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[Notices]
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement; South Carolina

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement will be prepared for the proposed Interstate 73 (I-73) highway project in eastern South Carolina.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Patrick L. Tyndall, Environmental Program Manager, Federal Highway Administration, 1835 Assembly Street, Suite 1270, Columbia, South Carolina 29201; Telephone (803) 765-5411; email: Patrick.tyndall@fhwa.dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposed I-73 project. The proposed interstate highway is ultimately planned to connect to I-73 in North Carolina and would enter South Carolina near Marlboro County. The portion of the roadway to be evaluated in this proposed EIS is the portion from the vicinity of I-95, southeast to the Conway/Myrtle Beach area, a distance of approximately 60 miles. The proposed study area includes Dillon, Marion, and Horry Counties.

Improvements to the corridor are considered necessary to improve national and regional connectivity to the Conway/Myrtle Beach area of South Carolina by providing a direct interstate link. This link will enhance economic opportunities and tourism in South Carolina. The proposed project would fulfill part of the congressional intent, as originally proposed in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and confirmed in the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) of 1998. The proposed action will also facilitate a more effective evacuation of the Conway/Myrtle Beach area during emergencies. Alternatives to be evaluated include the no action alternative, the upgrade of existing roads, construction on new alignment, and combinations of upgrades and new alignments.

The FHWA and SCDOT are seeking input as a part of the scoping process to assist in identifying issues relative to this project. Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. An interagency coordination process will begin soon, with the invitations to Cooperating Agencies and a formal scoping meeting to occur in the late summer of 2004. A public involvement plan is being developed for this project and will include a variety of opportunities for interested parties to be involved in the project. Two public interest group/public scoping meetings will be held in September 2004 at different locations in eastern South Carolina.

These meetings will be v publicized in advance, giving the location and time for each meeting. Additional coordination with the public, public interest groups, elected officials, and state and federal agencies will be performed between September 2004 and July 2006. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be

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directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Research Planning and Construction. The regulation implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

Issued on: August 3, 2004.

Robert D. Thomas,
Acting Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration,
Columbia, South Carolina.

[FR Doc. 04-18113 Filed 8-6-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-P



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
176 Croghan Spur Road, Suite 200
Charleston, South Carolina 29407



October 16, 2007

Mr. Wayne Hall
Special Projects Manager
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Post Office Box 191
Columbia, SC 29202-0191

Re: I-73 Southern Phase, Biological Assessment

Dear Mr. Hall:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has received the results of the Biological Assessment (BA) for the proposed construction of the southern phase of I-73 between I-95 in Dillon County and SC-22 in Horry County, SC. The BA, completed by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), provides a brief description of the project and its proposed corridor, a review of habitats within the corridor and a list of the 15 protected species known to occur within Horry, Marion and Dillon Counties. An Environmental Impact Statement for this phase of the project was previously reviewed by the Service.

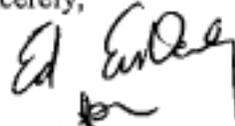
The Service recommends SCDOT contact the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for consultation requirements regarding the Shortnose sturgeon, *Acipenser brevirostrum*. The Service and NMFS share jurisdiction over the listed sea turtles, however, these species are not found within the project corridor. Similarly the West Indian Manatee, *Trichechus manatus*, the Seabeach amaranth, *Amaranthus pumilus*, and the Piping plover, *Charadrius melodus* require specific habitat types and do not occur within the project corridor. Finally, consultation for the Bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucoccephalus*, under the Endangered Species Act, 1973, is no longer required.

The BA has concluded that the proposed activity may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Kirkland's warbler. Further, the BA concludes the project will have no effect upon the Pondberry, Canby's dropwort, American chaffseed, Red-cockaded woodpecker or the Wood stork. Upon view of the information provided, the Service concurs with conclusions in the BA regarding listed species. However, obligations under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act must be considered if (1) new information reveals impacts of this identified action that may affect any listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered, (2) this action is subsequently modified in a manner which was not considered in this assessment, or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat is determined that may be affected by the identified action.

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If you have any questions regarding the Service's comments, please do not hesitate to contact Mark Caldwell at

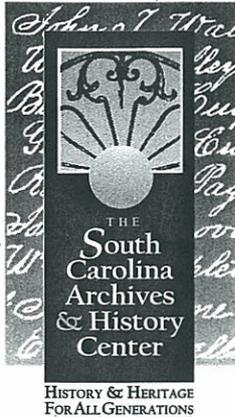
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed E. Hall", written over the printed name.

Timothy N. Hall
Field Supervisor

cc: Mr. Patrick Tyndall, FHWA, Columbia, SC

TNH/MAC/km



September 24, 2007

Mr. Randy Williamson
Environmental Engineer
South Carolina Department of Transportation
955 Park Street
Columbia, SC 29202-0191

Re: I-73 Southern Portion Preferred Alternate—Aboveground Cultural Resource Findings.

