

R-5927 Start of Study Letter

Summary of Comments

December 2023

Respondents:

Steve Brumagin, US Army Corps of Engineers
Ryan Conchilla, NC Division of Water Resources
Karyl Fuller, Triangle J Council of Governments
Gary Jordan, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Amanetta Somerville, US EPA (no comment, no nexus)
Travis Wilson, Highway Project Coordinator, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Summary of Comments:

The following responses were received in response to the Start of Study Letter distributed to project stakeholders on August 24, 2023. The information below is meant to be a summary of comments received. The letters and emails in their entirety are attached.

Endangered Species

A USFWS IPAC search indicates that the following federally listed species may be present: Red-cockaded woodpecker and Michaux's sumac.

Michaux's Sumac: Michaux's sumac was historically unique to the inner coastal plain and lower Piedmont of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Its natural habitat includes dry, open, rocky, or sandy woodlands over bedrock with high levels of calcium, magnesium, or iron. It can be found growing in disturbed locations such as highway rights-of-way, roadsides, sites that have been damaged by fire, or at the edges of artificially maintained clearings. Survey for Michaux's sumac should be undertaken and the results of the assessment would determine whether formal Section 7 consultation is required.

Red Cockaded Woodpecker: This project area is within the known range of the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). A survey for RCW cavity trees should be conducted in suitable habitat within 0.5 mile of the project footprint. If active RCW cavity trees are observed, the USFWS should be contacted with the results. The presence of active RCW cavity trees may require a Foraging Habitat Analysis (FHA) to be conducted. The results of the FHA would determine whether formal Section 7 consultation is required.

Tricolored Bat: The Tricolored bat is proposed for listing (and may be listed in 2023) by the USFWS as endangered and may also be present in the project area. Presence could affect tree clearing activities, design for temporary/permanent lighting and construction/demolition activities for this project. A complete list of requirements from the NC Natural Heritage Program in regard to fish and wildlife resources is attached.

Water Resources

Little River/Joes Fork/Nicks Creek: Nick's Creek bisects the project area and runs beneath US 15-501. Joes Fork drains to Nicks Creek and both drain northeast to Little River. All are class WS-III; HQW waters of the State. This is one of the highest classifications for water quality. The NCDWR is very concerned with sediment and erosion impacts that could result from this project. The NCDWR recommends that highly protective sediment and erosion control BMPs be implemented to reduce the risk of nutrient runoff to Little River. A list of obligations for impacts to waters and wetlands, sediment and erosion control measures, and heavy equipment use in and around waters and wetlands can be found in the attached letter from the NC Division of Water Resources, Transportation Permitting Branch.

A jurisdictional determination would confirm the absence/presence of regulated waters of the US within the project limits. The project area depicted adjacent to the US 15/501 roadway does contain areas mapped by FEMA as Zone AE (mapped floodway) associated with Nicks Creek and an unnamed tributary to Nicks Creek.

In addition, there are areas mapped by National Wetland Inventory (NWI) as features (PUBHh, PFO1C, PFO1B, PFO4B, PEM1Fh & R5UBH) near/adjacent to the project area. Review of soils within the project area did indicate some soil series which contain hydric and partially hydric soils. The soils present include Gilead, Mayodan, Bibb, Vacluse, Candor & Ailey series. If jurisdictional waters were found to be present within the project area and the project will include placement of fill or structures in waters, a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act may be required.

Section 4(f)/6(f) Resources

Pinehurst Greenway: A section of the Pinehurst Greenway runs along the west side of US 15-501 from Forest Drive north to Spring Lake Drive and south approximately 740 feet. The greenway is owned and maintained by the Village of Pinehurst and would be considered a 4(f) resource. There is a recommendation for multi-use path improvements (Moore County CTP, 2019) and bike shoulders (Pinehurst Bike Plan), close to Pinehurst, just above the traffic circle. There are golf courses that border the project corridor that may be publicly owned.

MR1437 (Bridge): A search of HPOWEB website did indicate listed/eligible for listing historic sites within the study area, specifically DOT# 620185 bridge across Nicks Creek. The 1924 reinforced concrete structure was identified as part of the 2005 historic bridge survey. Further investigation of this project's affect upon historic resources is warranted. Effects to this property would be considered Section 4(f) impacts.

