream in excess of five miles.

Such an amenity would not be available under the No Action Alternative.

4.21 Water: wetlands and floodplains

Development of the site under the Preferred Alternative will ensure the continued proper management of wetlands and floodplains on and adjacent to the site. Prior to schematic construction documentation, jurisdictional wetlands will be identified on-site to ensure compliance with USACE permitting requirements.

We are confident that a residential developer would follow best practices and applicable laws in the initial development of the property under the No Action Scenario; however, ongoing maintenance of sensitive areas and preservation of “common area” deeded to a homeowners association may become problematic with the passage of time.

The development of the property under the Preferred Alternative is the surest way of protecting and preserving this valuable resource.

Conclusion: Based on the existing conditions described in Chapter 3 and supported by the comparisons of this chapter, it appears that the Preferred Alternative meets the policies, goals, and regulations promulgated by the National Environmental Policy Act in a manner more complete than that of the No Action Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative has greater tangible public benefits which far outweigh the advantages of the No Action Alternative. Further, it is reasonable to conclude that the potential for impairment to resources is far greater under the No Action Alternative than in the Preferred Alternative.

Chapter 5 - Coordination and Consultation.

This chapter lists persons, organizations and agencies contacted for information and for identifying important issues, developing alternatives, or analyzing impacts. How did we get to this point? And who helped us get there?

Anderson County and its partners have spent more than a decade working to get where we are today. Piedmont Landing represents a critical stage in the development of the Saluda River Blue Trail. With this asset added to the Blue Trail, kayakers will be able to make a portage-free nine-mile journey on the Saluda from Dolly Cooper Park in Powdersville to Piedmont Riverfront Park. Those starting a journey at the Saluda Dam in Greenville can make a trek of 15 miles. The new Piedmont facility will enhance the utility of the Saluda River Blue Trail and allow all communities on and near the route to enjoy its benefits.

A consortium that includes public recreation providers, private sector interests, recreational enthusiasts, advocates for the physically-challenged, environmental groups, and individuals has formed a Vision Plan for a 127-mile Blue Trail along the Upstate South Carolina portion of the Saluda River. The Blue Trail enhances recreational access for kayakers and others in the six Upstate South Carolina counties that border the Saluda River, including Abbeville, Anderson, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, and Pickens Counties. This six-county collaboration and public/private partnership represents a regional effort to promote and preserve our local natural resource by creating river access and resource awareness.

To further develop this corridor into an active recreational asset to all users, the Anderson County Parks Department with assistance from stakeholders identified Phase One as being a 48-mile section of the Saluda River beginning at the Saluda Lake Dam in Greenville County and ending at the Ware Shoals Dam in Laurens/Greenwood counties. Upon completion, Phase One of the Blue Trail will include fourteen kayak/canoe access points, seven of which would offer full ADA access. The Phase One plan also identifies locations to formally develop boat ramps to accommodate small watercrafts as well as five portage points around existing hydropower facilities.

Upon completion, Piedmont Riverfront Park will be part of a system that includes these locations in Anderson County:

- Dolly Cooper Sports Complex (two ADA kayak access points and “lazy river” system)
- Dr. James A. Timmerman Boat Access (ADA kayak access; ADA fishing pier; boat launch)
- Sen. Michael W. Gambrell Access aka Belton Landing (ADA kayak access; boat launch)
- Town of Pelzer Boat Ramp

Future facilities are planned at these locations:

- Pelzer Upper Dam (kayak access/ portage)
- Pelzer Mill Dam (kayak access/ portage)
- W.S. Lee Energy Station (portage/ ADA kayak access/ boat ramp)
- Holliday Dam (kayak access/ portage)

Blue Trail Phase One planning and implementation involves Anderson, Greenville, and Pickens counties and would lead to a connection with the 33-mile river access plan being constructed by Laurens and Greenwood counties. Combined, the two corridors would establish an 81-mile Blue Trail along the Saluda River, accounting for two-thirds of the vision plan for Upstate South Carolina.

The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program has been an invaluable partner in this endeavor. As described in an article titled [Wheels to Water: Inclusive Recreation on the Saluda River](#) published on the NPS website:

“It started with Matt (Schell, Anderson County PRT Director) talking about these 48-miles and one access point at Dolly Cooper property in Anderson County,” said Bill Lane, a landscape architect for the National Park Service - Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. “He wanted to put an ADA facility there with a dock that floats up and down... Since then it’s just grown like crazy.”

Bill Lane officially joined the project in 2013 and kickstarted community engagement in Anderson County. Lane aided with mapping the river and access points, developing a paddle guide and working with local partners and power companies with investment in the river.

“Bill coming in garnered a lot of attention,” Schell said. “You know, when we’re spinning the same wheels for a little while, adding that extra life into [the project] in the form of just being able to say, ‘recognized by the National Park Service’ does do a lot of good.”

Lane organized a one-day design charette for the community members and stakeholders to develop an ADA accessible solution for getting canoes and kayaks around a dam in Piedmont. More than 15 members from the American Society of Landscape Architects in South Carolina volunteered their expertise at the charette to help make the community’s idea a reality.

With the National Park Service on-board, the project started to ramp up.

As it would be, the project described here helps bring to fruition the visions realized by the community and facilitated by Mr. Lane. A copy of the NPS article is on page 54 of this document. It can also be accessed at https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/wheels-to-water-inclusive-recreation-on-the-saluda-river.htm?fbclid=IwAR33lwZhcqIyj_omLBEVeVflmXk-feetu8DzXXFdOtEMzrHO8aKGNVi5ias

This environmental assessment was prepared by Steve Newton, MCRP; Anderson County Governmental Affairs Director, and Blake Sanders, PLA, ASLA; Studio Main LLC.

