



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

P.O. BOX 2676

VERO BEACH, FLORIDA 32961-2676

May 19, 1992



Colonel Terrence C. Salt
District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Attn: Regulatory Division

Application No: 199200428 (IP-BL)

Dated: 4/10/92

Applicant: Seminole Electric
Cooperative, Inc.

County: Hardee, Desoto,
Charlotte, and Lee Counties

Dear Colonel Salt:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the project plans advertised by the subject public notice. This report is submitted in accordance with the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.).

Review of this public notice has been coordinated with the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission (FG&FWFC).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

According to the public notice, the proposed project consists of placement of fill in 4.18 acres of wetlands for access roads and structure pads, plus impact to 0.17 acres of wetlands through placement of corduroy roads, required to construct a 70-mile-long 230 kV transmission line. The project includes an aerial crossing of the Peace River. Proposed mitigation consists of enhancing 110.21 acres of marsh and creating 16.32 acres of forested and herbaceous wetlands in the C.M. Webb Wildlife Management Area in Charlotte County, Florida.

On May 6, 1992, a Service biologist visited the site of the proposed mitigation with representatives from the FG&FWFC and the Seminole Electric Cooperative, Incorporated. Existing wetlands on the proposed enhancement site consisted of wet prairie and a limited area of hydric pine flatwoods. The site of the proposed wetland creation was dominated by wax myrtle, mixed grasses and other herbaceous vegetation, and saw palmetto in areas adjacent to adjoining wetlands.

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Proposed wetland enhancement is designed to raise seasonal high water by approximately 0.4 foot and alter the hydroperiod over an area estimated at 110.21 acres. Aside from the presence of existing erosion channels in areas designated on project plans as Slough 2 and Slough 3, wetlands on the site appear functional. Proposed enhancement value is derived from "making the wetlands wetter," resulting in vegetative changes, possible use by fish, and a hoped for increase in value to wading birds and other wildlife. However, the proposed work will result in 0.76 acre of additional wetland filling and may kill some existing slash pine.

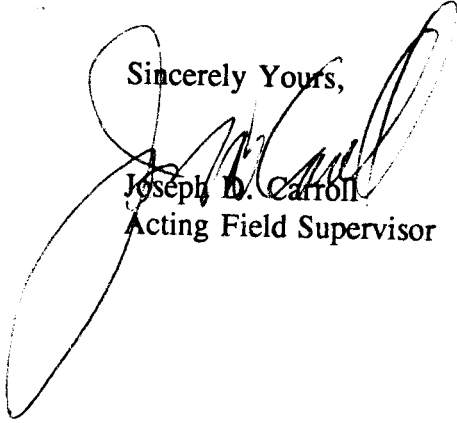
Based on review of site plans and the field inspection, the Service is uncertain whether the proposed enhancement of wetlands will be effective. However, since creation of wetlands also being proposed compensates for wetlands filling at a ratio of greater than 3 to 1, the Service believes that mitigation being proposed will be sufficient to offset project impacts to fish and wildlife.

Therefore, the Service would not object to a permit being issued for this proposed activity, provided that monitoring of the proposed mitigation be a condition of permit issuance. We suggest that annual quantitative monitoring be required for a period of not less than 5 years and that specific criteria be established to evaluate success of wetland enhancement and creation efforts. Should the Corps desire further coordination, the Service is available to review and comment on more detailed mitigation plans, monitoring provisions, and draft permit conditions for this project.

The Service requests that we be provided an opportunity to comment on any substantial changes in the currently proposed mitigation plan, that we be provided a copy of any permit issued for this proposed work, and that we receive copies of any required monitoring reports for the mitigation.

If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Peter Plage of my staff (813-353-8233).

Sincerely Yours,


Joseph D. Carroll
Acting Field Supervisor

cc:

EPA, Atlanta, GA
FG&FWFC, Tallahassee, FL
FG&FWFC, Vero Beach, FL
FG&FWFC, Punta Gorda, FL

DER, Tallahassee, FL
FWS, Jacksonville, FL
FWE, Naples, FL

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