

Wetlands Fact Sheet



Supporting the Mission of Wetlands and Water Resources Protection in South Carolina

Kershaw County is a vibrant and growing county. Its prominent water resources such as Lake Wateree and the Wateree, Lynches, and Little Lynches Rivers are complimented by hundreds of miles of streams and creeks, thousands of acres of farm ponds, and tens of thousands of acres of wetlands. Kershaw County wants to manage these sensitive resources wisely just as we expect our watershed neighbors to do on their property. Kershaw County supports the regulatory program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in protecting streams, creeks, ponds, lakes, rivers, and wetlands from unregulated development or destruction. **When planning construction projects in Kershaw County, always find out if you might be in a regulated wetland and determine if you need a permit before the damage occurs.**



Why Our Water Resources Are Important

Wetlands provide our community with a variety of important functions and values. Wetland functions include flood control, coastal protection, groundwater recharge, and pollution and sediment trapping. Values we derive from functioning wetlands include safe drinking water, habitats for wildlife and aquatic life, nurseries for seafood, commercial fishing, and essential recreational opportunities to enjoy our natural heritage.

Corps of Engineers Regulatory Program

In South Carolina and Kershaw County, the Charleston District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a Regulatory Branch that regulates many activities in the waters of the United States by the authorities of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. The mission of the Corps of Engineers Regulatory Program is to protect the nation's aquatic resources while allowing reasonable development through fair, flexible, and balanced permit decisions. The Corps evaluates permit applications for all construction activities that occur in Waters of the United States, including most lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands.

What is a wetland?

Wetlands are areas covered with water for time periods long enough to support plant species that thrive in wet soils. Wetlands include bogs, marshes, swamps, and wet meadows, but it is a misconception that all wetlands have standing water yearlong. Many wetlands may be seasonally dry or lack noticeable vegetation during certain seasons. These types of wetlands include many bottomland forests, pocosins, pine savannahs, Carolina bays, or other depressions.

The Corps uses three characteristics of wetlands when making wetland determinations: wetland vegetation, hydric soils, and hydrology. Nearly 5,000 plant types in the United States may occur in wetlands. Types that commonly occur in South Carolina include cattails, bulrushes, cordgrass, sphagnum moss, bald cypress, willows, sedges, rushes, arrowhead, and water plantain. Indicators of wetland trees include shallow root systems, swollen or buttressed trunks, and roots found growing from the trunk above the soil surface.



Hydric soils are developed where oxygen is limited due to saturation for long periods in the growing season. Hydric soil indicators include soils that consist predominantly of decomposed plant material (peat or muck); soil that has a bluish gray or gray color or is very dark (brownish black or black) and dull; soil that smells like rotten eggs; or sandy soil that has dark

stains or dark streaks of organic matter in the upper layer below the soil surface. Wetland hydrology indicators include standing or flowing water during the growing season, waterlogged soil during the growing season, watermarks present on trees or other objects, and drift lines.

Why is it necessary to consider whether an area is a wetland?

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires that anyone interested in depositing dredged or fill material into “Waters of the United States, including wetlands,” must receive authorization for such activities. The Corps has been assigned responsibility for administering the Section 404 permitting process. Activities for which a permit may be required include: placement of fill material, ditching, levee and dike construction, mechanized land clearing, land leveling, road construction, and dam construction. The Corps also regulates activities in Section 10 waters, such as dredging and dock construction in Lake Wateree and the Wateree River.



What needs to be submitted for a Section 404 Permit?

First, a jurisdictional determination (JD) should be performed for the property where the wetland or stream impact will be. A JD is the process of identifying and locating waters regulated by the Corps. Once the extent of the Waters of the US has been determined, a Joint Federal and State application is submitted to the Corps to start the permit process. The application must include appropriate drawings and a mitigation plan, if required. Mitigation is a way to replace the functions of wetlands and streams that are lost due to construction of the project.

What is the permit process?

Submittal of a complete permit package to the Corps starts the permit process. A public notice describing your project may be distributed to gather input from resource agencies such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, as well as the general public. After evaluating all comments and information received, the Corps will determine if any additional information is needed. Once the necessary information has been gathered, the Corps begins the decision-making process. In general, the Corps must consider the public interest factors; evaluate the benefits and detriments of the project; insure the project has avoided and minimized impacts to Waters of the US to the greatest extent practicable; and determine that the project is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative that fulfills the project purpose. Applications can be downloaded from the Charleston Corps District website at www.sac.usace.army.mil.

Required State Authorizations

Before a Corps 404 Permit can be issued, the Corps must receive the requisite state authorizations. These authorizations can include Clean Water Act Section 401 water quality certification and/or a certification that the project complies with the Coastal Zone Management Plan. These authorizations are administered by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. For more information on these programs, visit their website at www.scdhec.gov.

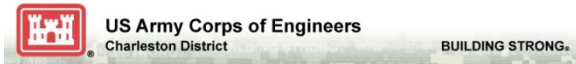
Local Corps Branch Offices Serving Kershaw County

US Army Corps of Engineers
Columbia Regulatory Office
1835 Assembly Street, Room 865-B1
Columbia, SC 29201
803-253-3444



US Army Corps of Engineers
Conway Regulatory Office
1949 Industrial Park Road, Rm. 140
Conway, SC 29526
843-365-4239

Or visit the Charleston District website at www.sac.usace.army.mil



Kershaw County Contact Information

Kershaw County Planning and Zoning
Kershaw County Government Center
515 Walnut Street, Room 160
Camden, SC 29020
803-425-7233

Or visit the Kershaw County website at: <http://www.kershaw.sc.gov>

