

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

1000 Assembly Street Suite 336
PO Box 167
Columbia, SC 29202
803.734.3282 Office
mixong@dnr.sc.gov

June 15, 2021

Mr. Rusty Wenerick
SCDHEC
Division of Water Quality
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201-1708

RE: P/N SAC 2019-01427, Dominion Energy
Individual State Water Quality Certification
River Neck to Kingsburg 16-inch Gas Main
Florence County

Dear Mr. Wenerick:

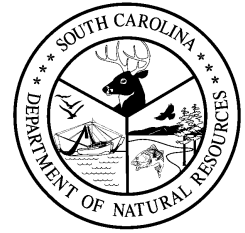
Personnel with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) have reviewed the proposed project, evaluated its impact on natural resources and offer the following comments.

Project Description

The proposed work consists of installing a 14.5 mile, 16-inch gas main by trench and backfill, widening portions of the Right of Way (ROW) easement by 10 feet, and installing a permanent roadway crossing of a tributary with a culvert to retain hydrological flow. The proposed project will result in 6.337 acres of temporary clearing impacts, 8.378 acres of temporary excavation impacts, 0.009 acres of permanent fill impacts, and 2.990 acres of permanent clearing impacts within jurisdictional freshwater wetlands and non-wetlands waters. No mitigation is proposed because the project is stated to result in minimal impacts to waters of the United States.

Agency Concerns

Based on the information provided and a review of topographic maps and aerial photography, the existing and proposed pipeline ROW crosses six named tributaries of the Great Pee Dee River. These streams are Jeffries Creek, Mill Branch, Bigham Branch, Brier Branch, Barfield Mill Creek and Bullock Branch. The proposed pipeline will cross each of these tributaries approximately a mile or less upstream from their confluence with the river. Jeffries Creek is proposed to be crossed using Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD); however, the remaining streams are proposed to be crossed using open trench excavation. The existing and proposed pipeline ROW also crosses an approximately 146 acre tract protected by a conservation easement (Front Swamp LLC) as well as the Pee Dee Station Wildlife Management Area managed by SCDNR and leased from the S.C. Public Service Authority (Santee Cooper). The applicant should coordinate with the appropriate landowners to minimize impacts to these protected conservation lands.



Robert H. Boyles, Jr.
Director

Lorianne Riffin
Director, Office of
Environmental Programs

SCDNR has records of several State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) fish species in the streams proposed to be crossed by the pipeline. SWAP species are those species of greatest conservation need not traditionally covered under any federal funded programs. Species are listed in the SWAP by conservation priority because they are rare or designated as at-risk due to knowledge deficiencies; species common in South Carolina but listed rare or declining elsewhere; or species that serve as indicators of detrimental environmental conditions. There are records of American eel (Highest Priority) and ironcolor shiner (Moderate Priority) occurring in Mill Branch and Bigham Branch and there are records of American eel, flat bullhead (Moderate Priority) and fieryback shiner (Moderate Priority) occurring in Bullock Branch. There are also records of several federally-listed threatened or endangered species in the project vicinity. The Great Pee Dee River is Designated Critical Habitat for Atlantic sturgeon and there are known occurrences of Atlantic sturgeon and shortnose sturgeon (both Federally Endangered) in the river. There are nearby occurrences of the federally-listed plant species Canby's Dropwort (Endangered) and Boykin's Lobelia (At-Risk). Please keep in mind that this information is derived from existing databases and should not be assumed complete. Areas not yet inventoried by SCDNR biologists may contain other significant species or communities. All efforts should be made to avoid and minimize impacts to these species of concern.

Agency Recommendations

SCDNR has no objection to the issuance of the proposed permit certification provided that the above concerns are adequately addressed, and the following additional stipulations are incorporated as minimization measures.

- All proposed Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) crossings must follow the stipulations as stated in the HDD Inadvertent Return Contingency Plan dated June 4, 2020.
- Where trench excavation is required across flowing streams, SCDNR recommends the use of a temporary flume bypass instead of a dam-and-pump method, as the latter could entrain or impinge many of the above-mentioned fish species of concern as well as other aquatic organisms.
- Clearing of riparian vegetation within wetlands and waters of the U.S. must be conducted manually and low growing, woody vegetation and shrubs must be left intact to maintain bank stability and reduce erosion.
- Stream banks at crossings must be restored after construction has been completed. Disturbed stream banks can be restored by planting woody vegetation and by using bioengineering techniques for stream bank stabilization.
- Construction activities must avoid and minimize, to the greatest extent practicable, disturbance of woody wetland or riparian vegetation within the project area. Removal of vegetation should be limited to only what is necessary for construction of the proposed pipeline and road culvert.
- Where necessary to remove vegetation, supplemental plantings should be installed following completion of the project. These plantings should consist of appropriate native species for this ecoregion.
- Right-of-ways through and adjacent to forested wetlands and riparian areas should be maintained in low growing, native vegetation. Maintenance of this right-of-way should be conducted via hand clearing rather than with chemicals to reduce the potential for contamination and negative impacts on aquatic resources. If chemicals are used, a 50-foot buffer on either side of the wetland crossing should be established where no herbicide treatments would be allowed. This will serve to retain the riparian vegetation while reducing the amount of chemical runoff into the aquatic environment.
- Prior to beginning any land disturbing activity, appropriate erosion, and siltation control measures, silt fences or silt barriers must be in place and maintained in a functioning capacity until the area is permanently stabilized.

- Materials used for erosion control such as hay bales or straw mulch must be certified as weed free by the supplier.
- Any damaged erosion control measures must be repaired within 24 hours of identification, or as soon as conditions allow if compliance with this time frame would result in greater environmental impacts
- All necessary measures must be taken to prevent oil, tar, trash, and other pollutants from entering the adjacent offsite areas/wetlands/water.
- Once the project is initiated, it must be carried to completion in an expeditious manner to minimize the period of disturbance to the environment.
- Upon project completion, all disturbed areas must be permanently stabilized with vegetative cover (preferable), riprap or other erosion control methods as appropriate.
- Road crossings of streams or tributaries must be accomplished with appropriately sized bridges and/or culverts. Culverts must be sized and designed to prevent alteration of the natural stream morphology. SCDNR prefers that arched or bottomless culverts are utilized; however, if using boxed culverts or pipes, the bottom elevation of the culvert or pipe must be at or below the stream bed elevation to allow for natural migration of aquatic organisms up- and downstream. Disturbed stream banks should be restored by using bioengineering techniques for stream bank stabilization.
- The project must comply with any applicable floodplain, stormwater, land disturbance, or riparian buffer ordinances.

Should you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at mixong@dnr.sc.gov or by phone at 803.734.3282.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Mixon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Greg Mixon
Office of Environmental Programs