Data and consultation related to the project and/or this assessment were obtained from the following agencies/sources:

- SCPRT
- National Park Service
- Anderson County Register of Deeds
- US Bureau of the Census
- Upstate Forever
- US EPA
- Institute of Transportation Engineers
- SCDOT
- The Wilderness Society
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- SC State Historic Preservation Office
- SC Ecological Services
- Anderson County Development Standards
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
South Carolina Ecological Services
176 Croghan Spur Road, Suite 200
Charleston, SC 29407-7558
Phone: (843) 727-4707 Fax: (843) 727-4218
<http://www.fws.gov/charleston/>

In Reply Refer To:
Project Code: 2022-0006930
Project Name: Piedmont Access - Saluda River

February 12, 2022

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally as desired. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the ECOS-IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the ECOS-IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2))

(c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological evaluation similar to a Biological Assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a Biological Assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found in the "Endangered Species Consultation Handbook" at:

<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/TOC-GLOS.PDF>

Migratory Birds: In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity, intentional or unintentional, resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts see <https://www.fws.gov/birds/policies-and-regulations.php>.

The MBTA has no provision for allowing take of migratory birds that may be unintentionally killed or injured by otherwise lawful activities. It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures see <https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/threats-to-birds.php>.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. For information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186, please visit <https://www.fws.gov/birds/policies-and-regulations/executive-orders/e0-13186.php>.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

Official Species List

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

South Carolina Ecological Services

176 Croghan Spur Road, Suite 200

Charleston, SC 29407-7558

(843) 727-4707

Project Summary

Project Code: 2022-0006930
Event Code: None
Project Name: Piedmont Access - Saluda River
Project Type: New Constr - Above Ground
Project Description: Projected located on the western bank of the Saluda River in Anderson County, South Carolina.
550 River Road
Piedmont, SC 29673
34.70945; -82.46673

The project will provide new public access opportunities to the Saluda River, including an ADA-accessible kayak launch, shoreline access, and trail system, at an as-yet undeveloped 30-acre site owned by Anderson County on the Saluda River in the village of Piedmont. This new facility will become an integral part of the Saluda River Blue Trail, which currently extends along a 17.5-mile recreational corridor anchored by Dolly Cooper Park in Powdersville to the north and by a newly-opened landing outside of Belton to the south. All project elements are designed to be wholly accessible by persons with disabilities or impaired mobility in keeping with Anderson County's mission to make all county facilities accessible to all persons.

Two-thirds of the thirty-acre site will remain undisturbed. Development activities will be minimal and low-impact.

Project construction is targeted to begin in January of 2023, with opening for public access within 12 months.

Project Location:

Approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/@34.7099386,-82.46641663989095,14z>



Counties: Anderson and Greenville counties, South Carolina

Endangered Species Act Species

There is a total of 13 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries¹, as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

1. [NOAA Fisheries](#), also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

Mammals

NAME	STATUS
Northern Long-eared Bat <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045	Threatened

Birds

NAME	STATUS
Eastern Black Rail <i>Laterallus jamaicensis ssp. jamaicensis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10477	Threatened

Reptiles

NAME	STATUS
Bog Turtle <i>Glyptemys muhlenbergii</i> Population: U.S.A. (GA, NC, SC, TN, VA) No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6962	Similarity of Appearance (Threatened)

Insects

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly <i>Danaus plexippus</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Candidate

Flowering Plants

NAME	STATUS
Bunched Arrowhead <i>Sagittaria fasciculata</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1720	Endangered
Dwarf-flowered Heartleaf <i>Hexastylis naniflora</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/2458	Threatened
Mountain Sweet Pitcher-plant <i>Sarracenia rubra ssp. jonesii</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4283	Endangered
Small Whorled Pogonia <i>Isotria medeoloides</i> Population: No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1890	Threatened
Smooth Coneflower <i>Echinacea laevigata</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3473	Endangered
Swamp Pink <i>Helonias bullata</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4333	Threatened
White Fringeless Orchid <i>Platanthera integrilabia</i> Population: No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1889	Threatened
White Irisette <i>Sisyrinchium dichotomum</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8097	Endangered

Lichens

NAME	STATUS
Rock Gnome Lichen <i>Gymnoderma lineare</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3933	Endangered

Critical habitats

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA UNDER THIS OFFICE'S JURISDICTION.

USFWS National Wildlife Refuge Lands And Fish Hatcheries

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the [National Wildlife Refuge](#) system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

THERE ARE NO REFUGE LANDS OR FISH HATCHERIES WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA.

Migratory Birds

Certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act¹ and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act².

Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to migratory birds, eagles, and their habitats should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate conservation measures, as described [below](#).

-
1. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
 2. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
 3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

The birds listed below are birds of particular concern either because they occur on the [USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern](#) (BCC) list or warrant special attention in your project location. To learn more about the levels of concern for birds on your list and how this list is generated, see the FAQ [below](#). This is not a list of every bird you may find in this location, nor a guarantee that every bird on this list will be found in your project area. To see exact locations of where birders and the general public have sighted birds in and around your project area, visit the [E-bird data mapping tool](#) (Tip: enter your location, desired date range and a species on your list). For projects that occur off the Atlantic Coast, additional maps and models detailing the relative occurrence and abundance of bird species on your list are available. Links to additional information about Atlantic Coast birds, and other important information about your migratory bird list, including how to properly interpret and use your migratory bird report, can be found [below](#).

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, click on the PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY at the top of your list to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Rusty Blackbird <i>Euphagus carolinus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA	Breeds elsewhere

Probability Of Presence Summary

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read and understand the FAQ "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Each green bar represents the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during a particular week of the year. (A year is represented as 12 4-week months.) A taller bar indicates a higher probability of species presence. The survey effort (see below) can be used to establish a level of confidence in the presence score. One can have higher confidence in the presence score if the corresponding survey effort is also high.