Jennifer Satterthwaite

From: Brumagin, Stephen A (Steve) CIV USARMY CESAW (USA) <Stephen.A.Brumagin@usace.army.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, September 20, 2023 10:31 AM
To: Rick DeCola
Cc: King, Art C
Subject: NCDOT R-5927 US 15/US 501 widening from NC 2/NC 211 traffic circle in Pinehurst to NC 73, Moore County, N.C., Start of Study

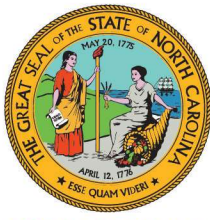
Dear Mr. DeCola,

Thanks for an opportunity to review and provide comments on your recent start of study request for the NCDOT R-5927 US 15/US 501 widening from NC 2/NC 211 traffic circle in Pinehurst to NC 73, Moore County, N.C.

Your submitted mapping did indicate waters within the project area, but a jurisdictional determination would confirm their absence/presence within the project limits. The project area depicted adjacent to the US 15/501 roadway does contain areas mapped by FEMA as Zone AE (mapped floodway) associated with Nicks Creek and an unnamed tributary to Nicks Creek. In addition, there are areas mapped by National Wetland Inventory (NWI) as features (PUBHh, PFO1C, PFO1B, PFO4B, PEM1Fh & R5UBH) near/adjacent to the project area. Review of soils within the project area did indicate some soil series which contain hydric and partially hydric soils. The soils present include Gilead, Mayodan, Bibb, Vauclose, Candor & Ailey series. If jurisdictional waters were found to be present within the project area and the project will include placement of fill or structures in waters, a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act may be required. An USFWS IPAC search indicates that the following federally listed species may be present: Red-cockaded woodpecker and Michaux's sumac. Also, please be aware that the proposed for listing (and may be listed in 2023) Tricolored bat may also be present and that currently this could affect tree clearing activities, design for temporary/permanent lighting and construction/demolition activities for this project. A search of HPOWEB website did indicate listed/eligible for listing historic sites within the study area, specifically DOT# 620185 bridge across Nicks Creek. Further survey/investigation of this project's affect upon historic resources is warranted.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks.

Stephen A. Brumagin
NCDOT Project Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Charlotte Field Office, Wilmington District
Work cell 704 798-6471



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

September 7, 2023

ROY COOPER
Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER
Secretary

RICHARD E. ROGERS, JR.
Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Rick DeCola, Transportation Department Manager, Mead & Hunt
From: Ryan Conchilla, NC Division of Water Resources, Transportation Permitting Branch
Subject: Scoping comments on the proposed widening of US 15-501 from NC 2 and NC 211 to NC 73 in Pinehurst and realignment of NC 73 and SR 1838 (McCaskill Road), Moore County. NCDOT TIP R-5927

Reference your correspondence dated August 24, 2023 in which you requested comments for the referenced project. Preliminary analysis of the project reveals the potential for impacts to streams and jurisdictional wetlands in the project area. More specifically, impacts to:

Stream Name	River Basin	Stream Classification(s)	Stream Index Number	303(d) Listing
Nicks Creek	Cape Fear	WS-III	18-23-3-(0.5)	No
Joes Fork	Cape Fear	WS-III	18-23-3-1	No
Little River	Cape Fear	WS-III, HQW	18-23-1	No

Further investigations at a higher resolution should be undertaken to verify the presence of other streams and/or jurisdictional wetlands in the area. In the event that any jurisdictional areas are identified, the Division of Water Resources requests that the applicant consider the following environmental issues for the proposed project:

Project Specific Comments:

1. Little River is class WS-III; HQW waters of the State. This is one of the highest classifications for water quality. The NCDWR is very concerned with sediment and erosion impacts that could result from this project. The NCDWR recommends that highly protective sediment and erosion control BMPs be implemented to reduce the risk of nutrient runoff to Little River.

Transportation General Project Comments:

1. The environmental document should provide a detailed and itemized presentation of the proposed impacts to wetlands and streams with corresponding mapping. If mitigation is necessary as required by 15A NCAC 2H.0506(h), it is preferable to present a conceptual (if not finalized) mitigation plan with the environmental documentation. Appropriate mitigation plans will be required prior to issuance of a 401 Water Quality Certification.
2. Environmental impact statement alternatives shall consider design criteria that reduce the impacts to streams and wetlands from storm water runoff. These alternatives shall include road designs that allow for treatment of the storm water runoff through BMPs as detailed in the most recent version of the *North Carolina Department of Transportation Stormwater Best Management Practices Tool* box manual, such as grassed swales, buffer areas, preformed scour holes, retention basins, etc.

