



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION

ONE CONSERVATION WAY · BRUNSWICK, GA 31520 · 912-264-7218

WALTER RABON  
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**COASTAL MARSHLANDS PROTECTION ACT  
STAFF'S FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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April 5, 2024

**TO:** Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee:  
Commissioner Walter Rabon, Chairman  
Mr. Chad Barrow  
Mr. Brad Brookshire  
Mr. Davis Poole  
Dr. Valerie Hepburn

**FROM:** Department Staff to the Committee

**APPLICANT:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Coastal Resources Division

**AGENT:** Steven Partin  
GADNR – Coastal Resources Division  
One Conservation Way  
Brunswick, GA 31520

**LOCATIONS:** Champney River, McIntosh County, Georgia

**PROJECT:** The proposed project is to modify and enhance the James Allen Williamson Champney River Park located on Champney River in McIntosh County, Georgia.

**ARMY CORPS NUMBER:** SAS-1980-04319

**APPLICABLE LAW:** O.C.G.A. §12-5-280 *et seq.*, as amended, Coastal Marshlands Protection Act of 1970.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS:** The Public Notice of the Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee (CMPC) ran from June 15, 2023 to July 14, 2023. No comments were received during the public notice period.

**FINDINGS:** Department Staff to the CMPC make the following findings regarding this application:

**Project Scope and Justification: O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286(b): O.C.G.A § 12-5-286 (b) (8) requires a discussion of why the permit should be granted.**

1. The existing boat ramp, fishing pier and parking lot was initially permitted in 1981 by CMPA permit #127 and modified in 2003 by CMPA permit #415 that included modifications to the service dock.
2. The applicant proposes to renovate the entire 3.3 acre project site which will include expanding the boat ramp, reconfiguring and enhancing the service dock, installing a new barge landing, replacing the deteriorated boardwalk in the northwest corner of the project area, elevating the ~2.5 acre parking lot, and adding bioswales in the parking lot.
3. The existing boat ramp is approximately 50ft. wide and extends channelward approximately 70ft. (3,500sq.ft.). The service dock, located on the western side of the ramp, includes a 4ft. x 80ft. (320sq.ft.) pile supported walkway leading channelward to a 4ft. x 24ft. (96sq.ft.) gangway. The gangway provides access to an L-shaped floating dock made up of a 10ft. x 20ft. (200sq.ft.) gangway landing and a 10ft. x 30ft. (300sq.ft.) mooring float parallel to the channel.
4. The existing boat ramp, service docks and walkways impact approximately 4,416sq.ft. (0.10 acres) of coastal marshlands.
5. The applicant proposes to reconstruct the boat ramp and service dock which will consist of a 56ft. x 106ft. (5,936sq.ft.) two-lane concrete ramp with a 6ft. center divider. The ramp will extend 30ft. channelward of Mean Low Water (MLW) and will be protected by rip rap on the east and west sides.
6. The portions of the proposed ramp (4,160sq.ft.) and rip rap (1,400sq.ft.) within CMPA jurisdiction will impact approximately 5,560sq.ft. (0.13 acres) of coastal marshlands, of which 2,060sq.ft. (0.05 acres) will be new impacts.
7. The proposed new service dock will include a 6ft. x 85ft. (499sq.ft. in jurisdiction) aluminum, fixed walkway leading from the upland to a 4ft x 30ft. (120sq.ft.) gangway that will access an 8ft. x 40ft. (320sq.ft.) floating dock perpendicular to the bank. An 8ft. x 60ft. (480sq.ft.) floating dock will be attached to the channelward end of the perpendicular float and extend west, parallel to the channel.
8. The fixed walkway will also provide access to a 10ft. x 30ft. (300sq.ft.) fishing pier to the west of the terminal end of the walkway.
9. Approximately 1,719sq.ft. (0.04 acres) associated with the service dock, floats, and pier will be located within CMPA jurisdiction.
10. The existing concrete pilings that are used for a barge landing will be left in place.
11. The proposed barge landing will consist of an irregularly shaped 35ft. wide landing area extending from the parking lot to the CMPA jurisdiction line. Channelward of the jurisdiction line, the landing area will be supported by approximately 690sq.ft. of rip rap.
12. There will be two 35sq.ft. timber dolphins placed 60ft. apart channelward of the proposed rip rap for barge mooring and located above MLW.
13. The proposed barge landing will impact approximately 760sq.ft. (0.02 acres) of coastal marshlands.
14. Maintenance to portions of an existing 5ft. wide elevated walkway in the northwestern corner of the project area is proposed in the current footprint.
15. As proposed, the project will impact approximately 4,539sq.ft. (0.10 acres) of coastal marshlands.