How is the probability of presence score calculated? The calculation is done in three steps:

1. The probability of presence for each week is calculated as the number of survey events in the week where the species was detected divided by the total number of survey events for that week. For example, if in week 12 there were 20 survey events and the Spotted Towhee was found in 5 of them, the probability of presence of the Spotted Towhee in week 12 is 0.25.
2. To properly present the pattern of presence across the year, the relative probability of presence is calculated. This is the probability of presence divided by the maximum probability of presence across all weeks. For example, imagine the probability of presence in week 20 for the Spotted Towhee is 0.05, and that the probability of presence at week 12 (0.25) is the maximum of any week of the year. The relative probability of presence on week 12 is $0.25/0.25 = 1$; at week 20 it is $0.05/0.25 = 0.2$.
3. The relative probability of presence calculated in the previous step undergoes a statistical conversion so that all possible values fall between 0 and 10, inclusive. This is the probability of presence score.

Breeding Season (■)

Yellow bars denote a very liberal estimate of the time-frame inside which the bird breeds across its entire range. If there are no yellow bars shown for a bird, it does not breed in your project area.

Survey Effort (|)

Vertical black lines superimposed on probability of presence bars indicate the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps. The number of surveys is expressed as a range, for example, 33 to 64 surveys.

No Data (—)

A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.

Survey Timeframe

Surveys from only the last 10 years are used in order to ensure delivery of currently relevant information. The exception to this is areas off the Atlantic coast, where bird returns are based on all years of available data, since data in these areas is currently much more sparse.

■ probability of presence ■ breeding season | survey effort — no data

SPECIES JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

Rusty Blackbird
BCC - BCR



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Birds of Conservation Concern <http://www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/birds-of-conservation-concern.php>
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds <http://www.fws.gov/birds/management/project-assessment-tools-and-guidance/conservation-measures.php>
- Nationwide conservation measures for birds <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/management/nationwidestandardconservationmeasures.pdf>

Migratory Birds FAQ

Tell me more about conservation measures I can implement to avoid or minimize impacts to migratory birds.

[Nationwide Conservation Measures](#) describes measures that can help avoid and minimize impacts to all birds at any location year round. Implementation of these measures is particularly important when birds are most likely to occur in the project area. When birds may be breeding in the area, identifying the locations of any active nests and avoiding their destruction is a very helpful impact minimization measure. To see when birds are most likely to occur and be breeding in your project area, view the Probability of Presence Summary. [Additional measures](#) or [permits](#) may be advisable depending on the type of activity you are conducting and the type of infrastructure or bird species present on your project site.

What does IPaC use to generate the migratory birds potentially occurring in my specified location?

The Migratory Bird Resource List is comprised of USFWS [Birds of Conservation Concern \(BCC\)](#) and other species that may warrant special attention in your project location.

The migratory bird list generated for your project is derived from data provided by the [Avian Knowledge Network \(AKN\)](#). The AKN data is based on a growing collection of [survey, banding, and citizen science datasets](#) and is queried and filtered to return a list of those birds reported as occurring in the 10km grid cell(s) which your project intersects, and that have been identified as warranting special attention because they are a BCC species in that area, an eagle ([Eagle Act](#) requirements may apply), or a species that has a particular vulnerability to offshore activities or development.

Again, the Migratory Bird Resource list includes only a subset of birds that may occur in your project area. It is not representative of all birds that may occur in your project area. To get a list of all birds potentially present in your project area, please visit the [AKN Phenology Tool](#).

What does IPaC use to generate the probability of presence graphs for the migratory birds potentially occurring in my specified location?

The probability of presence graphs associated with your migratory bird list are based on data provided by the [Avian Knowledge Network \(AKN\)](#). This data is derived from a growing collection of [survey, banding, and citizen science datasets](#).

Probability of presence data is continuously being updated as new and better information becomes available. To learn more about how the probability of presence graphs are produced and how to interpret them, go the Probability of Presence Summary and then click on the "Tell me about these graphs" link.

How do I know if a bird is breeding, wintering, migrating or present year-round in my project area?

To see what part of a particular bird's range your project area falls within (i.e. breeding, wintering, migrating or year-round), you may refer to the following resources: [The Cornell Lab of Ornithology All About Birds Bird Guide](#), or (if you are unsuccessful in locating the bird of interest there), the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology Neotropical Birds guide](#). If a bird on your migratory bird species list has a breeding season associated with it, if that bird does occur in your project area, there may be nests present at some point within the timeframe specified. If "Breeds elsewhere" is indicated, then the bird likely does not breed in your project area.

What are the levels of concern for migratory birds?

Migratory birds delivered through IPaC fall into the following distinct categories of concern:

1. "BCC Rangewide" birds are [Birds of Conservation Concern](#) (BCC) that are of concern throughout their range anywhere within the USA (including Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands);
2. "BCC - BCR" birds are BCCs that are of concern only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA; and
3. "Non-BCC - Vulnerable" birds are not BCC species in your project area, but appear on your list either because of the [Eagle Act](#) requirements (for eagles) or (for non-eagles) potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities (e.g. offshore energy development or longline fishing).

Although it is important to try to avoid and minimize impacts to all birds, efforts should be made, in particular, to avoid and minimize impacts to the birds on this list, especially eagles and BCC species of rangewide concern. For more information on conservation measures you can implement to help avoid and minimize migratory bird impacts and requirements for eagles, please see the FAQs for these topics.

Details about birds that are potentially affected by offshore projects

For additional details about the relative occurrence and abundance of both individual bird species and groups of bird species within your project area off the Atlantic Coast, please visit the [Northeast Ocean Data Portal](#). The Portal also offers data and information about other taxa besides birds that may be helpful to you in your project review. Alternately, you may download the bird model results files underlying the portal maps through the [NOAA NCCOS Integrative Statistical Modeling and Predictive Mapping of Marine Bird Distributions and Abundance on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf](#) project webpage.

Bird tracking data can also provide additional details about occurrence and habitat use throughout the year, including migration. Models relying on survey data may not include this information. For additional information on marine bird tracking data, see the [Diving Bird Study](#) and the [nanotag studies](#) or contact [Caleb Spiegel](#) or [Pam Loring](#).