3. After the selection of the preferred alternative and prior to an issuance of the 401 Water Quality Certification, the applicant is respectfully reminded that they will need to demonstrate the avoidance and minimization of impacts to wetlands (and streams) to the maximum extent practical. In accordance with the Environmental Management Commission's Rules (15A NCAC 2H.0506[h]), mitigation will be required for impacts of greater than 1 acre to wetlands. In the event that mitigation is required, the mitigation plan shall be designed to replace appropriate lost functions and values. North Carolina Division of Mitigation Services may be available for assistance with wetland mitigation.
4. In accordance with the Environmental Management Commission's Rules (15A NCAC 2H.0506[h]), mitigation will be required for impacts of greater than 300 linear feet to any perennial stream. In the event that mitigation is required, the mitigation plan shall be designed to replace appropriate lost functions and values. The North Carolina Division of Mitigation Services may be available for assistance with stream mitigation.
5. Future documentation, including the 401 Water Quality Certification Application, shall continue to include an itemized listing of the proposed wetland and stream impacts with corresponding mapping.
6. The NCDWR is very concerned with sediment and erosion impacts that could result from this project. The applicant shall address these concerns by describing the potential impacts that may occur to the aquatic environments and any mitigating factors that would reduce the impacts.
7. An analysis of cumulative and secondary impacts anticipated as a result of this project is required. The type and detail of analysis shall conform to the NC Division of Water Resource Policy on the assessment of secondary and cumulative impacts dated April 10, 2004.
8. The applicant is respectfully reminded that all impacts, including but not limited to, bridging, fill, excavation and clearing, and rip rap to jurisdictional wetlands, streams, and riparian buffers need to be included in the final impact calculations. These impacts, in addition to any construction impacts, temporary or otherwise, also need to be included as part of the 401 Water Quality Certification Application.
9. Sediment and erosion control measures should not be placed in wetlands or streams.
10. Borrow/waste areas should avoid wetlands to the maximum extent practical. Impacts to wetlands in borrow/waste areas will need to be presented in the 401 Water Quality Certification and could precipitate compensatory mitigation.
11. The 401 Water Quality Certification application will need to specifically address the proposed methods for stormwater management. More specifically, stormwater shall not be permitted to discharge directly into streams or surface waters. Please refer to the most recent version of the *North Carolina Department of Transportation Stormwater Best Management Practices Toolbox* manual for approved measures.
12. Based on the information presented in the document, the magnitude of impacts to wetlands and streams may require a 404 permit application to the Corps of Engineers and corresponding 401 Water Quality Certification. Please be advised that a 401 Water Quality Certification requires satisfactory protection of water quality to ensure that water quality standards are met and no wetland or stream uses are lost. Final permit authorization will require the submittal of a formal application by the applicant and written concurrence from the NCDWR. Please be aware that any approval will be contingent on appropriate avoidance and minimization of wetland and stream impacts to the maximum extent practical, the development of an acceptable stormwater management plan, and the inclusion of appropriate mitigation plans where appropriate.
13. If concrete is used during construction, a dry work area shall be maintained to prevent direct contact between curing concrete and stream water. Water that inadvertently contacts uncured concrete shall not be discharged

to surface waters due to the potential for elevated pH and possible aquatic life and fish kills. Concrete shall be handled in accordance with the NPDES Construction General Permit NCG010000.

