

**Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Division
Meridian Landing Dock Facility and Marsh Landing Docking Facility
McIntosh County, Georgia**

Project Description:

Background and Justification

The existing dock facilities at Marsh Landing and Meridian provide mooring for the public ferry vessels that serve Sapelo Island, as well as the University of Georgia’s research trawler, and finally limited access for small boats operated by island residents, utility providers and guests of the agencies. Approximately 65-70,000 passengers use the ferry system annually, accounting for the overwhelming majority of public access to Sapelo Island. The ferry vessels also provide emergency service to island residents and visitors and are on-call at all times for medical evacuations, etc. The site at Marsh Landing sits on the southwest corner of Sapelo Island at the junction of the Duplin River and Dobby Sound and has been in service as an island landing for at least the past 60 years. Meridian Dock is located on Hudson Creek and has been in service for over 40 years. The ferry service is operated by the Wildlife Resources Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Meridian Landing Dock Facility

The existing facility has an existing steel sheet pile bulkhead that is approximately 225 linear feet in length with a 2.5 ft. concrete cap. The existing dock consists of a 16 ft. x 55 ft. fixed pier with a 3 ft. x 6 ft. walkway that provides access to a USGS stream gauge. From the fixed pier, a 7 ft. x 30 ft. gangway provides access to 25 ft. x 25 ft. floating dock connected to an 8 ft. x 80 ft. floating dock. In addition, there are six (6) mooring dolphins totaling approximately 8 sq. ft. Four (4) of the dolphins consist of three (3) wooden pilings. The other two (2) consist of five (5) wood wooden pilings. The existing dock facility extends approximately 97 ft. into the waterway at a point where the waterway is approximately 480 ft. from Mean Low Water (MLW) to MLW.

Existing Meridian Landing Dock Facility	Impacts to Coastal Marshlands
Bulkhead	562.5 sq. ft.
Fixed Pier	880 sq. ft.
USGS walkway	18 sq. ft.
Gangway	210 sq. ft.
Floating Docks (2)	1,265 sq. ft.
Mooring Dolphins (6)	8 sq. ft.
TOTAL	2,943.5 sq. ft. (0.07 acres)

The proposed project consists of modifying the existing facility by constructing a new concrete sheet pile bulkhead approximately 215 linear feet in length with a 2.5 ft. concrete cap immediately seaward of the existing bulkhead. The existing dock structure will be removed (inclusive of all mooring dolphins). The new, pile-supported dock facility will consist of an 8 ft. x 80 ft. aluminum gangway with a center rail leading to a 40 ft. x 18 ft. floating dock that will be used for mooring the ferry boat with two (2) wood pile mooring dolphins consisting of five (5) pilings each totaling approximately 8 sq. ft. The USGS stream gauge will be mounted on the inboard piling of the ferry dock float. A 4 ft. x 40 ft. aluminum gangway will extend from the ferry dock float to an 8 ft. x 70 ft. floating dock with an 8 ft. x 40 ft. float located on the inboard. The proposed dock facility extends approximately 96 ft. into the waterway at a point where the waterway is approximately 477 ft. from Mean Low Water (MLW) to MLW.

Proposed Modification to Meridian Landing Dock Facility	Impacts to Coastal Marshlands
Bulkhead	537.5 sq. ft.
Gangways (2)	800 sq. ft.
Floating Docks (3)	1,600 sq. ft.
Mooring Dolphins (2)	16 sq. ft.
TOTAL	2,953.5 sq. ft. (0.07 acres)

Marsh Landing Dock Facility

The existing facility has a concrete bulkhead that is approximately 257 linear feet in length with a 2 ft. concrete cap. The existing dock consists of a 12 ft. x 90 ft. fixed walkway leading to a 19 ft. x 38 ft. covered and partially enclosed, fixed deck with a 6 ft. x 142 ft. fixed pier attached. From the fixed structure, there is a 3.5 ft. x 25 ft. gangway that leads to a 7.5 ft. x 40 ft. floating dock, a 3.5 ft. x 26 ft. gangway leading to 10 ft. x 38 ft. of floating dock, and a 6 ft. x 30 ft. gangway leading to a 25 ft. x 25 ft. floating dock. There are six (6) mooring dolphins totaling approximately 8 sq. ft. Four (4) of the dolphins consist of three (3) wooden pilings. The other two (2) consist of five (5) wood wooden pilings. In addition, there are numerous single pilings historically used to assist in stabilizing the floating docks and mooring purposes. The existing dock facility extends approximately 158 ft. into the waterway at a point where the waterway is approximately 680 ft. from Mean Low Water (MLW) to MLW.

Existing Marsh Landing Dock Facility	Impacts to Coastal Marshlands
Bulkhead	514 sq. ft.
Fixed Walkway	1,080 sq. ft.
Covered, Partially Enclosed, Fixed Deck	722 sq. ft.
Fixed Pier	852 sq. ft.
Gangways (3)	358.5 sq. ft.
Floating Docks (3)	1,305 sq. ft.
Mooring Dolphins (2)	8 sq. ft.
TOTAL	4,839.5 sq. ft. (0.11 acres)

The proposed project consists of modifying the existing facility. No modification is proposed for the existing concrete bulkhead, only minor repairs within the existing footprint. The modification to the dock facility will include removal of the existing dock structure (inclusive of all mooring dolphins and single pilings). The new, pile-supported dock facility will include a 20 ft. x 40 ft. (with 25 ft. x 45 ft. metal roof) open air, pavilion a 16 ft. x 38 ft. pier with a 4 ft. x 40 ft. gangway leading to a 10 ft. x 40 ft. floating dock, a second 4 ft. x 40 ft. gangway leading to an 8 ft. x 40 ft. floating dock. Seaward of the pier will be a 12 ft. x 32 ft. (with 15 ft. x 35 ft. metal roof) pavilion with siding. From this platform, there will be an additional 8 ft. x 30 ft. pier will provide access to a 4 ft. x 40 ft. gangway leading to a 10 ft. x 60 ft. floating dock and an 8 ft. x 80 ft. (with center rail) gangway leading to an 18 ft. x 60 ft. floating dock. The heights of both pavilion roofs will not exceed 17 ft. 8 in. above the decking. The facility will also consist of four (4) new mooring dolphins consisting of five (5) wooden pilings each totaling approximately 8 sq. ft. The proposed dock facility extends approximately 166 ft. into the waterway at a point where the waterway is approximately 680 ft. from Mean Low Water (MLW) to MLW.