What if I have eagles on my list?

If your project has the potential to disturb or kill eagles, you may need to [obtain a permit](#) to avoid violating the Eagle Act should such impacts occur.

Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report

The migratory bird list generated is not a list of all birds in your project area, only a subset of birds of priority concern. To learn more about how your list is generated, and see options for identifying what other birds may be in your project area, please see the FAQ "What does IPaC use to generate the migratory birds potentially occurring in my specified location". Please be aware this report provides the "probability of presence" of birds within the 10 km grid cell(s) that overlap your project; not your exact project footprint. On the graphs provided, please also look carefully at the survey effort (indicated by the black vertical bar) and for the existence of the "no data" indicator (a red horizontal bar). A high survey effort is the key component. If the survey effort is high, then the probability of presence score can be viewed as more dependable. In contrast, a low survey effort bar or no data bar means a lack of data and, therefore, a lack of certainty about presence of the species. This list is not perfect; it is simply a starting point for identifying what birds of concern have the potential to be in your project area, when they might be there, and if they might be breeding (which means nests might be present). The list helps you know what to look for to confirm presence, and helps guide you in knowing when to implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize potential impacts from your project activities, should presence be confirmed. To learn more about conservation measures, visit the FAQ "Tell me about conservation measures I can implement to avoid or minimize impacts to migratory birds" at the bottom of your migratory bird trust resources page.

Wetlands

Impacts to [NWI wetlands](#) and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District](#).

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND

- [PFO1Fh](#)
- [PSS1Fh](#)
- [PFO1Ch](#)
- [PFO1A](#)

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND

- [PEM1F](#)

RIVERINE

- [R2UBH](#)
- [R5UBH](#)
- [R4SBC](#)

LAKE

- [L1UBHh](#)

FRESHWATER POND

- [PUBHh](#)

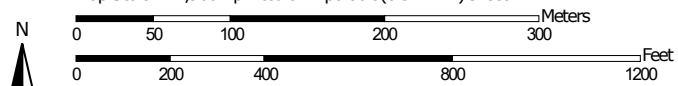
IPaC User Contact Information

Name: Steve Newton
Address: PO Box 8002
City: Anderson
State: SC
Zip: 29622-8002
Email: snewton@andersoncountysc.org
Phone: 8643530967