14. If temporary access roads or detours are constructed, the site shall be graded to its preconstruction contours and elevations. Disturbed areas shall be seeded or mulched to stabilize the soil and appropriate native woody species shall be planted. When using temporary structures the area shall be cleared but not grubbed. Clearing the area with chain saws, mowers, bush-hogs, or other mechanized equipment and leaving the stumps and root mat intact allows the area to re-vegetate naturally and minimizes soil disturbance.
15. Unless otherwise authorized, placement of culverts and other structures in waters and streams shall be placed below the elevation of the streambed by one foot for all culverts with a diameter greater than 48 inches, and 20 percent of the culvert diameter for culverts having a diameter less than 48 inches, to allow low flow passage of water and aquatic life. Design and placement of culverts and other structures including temporary erosion control measures shall not be conducted in a manner that may result in dis-equilibrium of wetlands or streambeds or banks, adjacent to or upstream and downstream of the above structures. The applicant is required to provide evidence that the equilibrium is being maintained if requested in writing by the NCDWR. If this condition is unable to be met due to bedrock or other limiting features encountered during construction, please contact the NCDWR for guidance on how to proceed and to determine whether or not a permit modification will be required.
16. If foundation test borings are necessary; it shall be noted in the document. Geotechnical work is approved under General 401 Certification Number 4085/Nationwide Permit No. 6 for Survey Activities.
17. Sediment and erosion control measures sufficient to protect water resources must be implemented and maintained in accordance with the most recent version of North Carolina Sediment and Erosion Control Planning and Design Manual and the most recent version of NCS000250.
18. All work in or adjacent to stream waters shall be conducted in a dry work area. Approved BMP measures from the most current version of the NCDOT Construction and Maintenance Activities manual such as sandbags, rock berms, cofferdams and other diversion structures shall be used to prevent excavation in flowing water.
19. While the use of National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps, NC Coastal Region Evaluation of Wetland Significance (NC-CREWS) maps and soil survey maps are useful tools, their inherent inaccuracies require that qualified personnel perform onsite wetland delineations prior to permit approval.
20. Heavy equipment should be operated from the bank rather than in stream channels in order to minimize sedimentation and reduce the likelihood of introducing other pollutants into streams. This equipment shall be inspected daily and maintained to prevent contamination of surface waters from leaking fuels, lubricants, hydraulic fluids, or other toxic materials.
21. Riprap shall not be placed in the active thalweg channel or placed in the streambed in a manner that precludes aquatic life passage. Bioengineering boulders or structures should be properly designed, sized and installed.
22. Riparian vegetation (native trees and shrubs) shall be preserved to the maximum extent possible. Riparian vegetation must be reestablished within the construction limits of the project by the end of the growing season following completion of construction.

Thank you for requesting our input at this time. The applicant is reminded that issuance of a 401 Water Quality Certification requires that appropriate measures be instituted to ensure that water quality standards are met and designated uses are not degraded or lost. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ryan Conchilla at ryan.conchilla@deq.nc.gov.