	Impacts to Coastal Marshlands
Fixed Decks, Inclusive of Roofs (2)	1,650 sq. ft.
Fixed Walkways (2)	848 sq. ft.
Gangways (4)	1,120 sq. ft.
Floating Docks (4)	2,400 sq. ft.

Mooring Dolphins (4)	40 sq. ft.
TOTAL	6,058 sq. ft. (0.14 acres)

Both modified dock facilities will continue to provide water and electricity. No restrooms exist or are proposed over coastal marshlands. As proposed a total of approximately 7,783 sq. ft. (0.179 acres) of structure will be removed and replaced with approximately 9,011.5 sq. ft. (0.207 acres).

Justification for the Pavilions at the Marsh Landing Facility:

O.C.G.A. 12-5-288 (a) states, "If the project is not water related or dependent on waterfront access or can be satisfied by the use of an alternative nonmarshland site or by use of existing public facilities, a permit usually should not be granted pursuant to Code Section 12-5-286."

The proposed covered pavilions are consistent with design standards for the Marsh Landing Dock going back to ownership under Howard Coffin in the 1920's. The retention of the pavilions seeks to both honor the historic nature of the ferry landing while also providing protection for ferry passengers from inclement weather. Both aspects are within the public's interest.

As proposed, the 12 ft. x 32 ft. (with 15 ft. x 35 ft. metal roof) pavilion will have siding. Without siding on this pavilion, rain and winds will make the covered area ineffective and will expose passengers to the elements. Winds typically blow strong from the sound or down the river and the sides are essential in providing refuge for passengers waiting to board the ferry.

The proposed pavilions at the Marsh Landing Facility cannot be relocated to the existing upland. Further upland limitations are due to the fact that the current upland parking, driving and restroom areas constitute less than 18,000 sq. ft. (.4 acres). This area must accommodate passenger parking, boat crew vehicles, USPS and DNR vehicles, public restrooms and adequate space for a driving throughway. There is no room to put an upland staging area without significantly impacting the already-limited parking.

Project Drawings:

SEE ATTACHED

Site Plans and Verified Jurisdiction Line:

SEE ATTACHED

Deed:

SEE ATTACHED

Adjoining Land Owners:

Meridian Landing - Linda and Johnnie Daniels, 9309 GA Hwy 99, Darien, GA 31305

Zoning Letter and Signed Drawings from Local Government:

A letter with the proposed project drawings has been provided to the McIntosh Building and Zoning Office requesting review and a letter stating the proposed project is non-violative of currently local ordinances and/or zoning.

Non-refundable Application Fee:

The applicant is an entity of the State of Georgia; therefore, an application is not required.

Alternative Analysis:

The proposed modification to the Meridian Landing and Marsh Landing Dock Facilities are water-dependent and there is no non-marsh or existing public facilities in existence that will provide the continued ferry services. A different location was not considered.

The existing dock facilities are in need to be modified both because of the age of the structures but also to provide enhance accessibility and to meet the required ADA standards. The facilities are the main department and arrival locations for all that visit, live, and work on Sapelo Island.

Landfill or Hazardous Waste Statement:

Both project locations, Meridian Landing Dock Facility and Marsh Landing Dock Facility are not located on or over a landfill or hazardous waste site according to the State Hazardous Site Response Program’s website.

Water Quality Certification:

A Water Quality Certification is not required for the proposed project.

Erosion and Sedimentation Statement:

The proposed project will be conducted in compliance with all applicable erosion and sediment control responsibilities.

Public Interest Statement:

- 1. 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 modification to the existing facilities will be pile-supported. As proposed, the Meridian Dock Facility will extend into the waterway approximately 96 ft. at a point where the waterway is approximately 477 ft. from MLW to MLW. As proposed, the Marsh Landings Dock Facility will extend into the waterway approximately 166 ft. at a point where the waterway is approximately 680 ft. from MLW to MLW. Neither facility is expected to create or cause an unreasonably harmful obstruction to or alteration of the natural flow of navigational water.

- 2. 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 modification to the existing facilities will be pile-supported. Both facilities have existing bulkheads. As proposed, the Meridian Dock Facility’s existing bulkhead will be replaced with a new concrete sheet pile bulkhead with a 2.5 ft. concrete cap. The proposed bulkhead will be located immediately seaward of the existing bulkhead. No modification is proposed for the existing concrete bulkhead at the Marsh Landing Dock

Facility. Neither facility is expected to create or cause an unreasonably harmful or increased erosion, shoaling of the channels, or stagnant areas of water.

3. 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 proposed modification will be done in accordance to all federal and state mitigating conditions and requirements associated with the protection of marine life and endangered species. The proposed 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.

Marshlands Component:

The proposed marshlands component consists of the modification at both the Meridian Landing and Marsh Landing Dock Facilities as described above.

Upland Component:

There is no upland component associated with the project. The modification to the Meridian Landing and Marsh Landing Dock Facilities will be conducted from the water.