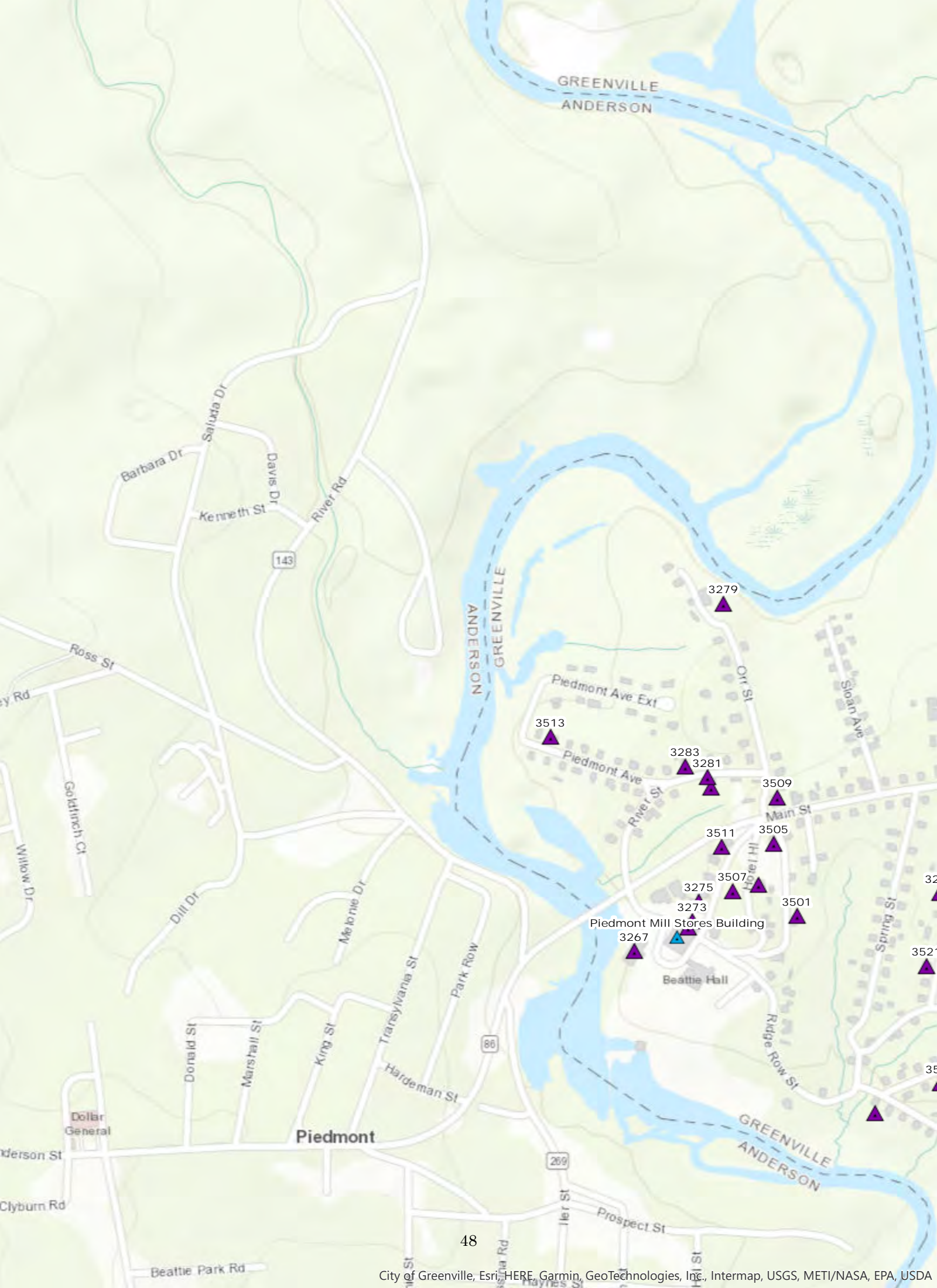
Custom Soil Resource Report Soil Map



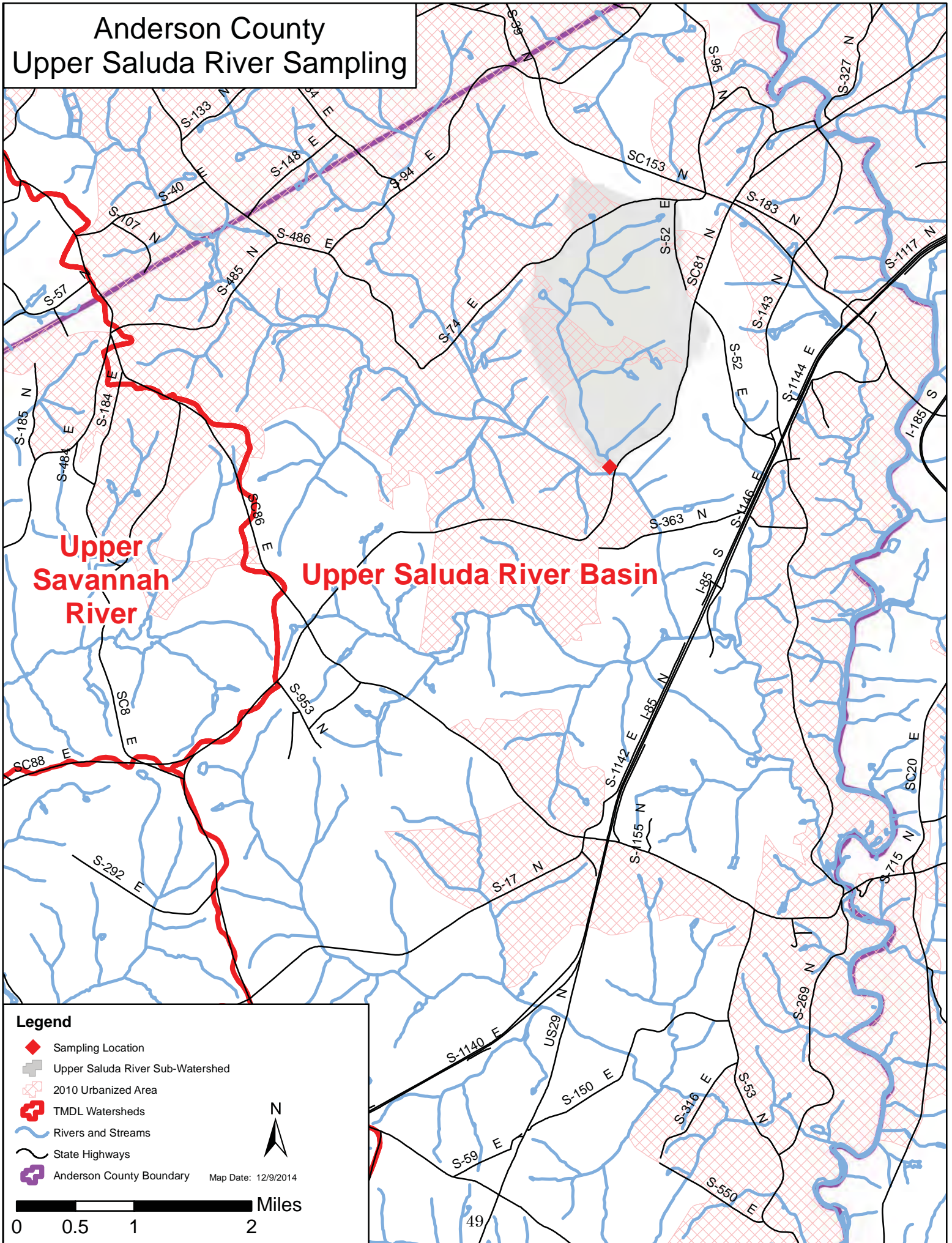
Map Scale: 1:4,900 if printed on A portrait (8.5" x 11") sheet.



Map projection: Web Mercator Corner coordinates: WGS84 Edge tics: UTM Zone 17N WGS84



Anderson County Upper Saluda River Sampling



How's My Waterway?

Informing the conversation about your waters.

Waterbody Report

S-301
Assessment Unit ID: SCS-301

Waterbody Condition: Impaired

Existing Plans for Restoration: Yes

303(d) Listed: Yes

Year Reported: 2018

Organization Name (ID): South Carolina (21SC60WQ)

What type of water is this?
 Stream (0 Miles)

Where is this water located?
 BIG BRUSHY CK AT S-04-143



Assessment Information from 2018

What is this water used for?

Expand All

Aquatic Life Support	Impaired ➤
Primary Contact Recreation	Good ➤

Probable sources contributing to impairment from 2018:
 No probable sources of impairment identified for this waterbody.