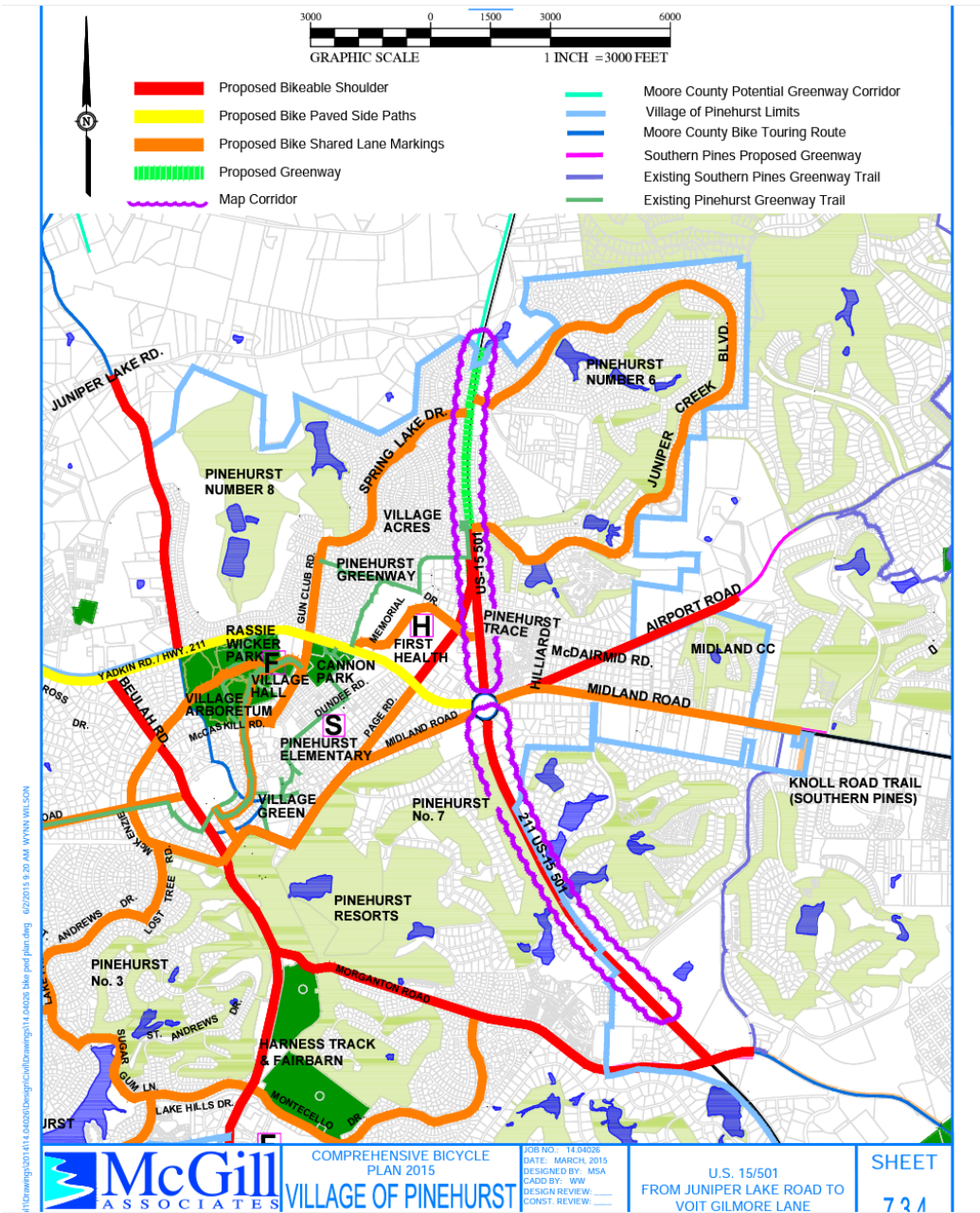
Jennifer Satterthwaite

From: Karyl Fuller <kfuller@tjcog.org>
Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2023 11:44 AM
To: Rick DeCola
Subject: RE: NCDOT STIP R-5927 Start of Study

Mr. DeCola,

I have a few notes.

- Someone has already mentioned the endangered woodpeckers.
- I believe that some of the bordering property is golf courses. I saw from another email that some of the courses are not public but some are, I believe.
- Also, there is a new MPO forming that will cover this area, it is the Sandhills (I believe) MPO and they are developing their MOU now. It may be worth reaching out to their LPA, the Village of Pinehurst for their comments.
- There is a recommendation for multi-use path improvements (Moore County CTP, 2019) and bike shoulders (Pinehurst Bike Plan), I believe, close to Pinehurst, just above the traffic circle. See snip from Pinehurst's Bicycle Plan (2015) below.



Thanks for the opportunity to comment.
Sincerely,

Karyl Fuller

Senior Planner

Triangle J Council of Governments
Triangle Area Rural Planning Organization
(919) 558-9320 | kfuller@tjco.org
www.tarpo.org | www.tjco.org

TJCOG will fully transition to Central Pines Regional Council on September 12, 2023



From: Rick DeCola <rick.decola@meadhunt.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2023 9:47 AM
To: Seth.Wilcher@dot.gov; Stephen.A.Brumagin@usace.army.mil; Gary_Jordan@fws.gov; Somerville.Amanetta@epa.gov; Ryan.Conchilla@deq.nc.gov; Travis.Wilson@ncwildlife.org; mmandeville@vopnc.org; mcarpenter@vopnc.org; rpedersen@moorecountync.gov; Karyl Fuller <kfuller@tjcog.org>
Cc: Davis, Gregory S <gsdavis@ncdot.gov>; King, Art C <acking@ncdot.gov>; Badgett, Rex <jsbadgett@ncdot.gov>; Jennifer Satterthwaite <Jennifer.Satterthwaite@meadhunt.com>; Veronica Miller <Veronica.Miller@meadhunt.com>; Siobhan Gordon <Siobhan.Gordon@meadhunt.com>
Subject: NCDOT STIP R-5927 Start of Study

Good Morning,

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Division 8 has begun the project development, environmental and engineering studies for the proposed widening of US 15/US 501 from the NC 2/NC 211 traffic circle in Pinehurst to NC 73 (Moore County). Additionally, NC 73 and SR 1838 (McCaskill Road) will be realigned to form one single intersection. The project is included in the NCDOT 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as project R-5927 and is scheduled for right-of-way in fiscal year 2026 and construction in fiscal year 2029. It will be funded through the State Highway Trust Fund. A State Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact is anticipated to be prepared in accordance with the North Carolina Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Attached for your review are the project vicinity and study area maps. We would appreciate any information that you might have that would be helpful in evaluating potential environmental impacts of the project, including recommendations of alternatives to be studied. If applicable, please identify any permits or approvals that may be required by your agency.

