Project Narrative for Activities Affecting Waters of the United States
Or Critical Areas of the State of Georgia at Altamaha Game Management Area- Rhett's Island

Permittee:

Name- GADNR (Altamaha Wildlife Management Area)
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Agent:

Name- Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
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Contact- Malcolm Baldwin Phone- (843) 277-8231

Proposed Work

Ducks Unlimited (DU) assisted Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) with improvements to the Altamaha Game Land- Rhett's Island Units, including maintenance activities, consisting of canal cleanout, dike retopping and water control structure replacement through funding provided by FEMA and NAWCA (North American Wetland Conservation Act) to repair storm damage and enhance the managed tidal impoundments.

The result of this work greatly improved the water flow in and out of the units, enhancing the wetlands and creating better habitat. A byproduct of this however, some of the outfalls have since experienced erosion that threaten the stability of the water control structures themselves. This project is proposed to take emergency measures to stabilize six (6) of the existing water control structures (WCS's) by adding rip rap to replace the material that has scoured away and stabilize the outfall to prevent the scour from occurring in the future. The weight of the rip rap will also serve to stabilize the retaining wall, adding structural integrity and preventing potential failure in the future.

Summary of Impacts:

Structure	*External Wetland Excavation*	*External Wetland Fill*	*Internal Wetland Excavation*	*Internal Wetland Fill*
1A	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.014 Ac/ 91 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.0 Ac/ 0 CY
1B	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.018 Ac/ 153 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.0 Ac/ 0 CY
1C	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.018 Ac/ 108 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.0 Ac/ 0 CY
1D	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.018 Ac/ 93 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.0 Ac/ 0 CY
2C	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.014 Ac/ 73 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.0 Ac/ 0 CY
3F	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.011 Ac/ 66 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.0 Ac/ 0 CY
Totals	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.093 Ac/ 584 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY	0.00 Ac/0.0 CY

A more detailed project description is included in the attached permit drawings.

Project Purpose

The overall project purposes include the addition of rip rap to repair and stabilize excessive scour caused by the existing water control discharge. Left to continue, the water control structures will fail causing the impoundment to breach and the habitat will be lost.

Rhett's Island is an important wetland complex in the Altamaha Game Land. Continued operation of the water control structures is necessary to impact habitat *as they observe declines in wetland conditions or increases in avian numbers.* Habitat availability may be limited or impacted in coastal habitats during different times of the year when migratory shorebirds and waterfowl need high-quality habitat, so long-term changes in water quality and habitat types could increase the diversity and duration of habitat available to these species groups – aiding in meeting objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative and the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture. This can also result in increased use for public recreation and education possibilities through bird watching, hiking, waterfowl hunting, scientific studies and educational outreach. In addition to providing excellent waterfowl, shorebird, and other wetland-dependent species habitat, the improved wetland systems at Rhett's Island will also improve water quality by helping to filter out sediments and nutrients before they reach the Altamaha River.

Alternatives Considered

One alternative considered was backfilling the scoured area with borrowed fill material to replace what has washed away and then adding a wooden splash pad. However, due to the existing void caused by the scour, there are concerns with the stability of the structure. The placement of fill material in wet conditions will not provide the counterweight or the structural integrity that rip rap would. We therefore feel rip rap is necessary to stabilize the structures and ensure the do not fail in the future.

Avoidance and Minimization

Avoidance strategies are limited for the proposed work. The existing structure's outfall require stabilization. The minimum amount of rip rap needed to obtain this is proposed. The rip rap will remain submerged at low tide and not be filled to an elevation that would cause a net loss of wetland.

Compensatory Mitigation

We have not developed a compensatory mitigation plan for the proposed project for several reasons. The proposed project aids in the management of a more diverse set of habitats by allowing multiple water management regimes within a fully-functioning tidal impoundment. The proposed activities are within line with traditional maintenance activities associated with managed tidal impoundments. The proposed project is consistent with the past stewardship of Rhett's Island. The project will help secure previous improvements installed by grant funding from the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) and the project is consistent with the habitat goals for The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative and the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture. In addition, there will be no net loss in wetland area by the performance of the proposed work. Based on these reasons, we believe that compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project.

Navigation

The proposed rip rap will be placed at the end of the outfall pipes of 6 existing water control structures. All 6 sites are located in existing outfall ditches, outside of the river. The outfall ditches range from 60' to 280' in length. The proposed rip rap length from the existing bulkhead varies from 15' to 25' in length and therefore will not extend into either of the river outfalls, Long Reach or Altamaha River. These to rivers at their narrowest points in

this area are both approximately 750 lf wide. The implementation of the proposed work will not effect navigation in any way.

Landfill or Hazardous Waste Statement

The proposed work is no over landfill or hazardous waste sites and the site is suitable for the work proposed.

Erosion and Sedimentation Statement:

The work will be conducted in compliance with applicable erosion control and sediment control responsibilities. The project's purpose is to stop excessive erosion at the existing outfall locations.

Public Interest Statement

No unreasonable harmful obstruction or alteration of the natural flow of navigational water will arise as a result of the proposed work. No unreasonable harmful or increased erosion, shoaling or channels or stagnant areas of water will be created. Granting of the permit will not result in interference with conservation of fish, shrimp, oysters, crabs, clams, or other marine life or resources, including but not limited to oxygen supply.

Attachments

Location Map, Site Plans and Impact Tables for sites 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 2C and 3F.