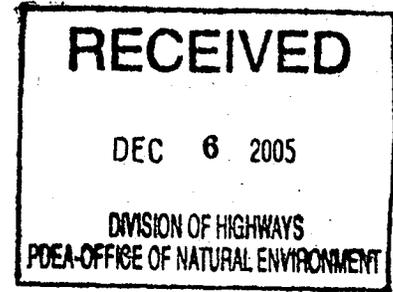




November 30, 2005



Dr. Gregory J. Thorpe, Ph.D.
Environmental Management Director
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch
NC Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

Subject: Sandhills Area Land Trust Mitigation Site, US 1 Vass Bypass from north of Lakeview to south of Sanford in Moore and Lee Counties, USACE Action ID 199300570, WQC No. 3344, TIP Project No. R-210.

Dear Dr. Thorpe:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Division of Water Quality (DWQ) has completed its review of the outstanding issues regarding the Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT) Mitigation Site. On April 14, 2005, DWQ issued a letter to the Department of Transportation (DOT) stating that the SALT site appeared to be currently functioning as a wetland and therefore could not be awarded wetland restoration credits. However, enhancement credits for the site were appropriate.

On October 10, 2005, DOT and DWQ met to discuss the mitigation site and the associated mitigation credits. During this meeting DWQ stated that restoration credits could be awarded for filling the drainage ditches and removal of the old roadbed. In addition, DWQ presented a map that provided estimates of areas that could be considered wetland restoration. These are areas with hydric soils but with non-wetland hydrology. DWQ makes the assumption that filling the ditches will create a wetland hydrology in these areas.

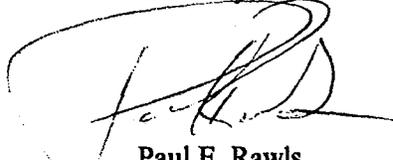
DWQ requested DOT to overlay the GIS files for these maps for a more accurate wetland restoration acreage estimate. However, DOT has informed DWQ that due to the age of the project and the lack of compatible data files, these maps could not be overlain in an electronic format. As follow up to the October 10, 2005 meeting, DWQ has again reviewed the information provided. DWQ in order to establish the highest amount of restoration credit has also attempted to estimate the wetland restoration area using a grid ruler. The table below describes the estimated wetland restoration credits for the SALT Mitigation site within the available 49 acres (as stated in Condition 15 of the 401 Water Quality Certification for the referenced project):

Credit Description	Number of Credits
Areas of hydric soils but non-wetland hydrology including 2,300 lf of ditches in these areas	17.0 acres
5,400 lf of ditches outside of previously listed areas with assumption of 12-foot wide ditch	1.5 acres
2,760 lf of roadbed in wetlands or hydric soils with non-wetland hydrology with assumption of 15-foot wide road bed	1.0 acre
Total Wetland Restoration Credit	19.5 acres

The remaining 29.5 acres (49 acres – 19.5 acres = 29.5 acres) are available for wetland **enhancement** credit. In accordance with Condition 15 of the 401 Water Quality Certification for the referenced project, DOT should obtain the balance of the required restoration credit, **17.3 acres** (~~36.8 acres~~ – 19.5 acres = 17.3 acres), through in-lieu payments to the Ecosystem Enhancement Program (formally the Wetlands Restoration Program).

We appreciate your cooperation and hope that these issues can be resolved quickly. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Brian Wrenn at 919-733-5715 or John Hennessy at 919-733-5694.

Sincerely,



Paul E. Rawls
Section Chief

Attachments

Cc: William Gilmore, EEP
Phil Harris, Natural Environment Unit, NC DOT
LeiLani Paugh, Natural Environment Unit, NC DOT
John Hennessy, Transportation Permitting Unit Supervisor, NC DWQ
Coleen Sullins, Deputy Director, NC DWQ
Alan Klimek, Director, NC DWQ
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