**O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286 (b) (8) requires a discussion of why the permit should be granted.**

16. Due to its proximity to a variety of waterways and habitats the Champney River Park and boat ramp is heavily used by fisherman, hunters, birders, and the GADNR – Wildlife Resource Division staff to access and maintain many portions of the Altamaha Wildlife Management Area. The improvements are necessary to increase safety and increase accessibility at the site. The expanded service dock and boat ramp will allow for more efficient launching and recovery of vessels of all types.

**Application Form, Applicant Name and Address, Project Plans, Plat, Deed or other instrument, Written permission to carry out project by owner of land, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286(b)(1-4):**

17. Applicant has submitted the application form, name and address, project plans, plats, and deed.

**Adjoining Landowners, Non-refundable application fee, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286 (b)(5,7):**

18. The adjoining property owner is the State of Georgia.

19. The non-refundable application fee was not required because the applicant is an entity of the State of Georgia.

**Local Government Zoning, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286(b)(6):**

20. A letter has been received from the City of Darien Planning Director stating the proposed project is not violative of zoning law. The letter is not conditioned.

**Alternative Sites Description and Feasibility 12-5-286 (b)(8):**

21. The proposed project is to modify and enhance the existing boat ramp facility and park amenities; no alternative locations were considered by the applicant.

**Landfill, Hazardous Waste Inquiry, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286(b)(9):**

22. A letter has been received from the City of Darien Planning Director stating that there are no landfills or hazardous waste sites near the proposed project location.

**Water Quality Certification, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286(b)(10):**

23. Water Quality Certification has been issued in conjunction with the Nationwide Permits #3a, #13, #36. and a Letter of Permission.

**Adherence to Erosion and Sediment Control Responsibilities, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286 (b)(11):**

24. Applicant has stated their intention to adhere to building, land disturbing and storm-water management authorizations as required by McIntosh County, Georgia.

**Notification of Proposed Project, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286(d)(e):**

25. The Public Notice of the Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee (CMPC) ran from June 15, 2023 to July 14, 2023. No comments were received during the public notice period.

**Public Interest Considerations, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-286(g):**

26. In passing upon application for a permit, the CMPC shall consider the public interest.

- a) **The design of the project is such that no unreasonably harmful obstruction to or alteration of the natural flow of navigational water within the affected area will arise as a result of the proposal.** The proposed project design will not alter natural flow of

navigable waters. The service dock facility is pile supported and extends approximately 91ft. beyond mean low water at a point where the waterway is approximately 590ft. wide.

- b) **The design of the project is such that no unreasonably harmful or increased erosion, shoaling of the channels, or stagnant areas of water will be created.** The proposed project will not unreasonably harm or increase erosion, shoaling of the channels, or create stagnant areas of water. The poured concrete boat ramp will be abutted with rip-rap to minimize scouring and erosion.
- c) **The proposal will not unreasonably interfere with the conservation of fish, shrimp, oysters, crabs, and clams or any marine life or wildlife or other natural resources including but not limited to water and oxygen supply.** The project is not expected to unreasonably interfere with the conservation of fish, shrimp, oysters, crabs, and clams or any marine life or wildlife or other natural resources including but not limited to water and oxygen supply. The West Indian Manatee is an endangered and federally protected species and is known to frequent Georgia's coastal waters.

**Leasing of state owned marshland or water bottoms, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-287:**

27. The proposed project will not require a water bottoms lease.

**Restriction on granting of permits; size restriction; activities and structures considered contrary to the public interest, O.C.G.A. § 12-5-288 (a) and (b):**

- 28. The boat ramp facility is water-dependent. The project cannot be satisfied using an alternative non-marshland site.
- 29. The amount of proposed structures in jurisdiction will total 4,539sq.ft. (0.10 acres) of coastal marshlands.

**Determining Project Boundaries, Rule 391-2-3-.02(3):**

- 30. The marshlands component consists of the removal and replacement of the existing boat ramp facility, a service dock, and construction of a barge landing.
- 31. The upland component will consist of approximately 2.5 acres (108,900sq.ft.). The proposed improvements to the parking lot include the addition of fill, bioswales, and pervious grass pave.
- 32. Currently, the parking lot area consists of approximately 97,686sq.ft. of impervious paved asphalt, 3,444sq.ft. of impervious sidewalks and 7,500sq.ft. of pervious grass islands. The area of the upland component within the 50ft. marshlands buffer totals approximately 78,844sq.ft. (1.81 acres)

**Marshland Buffers for Upland Component of the Project, Rule 391-2-3-.02(4):**

- 33. The applicant has certified adherence to soil and erosion control responsibilities.
- 34. The proposed project is an enhancement of a currently impacted public access site. Currently, the impacted area within the 50ft. marshlands buffer totals approximately 42,291sq.ft. (0.97 acres). The proposed project proposes to reduce the amount of impervious surface within the 50ft. marshlands buffer than what is currently existing.
- 35. Land disturbance and construction within the 50ft. marshlands buffer in the upland component of the project is limited to:
  - a) **Construction and Maintenance of temporary structures necessary for construction of the marshlands component of the project.** There are no temporary structures proposed for construction of the marshlands component.

