



US Army Corps
Of Engineers
Wilmington District

PUBLIC NOTICE

Issue Date: August 13, 2015
Comment Deadline: September 14, 2015
Corps Action ID Number: SAW-2015-00940

The Wilmington District, Corps of Engineers (Corps) has received a prospectus proposing to establish a 260-acre stream and wetland mitigation bank, known as Falling Creek Mitigation Bank (Bank) and located in the Upper Neuse 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 3020201 of the Neuse River Basin.

Specific details and location information are described below and shown in the prospectus document. This Public Notice and all attached maps and plans are also available on the Wilmington District Web Site at:

<http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/RegulatoryPermitProgram.aspx>

Bank Sponsor/Agent: Wildlands Engineering, Inc.
Attention: Mr. John Hutton
312 West Millbrook Road
Suite 225
Raleigh, North Carolina 27604

Authority

The Corps will evaluate this prospectus and the establishment of the mitigation bank in accordance with the procedures outlined in 33 CFR Part 332. Additionally, this proposal will also be reviewed pursuant to the permitting authority under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for proposed activities involving the discharge of fill material into waters and/or wetlands of the United States.

Location

The 260-acre proposed Bank is located adjacent to Falling Creek in the Neuse River Basin, northwest of the intersection of Grantham School Road and Corbett Hill Road, in Wayne County, North Carolina. (35.2667° N, -78.1881° W)

Existing Site Conditions

The Bank is located on several adjacent parcels in Mount Olive that are comprised primarily of pastures used for grazing cattle. The cattle currently have access to the majority of the streams and wetlands with the exception of the downstream reaches where the streams enter the forested floodplain of Falling Creek. The site includes fifteen

unnamed tributaries that drain to Falling Creek, which flows directly into the Neuse River. The streams range from ditched and straightened channels with significant bank erosion and mass wasting, to streams with near reference condition dimension and pattern but with significant cattle impacts. Floodplains within the proposed project area are a mosaic of existing wetlands and drained hydric soils. Existing wetlands typically drain from toe of slope, spread out over the floodplains, and connect to incised stream channels via ditches. Wetland impairments include livestock trampling, lack of understory vegetation, sedimentation, and hydrologic impairments.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposal is establishment of a stream and wetland mitigation bank to generate mitigation credits that may be used to provide compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts to warm water streams and riparian wetlands associated with Department of the Army permit authorizations pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

Project Description

The sponsor proposes to restore 16,585 linear feet (LF), enhance 6,794 LF, and preserve 7,735 LF of intermittent and perennial stream channels; and to rehabilitate 19.3 acres, re-establish 11.2 acres, enhance 7.0 acres, and preserve 173.8 acres of riparian wetlands. The Bank will also include the re-establishment and protection of riparian buffers and the incorporation of best management practices (BMPs) to treat runoff from agricultural fields. Stream enhancement activities will include installation of fencing to exclude cattle; planting native woody species to restore and enhance riparian habitat; culvert removal/repair, bank grading and stabilization, and installation of in-stream structures to provide stability and enhance aquatic habitat. Stream restoration activities will include design and implementation of a stable bankfull pattern, dimension, and profile to restore floodplain connectivity, increase bed-form diversity, provide lateral and vertical stability, and improve aquatic habitat. Wetland enhancement, rehabilitation, and re-establishment activities will include installation of fencing to exclude cattle; planting native tree and understory species to re-establish a forested wetland; and raising stream beds/plugging agricultural ditches to restore wetland hydrology.

The proposed Geographic Service Area for the Bank encompasses the entire boundary of the 8-digit HUC 03020201, Upper Neuse watershed. The sponsor has signed option agreements with the land owners to record conservation easements on all land located within the bank boundary. Unique Places to Save, a non-profit committed to land conservation through conservation planning and management will serve as conservation easement holder and long-term manager for the mitigation property.

The prospectus is available for review at:

<http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/RegulatoryPermitProgram/PublicNotices.aspx>

Evaluation and Commenting Information

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties, in order to consider and evaluate the proposed mitigation bank. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps in evaluating this proposal. Comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards and floodplain values (in accordance with Executive Order 11988), land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Preliminary review indicates:

- 1) An environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be required.
- 2) The activities associated with development of the Bank are not likely to adversely affect any fish, wildlife, and/or plant species (or their critical habitat) listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (PL-93-205).
- 3) There will be no effect to any cultural or historic resources considered eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Additional information may change any of these preliminary findings.

Written comments pertinent to the proposed work, as outlined above and as described in the prospectus, will be received in this office, Wilmington District, Corps of Engineers, Attention: Ms. Andrea Hughes, 11405 Falls of Neuse Road, Wake Forest, North Carolina 27587, until 5pm, September 14, 2015. If you have questions, please contact Ms. Hughes at (919) 846-2564.