Please respond by September 25, 2023, so that your comments can be used in the scoping of this project. If you have any questions concerning this project, or would like any additional information, please contact me at 919-714-8666 or rick.decola@meadhunt.com and include the STIP R-5927 in all correspondence and comments.

Sincerely,
Rick DeCola

Rick DeCola, PE
Transportation Department Manager
Direct: 919-714-8666 | Cell: 919-395-3854 | Transfer Files

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Jennifer Satterthwaite

From: Jordan, Gary <gary_jordan@fws.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2023 3:30 PM
To: Rick DeCola; Seth.Wilcher@dot.gov; Stephen.A.Brumagin@usace.army.mil; Somerville.Amanetta@epa.gov; Ryan.Conchilla@deq.nc.gov; Travis.Wilson@ncwildlife.org; mmandeville@vopnc.org; mcarpenter@vopnc.org; rpedersen@moorecountync.gov; kfuller@tjcog.org
Cc: Davis, Gregory S; King, Art C; Badgett, Rex; Jennifer Satterthwaite; Veronica Miller; Siobhan Gordon
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] NCDOT STIP R-5927 Start of Study

You don't often get email from gary_jordan@fws.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

Rick,

This project area is within the known range of the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). A survey for RCW cavity trees should be conducted in suitable habitat within 0.5 mile of the project footprint. If active RCW cavity trees are observed, the USFWS should be contacted with the results. The presence of active RCW cavity trees may require a Foraging Habitat Analysis (FHA) to be conducted. The results of a FHA would determine whether formal Section 7 consultation is required.

Gary Jordan
Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Liaison to NCDOT
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Raleigh Ecological Services Field Office
551-F Pylon Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606
gary_jordan@fws.gov

From: Rick DeCola <rick.decola@meadhunt.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2023 9:47 AM
To: Seth.Wilcher@dot.gov <Seth.Wilcher@dot.gov>; Stephen.A.Brumagin@usace.army.mil <Stephen.A.Brumagin@usace.army.mil>; Jordan, Gary <gary_jordan@fws.gov>; Somerville.Amanetta@epa.gov <Somerville.Amanetta@epa.gov>; Ryan.Conchilla@deq.nc.gov <Ryan.Conchilla@deq.nc.gov>; Travis.Wilson@ncwildlife.org <Travis.Wilson@ncwildlife.org>; mmandeville@vopnc.org <mmandeville@vopnc.org>; mcarpenter@vopnc.org <mcarpenter@vopnc.org>; rpedersen@moorecountync.gov <rpedersen@moorecountync.gov>; kfuller@tjcog.org <kfuller@tjcog.org>
Cc: Davis, Gregory S <gsdavis@ncdot.gov>; King, Art C <acking@ncdot.gov>; Badgett, Rex <jsbadgett@ncdot.gov>; Jennifer Satterthwaite <Jennifer.Satterthwaite@meadhunt.com>; Veronica Miller <Veronica.Miller@meadhunt.com>; Siobhan Gordon <Siobhan.Gordon@meadhunt.com>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] NCDOT STIP R-5927 Start of Study

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Good Morning,

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Division 8 has begun the project development, environmental and engineering studies for the proposed widening of US 15/US 501 from the NC 2/NC 211 traffic circle in Pinehurst to NC 73 (Moore County). Additionally, NC 73 and SR 1838 (McCaskill Road) will be realigned to form one single intersection. The project is included in the NCDOT 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as project R-5927 and is scheduled for right-of-way in fiscal year 2026 and construction in fiscal year 2029. It will be funded through the State Highway Trust Fund. A State Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact is anticipated to be prepared in accordance with the North Carolina Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Attached for your review are the project vicinity and study area maps. We would appreciate any information that you might have that would be helpful in evaluating potential environmental impacts of the project, including recommendations of alternatives to be studied. If applicable, please identify any permits or approvals that may be required by your agency.

Please respond by September 25, 2023, so that your comments can be used in the scoping of this project. If you have any questions concerning this project, or would like any additional information, please contact me at 919-714-8666 or rick.decola@meadhunt.com and include the STIP R-5927 in all correspondence and comments.