Dear Mr. Williamson:

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has reviewed the information submitted regarding the I-73 Southern Portion Preferred Alternate and determined that no aboveground historic properties will be affected by the project. Archaeological resources for the I-73 Southern Portion Preferred Alternate were previously addressed in the South Carolina Department of Transportation's (SCDOT) 8/17/07 concurrence letter. SHPO's finding for aboveground cultural resources is based on the understanding that the Preferred Alternate for the I-73 Southern Portion is the alignment/corridor referred to as "Alternative Three" during I-73 Agency Coordination Team meetings and in study materials provided by SCDOT. If the I-73 Southern Portion Preferred Alternate has changed, does change, or is any way modified, SHPO will need to review additional cultural resource study materials that address the changes or modifications.

SHPO commends SCDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the LPA Group for the effort that went into producing a Preferred Alternate for the I-73 Southern Portion that does not affect aboveground cultural resources. Avoiding historically significant resources in a project of such grand scale is an amazing feat and demonstrates the environmental sensitivity of all the players involved. We look forward to continued coordination with SCDOT, FHWA, and the LPA Group on the adjoining I-73 Northern Portion.

We are providing these comments to assist you with your responsibilities as agency official designee, as defined under 36 CFR 800.2, to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If you have any questions, please call me at (803) 896-6184.

Sincerely,

David P. Kelly
DOT Project Coordinator

cc: Patrick Tyndall, FHWA
Mitchell Metts, SCDOT
Wayne Roberts, SCDOT
Wayne Hall, SCDOT
Skip Johnson, LPA Group



South Carolina
Department of Transportation

August 17, 2007

Ms. Mary W. Edmonds
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
South Carolina Dept. of Archives & History
8301 Parklane Road
Columbia, S. C. 29223-4905

Re: STP-EH88(015), Brockington and Associates' Draft Reports *Cultural Resources Survey of the Proposed I-73 Southern Corridor, Dillon, Marion, and Horry Counties, South Carolina, Volume III: Archaeological Survey*; PIN 36358.

Dear Ms. Edmonds:

The Department's sub-consultant, Brockington and Associates, Inc., has completed archaeological test excavations at two sites on the selected corridor for the above referenced project. Two copies of this Volume III addendum are included for your review and comment.

Site 38MA196 is located on an alignment shift of the project corridor in Marion County. The site consists of an Early Archaic to Mississippian periods scatter of lithics and ceramics, and a nineteenth to twentieth century scatter of historic artifacts, located in an agricultural field. The site is recommended not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), primarily because of disturbances resulting from extensive agricultural activities at the site. This assessment is based on the shallow nature of the deposits, the small size of ceramics recovered from the site, and the recovery of approximately half the assemblage from the surface of the site. Most of the artifacts came from either the surface or plowzone where artifacts from all time periods were jumbled together. There were no intact subsurface cultural deposits and no features observed in any of the shovel tests or test units. No additional investigations are recommended.

Site 38HR560 is located along the project corridor in Horry County adjacent to Long Swamp and bisected by the existing Nichols Highway. The site consists a large (929 feet east-west by 520 feet north-south) scatter of lithics and ceramics dating from the Early Archaic to Middle Woodland periods and a scatter of twentieth century historic artifacts. The site borders a large borrow pit (now pond) to the northwest, planted pines to the south, and a wetland to the east. The excavation of the borrow pit during the late 1980s to early 1990s apparently destroyed a portion of the site along the edge of the terrace adjacent to Long Swamp. Site 38HR560 is recommended potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. However, the I-73 project will have no adverse effect to the site and no additional investigations are recommended.

The eastern portion of site 38HR560 within the project corridor does not seem to have the potential to yield significant information for prehistoric research. It does not compare favorably with another Horry site (38HR309) that was evaluated eligible for the NRHP and



was subjected to data recovery excavations. Site 38HR560 does not exhibit the stratified archaeological deposits seen at 38HR309. The western portion of site 38HR560 lies outside the I-73 project corridor and was not subjected to archaeological test excavations during the present investigations. The western portion of the site, therefore, remains eligible for the NRHP. The western portion of the site will not be affected by the I-73 project. However, because it remains potentially eligible for the NRHP, caution should be used to avoid any unintended disturbance to this portion of the site during construction. Special provisions should be placed in the contract to avoid this area by any construction activities including staging areas, lay-down areas, construction offices, and borrow pits.

In accordance with the memorandum of agreement approved by the Federal Highway Administration, March 16, 1993, the Department is providing this information as agency official designee, as defined under 36 CFR 800.2, to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

It is requested that you review the enclosed material and, if appropriate, indicate your concurrence in the Department's findings, thus initiating the formal Section 106 consultation process. Please respond within 30 days if you have any objections or if you have need of additional information.

Sincerely,



Wayne D. Roberts
Chief Archaeologist

WDR

Enclosure

I (~~do not~~) concur in the above determination.

Signed:  Date: 9/4/07

cc: Patrick Tyndall, FHWA

bcc: Wayne D. Roberts (original)

Environmental Management (Hall)

Mitchell Metts, Program Manager

Keith Derting, SCIAA

Wenonah Haire, Catawba THPO

File: PC/WDR

*SEAH
DOT Project Coordinator*