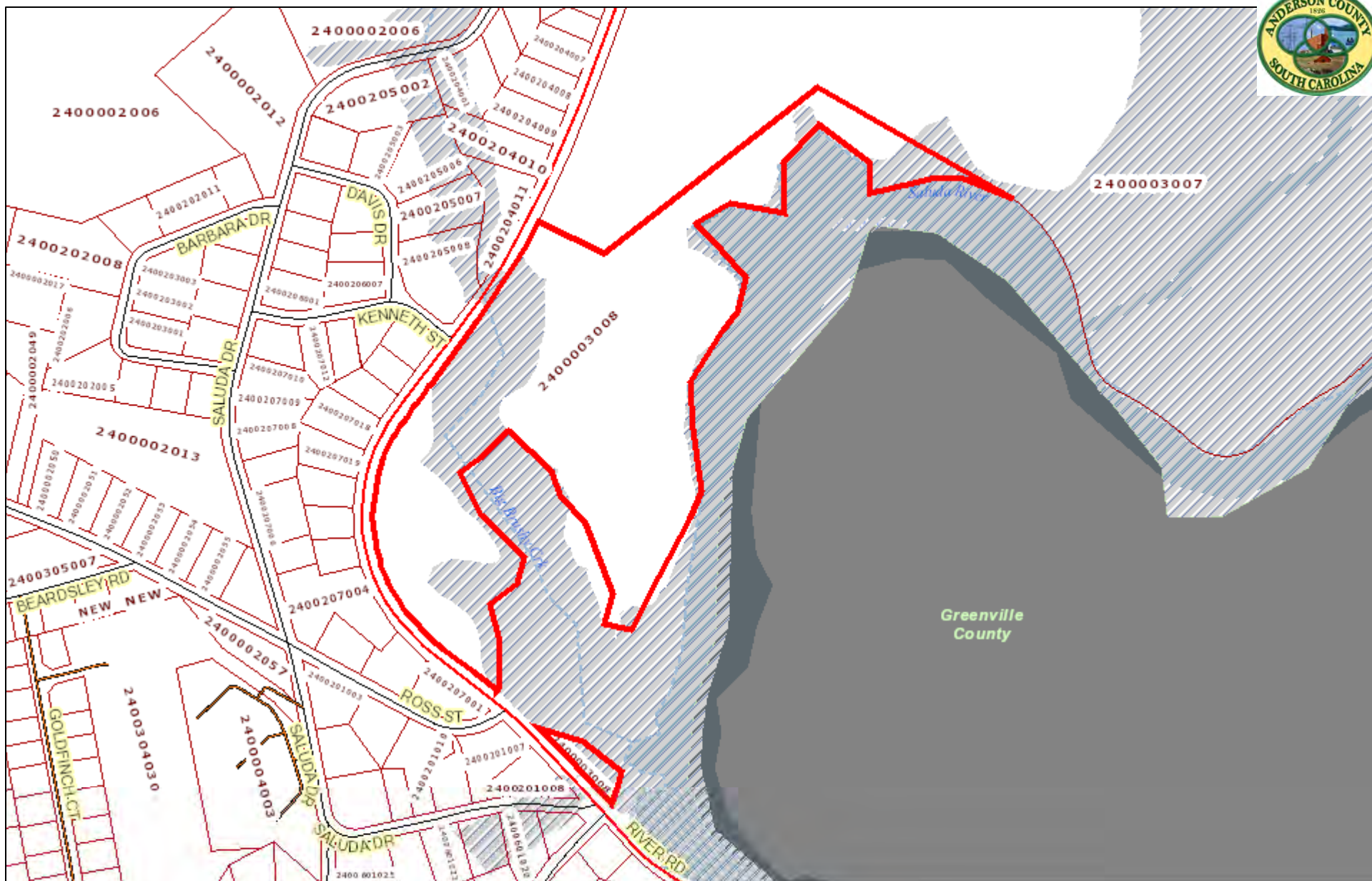
Plans to Restore Water Quality

What plans are in place to protect or restore water quality?

Links below open in a new browser tab.

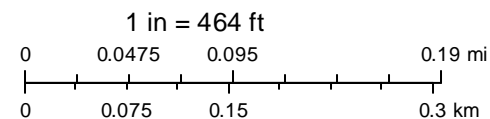
Plan	Impairments	Type	Date
Upper Saluda Basin Fecal Coliform Bacteria	Fecal Coliform	TMDL	2004-09-30

FEMA Flood Plain Map



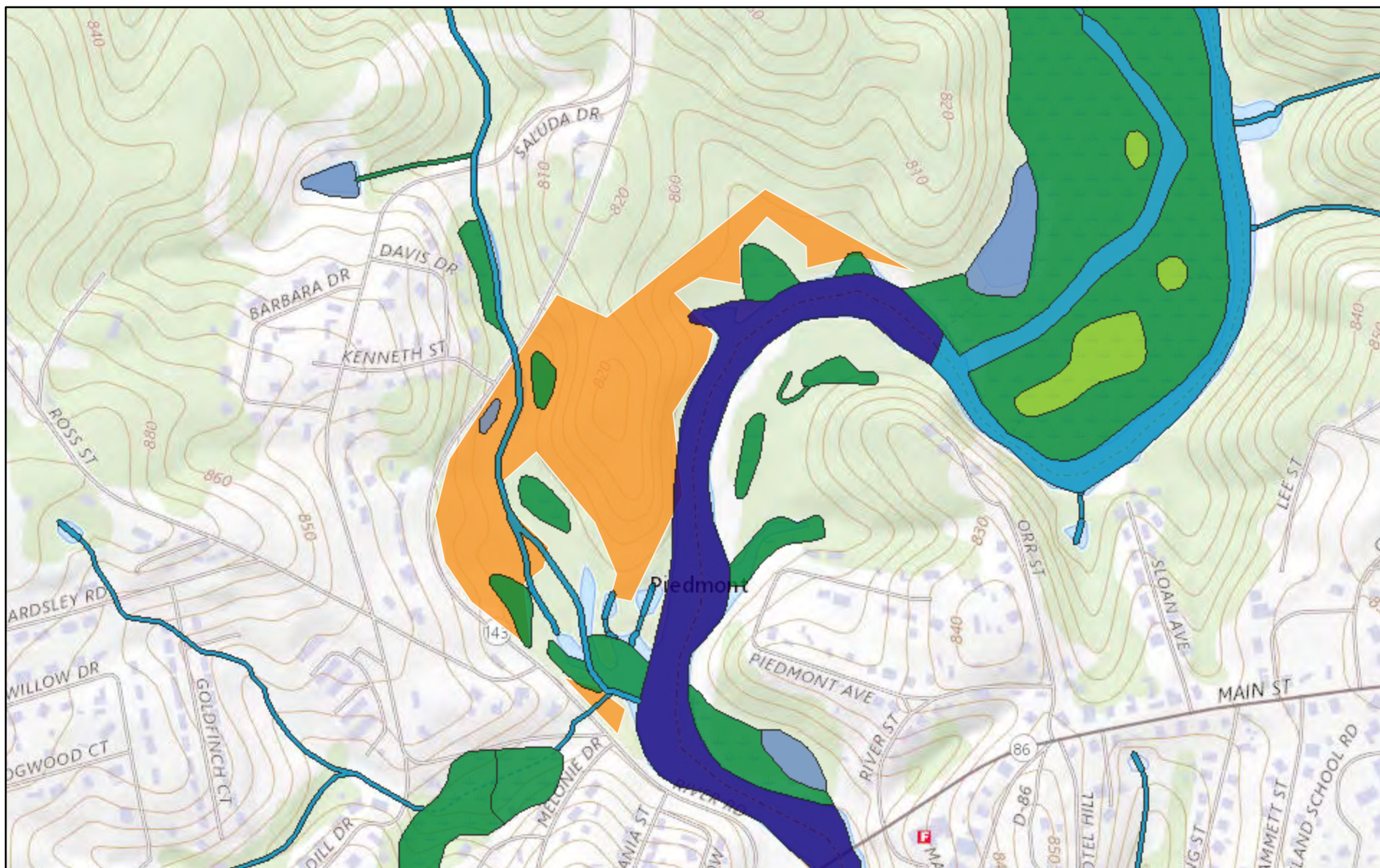
February 15, 2022 Disclaimer accepted.