- b) **Construction and maintenance of permanent structures that are required for the functionality of and/or provide permanent access to the marshlands component of the project.** New impacts in the buffer will include portions of the parking lot, sidewalks, and barge landing, however, these new impacts will be constructed on a portion of the buffer that is already disturbed and/or impervious.
- c) **Already existing impervious surfaces and structures within the marshlands buffer may remain and be maintained, provided the replacement, modification or upgrade does not increase any encroachment upon the required marshlands buffer in effect at the time of replacement, modification or upgrade.** Enhancements to the buffer to reduce current, pre-construction impervious surfaces are proposed, to include additional clean-up of previous, existing impacts, supplemental plantings, and introduction of stormwater management tools.

**Stormwater Management Standards for the Upland Component of the Project, Rule 391-2-3-.02(5):**

36. Stormwater will be treated with four underdrained bioretention areas within the paved portion of the upland component that will lead to a proposed stormwater bioretention area spanning the entire eastern side of the upland component.

**Impervious Surface, Rule 391-2-3-.02(6):**

- 37. Currently there is approximately 42,291sq.ft. (54%) of impervious surface within the 50ft. marshlands buffer.
- 38. The proposed impervious area within the 50ft. marshlands buffer will total approximately 28,146sq.ft. (36%) upon project completion.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should the Committee determine that the proposed project is in the public interest, Department staff recommends the following **STANDARD and SPECIAL conditions:**

**COASTAL MARSHLANDS PROTECTION ACT STANDARD CONDITIONS**

- 1. The project must comply, as applicable, for areas permitted herein, with all other federal, state, and local statutes, ordinances, and regulations and the applicant must obtain all licenses and permits prior to commencement of construction.
- 2. This permit does not resolve actual or potential disputes regarding ownership of, rights in or over the property upon which the subject project is proposed, and shall not be construed as recognizing or denying any such rights or interests.
- 3. All plans, documents, and materials contained in this permit application, required by Coastal Marshlands Protection Act of 1970, as amended O.C.G.A. § 12-5-280 et seq. are a part of this permit and conformance to such plans, documents, and materials are a condition of this permit. No change or deviation from these plans, documents, and materials shall be permitted without prior notification and approval by the Department or CMPC.
- 4. No further encroachment or construction shall take place within state jurisdiction, except as permitted by the CMPC. Any modification of the plans or structure in the jurisdictional area must be reviewed and approved by the Department or the CMPC, as necessary, prior to construction.

5. No construction or alteration of a project may commence until the expiration of 30 days following the date on which the application is approved; provided however that if a timely appeal is filed, no construction or alteration may commence until all administrative and judicial proceedings are terminated.
6. The permit must be posted onsite within twenty-four (24) hours of beginning construction.
7. A copy of these and all permit conditions must be supplied to the person in charge of construction. All contractors and subcontractors are responsible for strict adherence to all permit conditions.
8. All Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be used to prevent any erosion and sedimentation at the site. No equipment, materials, or debris may be placed in, disposed of, or stored in jurisdictional areas. Any visible alterations in the marsh topography will be restored immediately using low-impact hand tools. Any damage to the marsh vegetation that has not recovered naturally during the next growing season will be repaired by a method acceptable to the Department.
9. If the permitted improvements are damaged, fall into disrepair, become dilapidated, or are not meeting their expected usefulness and are not maintained at a serviceable level, it is the responsibility of the owner to remove the improvements. A new permit will be required to retain and repair the structure, improvement, or asset if it loses its structural integrity and is no longer serviceable.
10. The CMPC is not bound in the future to protect any improvement or asset authorized by the permit.

#### **SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

1. Permittee may be required to provide a post-construction survey to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division upon completion of the permitted activity. Such survey shall comply with the Georgia Plat Act O.C.G.A. 15-6-67 *et seq.*
2. The permittee must install manatee awareness signage during construction of the project and adhere to standard manatee conditions and procedures for aquatic construction as approved by the Savannah District Office of the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.