Sincerely,
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Jennifer Satterthwaite

From: Somerville, Amanetta <Somerville.Amanetta@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2023 11:13 AM
To: Rick DeCola
Subject: RE: NCDOT STIP R-5927 Start of Study

Good morning, Mr. DeCola,

The EPA has reviewed the provided information for STIP Project R-5927- Widening of US 15/US 501 from the NC 2/NC 211 traffic circle in Pinehurst to NC and the realignment of NC 73 and SR 1838 (McCaskill Road) intersection in Moore County, North Carolina. This project is state-funded, NEPA is not applicable. EPA does not have any comments on the current scope at this time.

Amanetta Somerville

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 4
61 Forsyth Street SW. Atlanta, Ga 30303
National Environmental Policy Act Section
Strategic Programs Office
Phone: 404-562-9025
E-mail: somerville.amanetta@epa.gov

From: Rick DeCola <rick.decola@meadhunt.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2023 9:47 AM
To: Seth.Wilcher@dot.gov; Stephen.A.Brumagin@usace.army.mil; Gary_Jordan@fws.gov; Somerville, Amanetta <Somerville.Amanetta@epa.gov>; Ryan.Conchilla@deq.nc.gov; Travis.Wilson@ncwildlife.org; mmandeville@vopnc.org; mcarpenter@vopnc.org; rpedersen@moorecountync.gov; kfuller@tjcog.org
Cc: Davis, Gregory S <gsdavis@ncdot.gov>; King, Art C <acking@ncdot.gov>; Badgett, Rex <jsbadgett@ncdot.gov>; Jennifer Satterthwaite <Jennifer.Satterthwaite@meadhunt.com>; Veronica Miller <Veronica.Miller@meadhunt.com>; Siobhan Gordon <Siobhan.Gordon@meadhunt.com>
Subject: NCDOT STIP R-5927 Start of Study

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Please respond by September 25, 2023, so that your comments can be used in the scoping of this project. If you have any questions concerning this project, or would like any additional information, please contact me at 919-714-8666 or rick.decola@meadhunt.com and include the STIP R-5927 in all correspondence and comments.

Sincerely,
Rick DeCola

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⊠ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ⊠

Cameron Ingram, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rick DeCola, Transportation Department Manager
Mead & Hunt

FROM: Travis Wilson, Highway Project Coordinator
Habitat Conservation Program

DATE: August 31, 2023

SUBJECT: Response to the start of study notification regarding fish and wildlife concerns for the proposed widening of US 15/501 and intersection improvements in Pinehurst, Moore County, North Carolina. STIP# R-5927

This memorandum responds to a request for our concerns regarding impacts on fish and wildlife resources resulting from the subject project. Biologists on the staff of the N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) have reviewed the proposed improvements. Our comments are provided in accordance with certain provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c)) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661-667d).

There is potential for federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) to be present within the project study area. A survey should be conducted to determine presence or absence of active RCW cavities. To further help facilitate document preparation and the review process our general informational needs are outlined below:

1. Description of fishery and wildlife resources within the project area, including a listing of federally or state designated threatened, endangered, or special concern species. Potential borrow areas to be used for project construction should be included in the inventories. A listing of designated plant species can be developed through consultation with:

NC Natural Heritage Program
Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources
1601 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1601.

WWW.ncnhp.org

and,

NCDA Plant Conservation Program

P. O. Box 27647
Raleigh, N. C. 27611
(919) 733-3610

2. Description of any streams or wetlands affected by the project. The need for channelizing or relocating portions of streams crossed and the extent of such activities.
3. Cover type maps showing wetland acreages impacted by the project. Wetland acreages should include all project-related areas that may undergo hydrologic change as a result of ditching, other drainage, or filling for project construction. Wetland identification may be accomplished through coordination with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). If the COE is not consulted, the person delineating wetlands should be identified and criteria listed.
4. Cover type maps showing acreages of upland wildlife habitat impacted by the proposed project. Potential borrow sites should be included.
5. The extent to which the project will result in loss, degradation, or fragmentation of wildlife habitat (wetlands or uplands).
6. Mitigation for avoiding, minimizing or compensating for direct and indirect degradation in habitat quality as well as quantitative losses.
7. A cumulative impact assessment section which analyzes the environmental effects of highway construction and quantifies the contribution of this individual project to environmental degradation.
8. A discussion of the probable impacts on natural resources which will result from secondary development facilitated by the improved road access.
9. If construction of this facility is to be coordinated with other state, municipal, or private development projects, a description of these projects should be included in the environmental document, and all project sponsors should be identified.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input in the early planning stages for this project. If we can further assist your office, please contact me at (919) 707- 4057.