TMS:	2400003008	Zip Code:	29622
Owner:	ANDERSON COUNTY	Current Plat:	CP S 2686/2
Owner Address:	PO BOX 8002	Description:	TRS A-C RIVER RD 28.02 AC
City/State:	ANDERSON SC	Market Value:	
Deed Book:	14607	Deed Page:	257
Tax District:	128		
Sale Year:	2020		



ESRI, Highland Mapping, and Anderson County GIS

NWI Wetlands

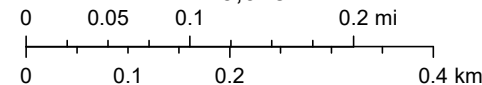


February 15, 2022

Wetlands

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
|  Estuarine and Marine Deepwater |  Freshwater Emergent Wetland |  Lake |
|  Estuarine and Marine Wetland |  Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland |  Other |
| |  Freshwater Pond |  Riverine |

1:9,028



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Standards and Support Team, wetlands_team@fws.gov, USGS The National Map: National Boundaries

COVID-19 Response

Masks are required for everyone, regardless of location or vaccination status, in all NPS buildings, crowded outdoor spaces, and all forms of enclosed public transportation. Additional details are available at www.nps.gov/coronavirus. Before visiting, please check the [park website](#) to determine its operating status. Please [recreate responsibly](#).

National Park Service

ARTICLE

Wheels to Water: Inclusive Recreation on the Saluda River



Paddler uses a wheelchair accessible kayak launch dock to enter the water.

By Ember Rensel

Winding calmly toward the Atlantic Ocean from the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Saluda River makes its way through northwestern South Carolina, brushing past old mill towns, rolling countryside and historic landmarks. Once a vital piece of the area's textile industry, the river became a quiet source for hydroelectric power while its potential for recreation went unnoticed. Until recently.

About 10 years ago, Matt Schell, the manager of Anderson County's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, saw a chance to create a recreational space available to everyone along the Saluda River. Since the project's public debut in 2009, Anderson County has been committed to meeting and exceeding the requirements set for accessibility by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Determined to make the Saluda River an opportunity for all people to connect with an incredible natural resource, he reached out to the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program.

A River for Everyone: Making it Accessible

With the Saluda River to the east and Lake Hartwell and the Savannah River to the west, Anderson County is surrounded by water. "We're bounded by these beautiful natural resources which make Anderson County a stand-out," Schell said. "But there was little to no diversity in recreation development or ADA access on them." Though the lakes have consistently attracted anglers to the area, the Saluda River was largely overlooked.

"It started with Matt talking about these 48-miles and one access point at Dolly Cooper property in Anderson County," said Bill Lane, a landscape architect for the National Park Service - Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. "He wanted to put an ADA facility there with a dock that floats up and down... Since then it's just grown like crazy."

The growth did not come easily, however. From the river itself, which is known to fluctuate up to 19-feet in some sections, to the seven hydroelectric dams that begin, interrupt and end the river corridor, and neighboring counties that were hesitant to commit support, the project encountered its fair share of roadblocks. Despite the challenges, Schell and his team were steadfast in their mission of universal accessibility, making sure that every step they took aligned with the requirements set by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The fluctuating water level, usually a challenge for river access, lent itself well to their plans. "We were able to establish a county-model (with a goal of statewide adoption) of the EZ Dock floating kayak launch," explained Schell. "It floats on the river similar to a dock system, but it has a transfer bench." The floating launch grants access to the river no matter the water level and the transfer bench allows for an easy transfer from wheelchairs, allowing users to pull their kayak into the launch and transfer smoothly in and out of the river using only their upper body strength.



Usually bound to her wheelchair, Sandy Hanebrink is an Anderson County resident who is quadriplegic and has limited upper body mobility. She is an ADA advocate and consultant and played a large role in the onset of access development. Photos courtesy of Glenn Brill.

Once they had the project off the ground, they needed support. Bill Lane officially joined the project in 2013 and kickstarted community engagement in Anderson County. Lane aided with mapping the river and access points, developing a paddle guide and working with local partners and power companies with investment in the river.

“Bill coming in garnered a lot of attention,” Schell said. “You know, when we’re spinning the same wheels for a little while, adding that extra life into [the project] in the form of just being able to say, ‘recognized by the National Park Service’ does do a lot of good.”

