

APPENDIX J

EXECUTIVE ORDER 11990 WETLAND FINDING

Federal Highway Administration
South Dakota Department of Transportation
City of Watertown

Watertown South Connector- SD 20 to US 81
Executive Order 11990 Wetland Finding

This action complies with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands

Approved _____
FHWA Environmental Engineer Date

Approved _____
SDDOT Environmental Engineer Date

Federal Highway Administration
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South Connector- SD 20 to US 81 Environmental Assessment
Executive Order 11990 Wetland Finding

This statement set forth the basis for a preliminary finding that there is no practical, prudent or economical alternative to the placing of fill for highway construction in certain wetlands within the future right-of-way of the proposed South Connector- SD 20 to US 81. The Watertown South Connector Environmental Assessment has satisfactorily addressed project effects on wetlands in accordance with Executive Order 11990 on “No Net Loss” of wetlands.

Projected effects and impacts on wetlands were determined by following Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance and policies, and the wetland sequencing and permitting requirements of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and state agencies responsible for wetland impact review.

Project Description

The proposed project would consist of a paved arterial route from the intersection of US 81 and 20th Avenue South to SD 20. The proposed arterial route would initially be constructed with two traffic lanes, one in each direction of traffic. The Watertown South Connector location is illustrated on Figure 1-2 of the project’s Environmental Assessment (EA). The six Build Alternative Options being evaluated in the EA for the South Connector-SD 20 to US 81 are illustrated on Figure 2-1 of the EA.

The proposed approximately 2-mile roadway will be designed between 80 to 150 feet of ROW, 12-foot minimum travel lane widths, 2.67-foot shoulders near US 212, and 8-foot shoulders for the remainder of the roadway. Figure 2-3 of the EA illustrates the typical roadway sections of the proposed South Connector- SD 20 to US 81. Different sections may be selected at particular areas depending on physical conditions or environmental constraints.

Alternatives Considered

Of the six Build Alternative Options, three options are evaluated in detail within the EA; three options were eliminated from detailed evaluation based on their large magnitude of wetland and other impacts. None of the three alternative options can avoid wetlands because of the presence of isolated wetlands throughout the center portion of the Study Area and the requirement for a roadway to cross the Diversion and Pelican Lake Cutoff Channels (which have associated wetlands). The Build Alternative Options carried forward would reduce wetland acreage as follows: 1.0 acre for Build Alternative Option 2, 3.0 acres for Build Alternative Option 3, and 2.3 acres for Build Alternative Option 4. The estimates are based on determination of wetland boundaries via a review of National Wetland Inventory maps and field confirmation. The EA presents additional details on project effects and proposed avoidance/minimization and mitigation measures.

Basis for Determining the Proposed Action Includes All Practicable Measures to Minimize Harm to Wetlands

During the preliminary design phase for each project segment, all affected wetlands will be delineated following the methods of the USACE 1987 Manual on *Identifying Wetlands in the United States* and field typed in accordance with the methods of USFWS “Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States” (Cowardin et al. 1979), to provide accurate and up-to-date wetland determinations and impact acreages resulting from the project. Wetland impact sequencing measures will also be implemented during the preliminary design phase after the completion of the wetland delineations and field typing. Sequencing implementation includes the following in order; 1) wetland avoidance; 2) wetland impact minimization; and 3) wetland mitigation. Wetland mitigation opportunities will be developed prior to or concurrent with construction of the Watertown South Connector.

Mitigation

Wetlands which cannot be avoided will be mitigated in kind to the extent possible. A wetland mitigation concept plan was prepared for the project and shown in Figure 3-4a. The proposed mitigation ratio is approximately 2:1. The mitigation property is owned by the City of Watertown.. The final mitigation plans will be reviewed and approved/concurred by USFWS as well as other resource agencies. The wetland delineations and field typing, sequencing consideration based preliminary design plans, and the wetland mitigation plan will be included in a wetland permit application prepared for the South Connector- SD 20 to US 81.

Coordination

This project has been and will continue to be coordinated with the following agencies:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- SD Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks
- SD Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources

The wetland permit applications will be submitted to the responsible permitting agencies for review and approval prior to construction of the South Connector- SD 20 to US 81 in anticipation of issuance of a Section 404/401 Individual Permit under the Federal Clean Water Act. The USACE and/or the FHWA will act as the lead approval agency of the wetland permit application for the South Connector- SD 20 to US 81.

Finding

In accordance with Executive Order 11990, NEPA and the Federal Highway Act it has been determined that there is no feasible or practical alternative to the proposed construction. All practical measures to minimize harm have been considered and initiated. Should it become necessary to modify or otherwise revise this preliminary finding with the completion of wetland delineation associated with the projects design phases, and updated Wetland Finding will be prepared and circulated for review and concurrence.