Lane organized a one-day design charette for the community members and stakeholders to develop an ADA accessible solution for getting canoes and kayaks around a dam in Piedmont. More than 15 members from the American Society of Landscape Architects in South Carolina volunteered their expertise at the charette to help make the community’s idea a reality.

With the National Park Service on-board, the project started to ramp up.

In June 2015, the project was featured on the Americans with Disabilities Act 25th Anniversary Legacy Tour. In one year, an exhibition bus made 115 stops, covering ground in 33 states across the country, to raise awareness for the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. “They stopped at all these major cities that were doing notable ADA inclusion projects across the United States,” Schell said. “They were in all the major cities... the only place on that roster that was not a major city was Anderson, South Carolina... the tour featured stops on the Saluda River as well as Lake Hartwell. It was a huge compliment to what we as a county were doing.”

Being recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act was a breakthrough for the project, putting the river’s potential for inclusive tourism and recreation on the state and national radar. “That recognition really just helped our administration and our county council... knowing that we’re doing the right thing,” Schell said.

Every partner and sponsor is vital to the success of the project. With the local government and community supporting the project’s goals and high standards for accessibility, potential partners down the river began to take notice.

A River by Everyone: Partnering with the Community

For the past 10 years, Anderson County has partnered with local businesses to host the project’s only paddling event: the Saluda River Rally. Not only does the event bring awareness to the project, but it also kicks off the summer recreation season, as it takes place on the first Saturday of June. Crowds gather at the banks of the river at Dolly Cooper Park and enjoy a day filled with boating, bluegrass and barbeque. “It’s like a rural miniature Woodstock going on by the river... It’s a phenomenal event that just grows in size year after year,” Lane said. “We get to expose people to ADA accessibility that may never have been exposed to it until they get here.”

The river rally is an inclusive recreation and family event. “We also use it as a Special Olympics fundraiser so that our local athletes are often on the river with the participants,” Schell elaborated. “We have seen folks age 7 to 70 with all levels of abilities on the river after traveling from as far as California, Missouri and Connecticut. This has been all about inclusive access on the river... to give some people a river experience that they would have never gotten otherwise.”



River rally participants enjoy kayaking down the Saluda River. Photo courtesy of Matt Schell, Anderson County's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

The river rally has become a major tourism event for Upstate South Carolina, spanning three towns: Powdersville, Piedmont and Pelzer. Put on collectively by the entire Anderson County community, more than 30 partners and sponsors coordinate, financially support and facilitate the day-long fundraiser. In 2019, more than 350 people from across the country registered to participate. All participants paddle the first nine miles from Dolly Cooper Park in Powdersville to the downtown Piedmont Dam.

About a third of the adventure-goers portage (carry their boats) around the dam after a relaxing layover at the Saluda River Grill, where food and music are provided, and continue another six miles downstream to Pelzer.

The Piedmont Dam is one of seven dams along the 48-mile project corridor. When the project first started, the hydropower companies were concerned about the potential for paddlers to sustain injuries while portaging around the dams.

"It was very serious," Schell said. "There would be alarms that would sound if they (the hydropower companies) saw somebody on their property." Even river clean-ups near the dam were supervised by the dam management groups

and required signed waivers.

Today, Enel Green Power, the group that manages the dam, is the title sponsor for the event and provides a large portion of funding for the Saluda River Rally. “We (Schell and Lane) were able to... communicate how much of a recreation component was interrupted... and as a navigable waterway, they [hydropower companies] have an obligation to help people get around a dam and back on the river, or at least partner for it,” Schell said. “We’ve actually had a 180-degree change in perception and perspective; creating the first of many great relationships on the river. We still have to sign waivers, but there’s not that fear.”

Now, all three hydropower companies sponsor the river rally, including Duke Energy and Northbook Carolina.

“Some of these hydropower [impoundment] sections can support small watercraft, so there are a couple with a future boat ramp in mind,” Schell said. These boat ramps will be accessible and are designed to give access to emergency responders, who have been limited in their ability to assist with water rescues up to this point.

The community benefits of the project don’t stop there.

Since the river rally began, Piedmont and Powdersville have experienced economic development in the that had been “on pause” since the mills went out of business. “This recreational trail is helping to revive several towns on our eastern boundary... Powdersville is our fastest growing unincorporated town in Anderson County,” Schell said.

This notable development has added to the project’s recent momentum. In 2019, the project saw significant progress. The growth in the local economies allowed these small towns to financially support the Saluda River Blueway, something that they were not able to offer when the project began.

“These are really small towns, very rural in nature... so for them to put their money and all their energy into something very unique like this is awesome,” Lane said.

Building on the momentum that evolved when the National Park Service began collaborating with the community, Anderson County acquired another access point in Piedmont and partnered with the City of Belton on a launch that is expected to open this fall. Not only are towns offering support, but energy companies are funding new access points, and the local government and private agencies are awarding grants for the project as well.



River Rally participants paddle with a wheelchair down the Saluda. Photo courtesy of Matt Schell, Anderson County's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

These towns are committed to supporting the Saluda River Blueway not only for the development it has brought, but for its mission of giving all Americans a chance to recreate on the river. Lane came away from the project motivated to take his new understanding of accessibility to other National Park Service projects. "It got me looking at other access points that I've worked on in the past on other water trails and going back to my past partners to make all their access points ADA accessible," he said. "Kudos to Matt [Schell] for doing that and getting me inspired to not ignore that user group."

As the project continues to gain support, Schell and his team are looking beyond their 48 miles of water to the potential for spreading inclusive, accessible tourism and recreation access across the entire state of South Carolina.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE



Approach into site from River Road gate
on existing roadbed



Foundation remnants from previous use



Facing south at beginning of
“teardrop” cul-de-sac



Approach to dredging transfer area;
Preferred access point for kayak launch



Informal launch area near preferred kayak launch point; note erosion



Informal access point to Big Brushy Creek off River Road near pump station