ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR 2010 GROVE CREEK



GROVE CREEK MITIGATION SITE DUPLIN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA TIP No. R-2204 WM NCDOT Project No. 8.1241801 (EEP Project Number .00038) 2010 Annual Monitoring Report (Year 5 of 5)

> Submitted to: North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Ecosystem Enhancement Program Raleigh, North Carolina

> > Prepared by: Axiom Environmental, Inc. 20 Enterprise Street, Suite 7 Raleigh, North Carolina 27607

Design Firm: Office of Natural Environment & Roadside Environmental Unit North Carolina Department of Transportation Raleigh, North Carolina

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Grove Creek Wetland Mitigation Site (Site) is located within United States Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrologic Unit 03030007 (North Carolina Division of Water Quality [NCDWQ] subbasin 03-06-22) of the Cape Fear River Basin. The Site includes an approximately 549-acre tract, located 5 miles east of Kenansville in central Duplin County. This document serves as the 2010 Fifth Year Annual Monitoring Report.

Eleven gauges were maintained and monitored for the year 5 (2010) growing season. Groundwater hydrology within 12 inches of the soil surface occurred for greater than 12.5 percent of the growing season at all gauges except Gauge GW2-4 and GW11. However, GW 3 is located on the upland/wetland margin. In addition, hydrophytic vegetation and hydric soils are present at all gauge locations.

Seven 10-meter square vegetation plots were monitored for the year 5 (2010) monitoring season. Based on the number of stems counted, the average plot density monitored at this Site is greater than 260 stems per acre and is considered successful for 2010 (year 5) monitoring. The average plot density was measured at 659 planted stems per acre.

Problem areas within the Site are depicted on Figure 5 with pictures included in Appendix B. Poor planted stem survival has been observed in the vicinity of vegetation Plots 5 and 7 and surface water gauges (SG3-6). Natural recruits are colonizing these areas and aquatic herbaceous species proliferated during the year 5 (2010) monitoring season including cat tail (*Typha latifolia*), woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), and bigpod sesbania (*Sesbania herbacea*). Poor survival of planted stems may have resulted from drought during planting followed by excessive inundation. Other problems within the Site include beaver activity, an area of poor herbaceous growth, and continual mowing of access roads and a small patch for deer hunting, as well as four wheeler tracks throughout the Site.

In summary, Grove Creek Mitigation Site was successful for hydrology and vegetation for the Fifth Annual Monitoring Year (2010) period.

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1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1 Project Description

The Grove Creek Wetland Mitigation Site (Site) is located within United States Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrologic Unit 03030007 (North Carolina Division of Water Quality [NCDWQ] subbasin 03-06-22) of the Cape Fear River Basin. The Site includes an approximately 549-acre tract, located 5 miles east of Kenansville in central Duplin County (Figure 1).

Directions to the Site:

From Raleigh take Interstate 40 East to Exit 373

- Travel east on Highway 24 through Kenansville
- Travel approximately 6 miles further east on Highway 24 (if you reach the Cape Fear River, you have gone too far) to a left onto Dobson Chapel Road
- Road surface becomes gravel and intersects another gravel road in about 0.3 mile. The Site is straight ahead

1.2 Purpose

In order to demonstrate successful mitigation, hydrologic and vegetative monitoring must be conducted for five years or until success criteria are achieved. Success criteria are based on federal guidelines for wetland mitigation. These guidelines stipulate criteria for both hydrologic conditions and vegetation survival. The following report details the results of hydrologic and vegetative monitoring for the 2010 (year 5) growing season at the Grove Creek Mitigation Site.

1.3 Project History

January 2004	Mitigation Plan
September 2004	Final Design (90%)
2005	Site Construction
2005	Planting
November 2006	Vegetation Monitoring (Year 1)
March-November 2006	Hydrologic Monitoring (Year 1)
July 2007	Vegetation Monitoring (Year 2)
March-November 2007	Hydrologic Monitoring (Year 2)
July 2008	Vegetation Monitoring (Year 3)
March-November 2008	Hydrologic Monitoring (Year 3)
July 2009	Vegetation Monitoring (Year 4)
March-November 2009	Hydrologic Monitoring (Year 4)
July 2010	Vegetation Monitoring (Year 5)
March-November 2010	Hydrologic Monitoring (Year 5)

1.4 Mitigation Structure and Objectives

Prior to implementation of wetland restoration activities, the Site was characterized by active agricultural fields, mixed hardwood forests, and a large Bottomland Hardwood/Cypress-Gum Swamp wetland system located adjacent to the Northeast Cape Fear River. Historic land use activities included ditching within hydric soils and timber harvesting within wetlands.



The primary mitigation activities at the Site included restoration of previously ditched and filled riverine wetlands, creation of riverine wetlands within existing agricultural fields, hydrological enhancement of previously ditched riverine wetlands, preservation of the existing Coastal Plain Bottomland Hardwoods/Cypress-Gum Swamp Forest wetlands, restoration of a previously drained nonriverine wetland area, and preservation of existing upland hardwood forests.

Wetland restoration and creation at the Site entailed 1) ditch cleaning prior to backfill, 2) impervious ditch plug construction, 3) ditch/canal backfilling, and 4) removal of fill material from wetlands.

According to the January 2004 Mitigation Plan, the primary goals of the project include 1) maximize the area returned to historic wetland function; 2) expand, enhance, and preserve 549 acres of the Northeast Cape Fear River riparian ecosystem; 3) protect the Site within a conservation easement in perpetuity; 4) provide valuable habitat to a diverse assemblage of flora and fauna; 5) serve as a wildlife corridor along the Northeast Cape Fear river; and 6) provide numerous wetland values including water storage, shoreline stabilization, pollutant removal, aquatic/wildlife habitat, recreation, and education. Project structures and objectives are summarized in Table 1 and depicted in Figure 2.

Table 1. Project Mitigation Structures and Objectives										
Grove Creek (EEP Project Number .00038)										
Project Segment or Reach ID	Mitigation Type*	Approach	Acreage	Stationing	Comment					
Bottomland Hardwood	R		3.0 acres		Previously ditched and filled riverine wetlands					
Bottomland Hardwood	E		18.4 acres		Ditched riverine wetlands					
Cypress-Gum Swamp/Bottomland Hardwood	Р		375.9 acres		Existing riverine wetlands					
Bottomland Hardwood	С		9.2 acres		Existing upland agricultural fields to be graded to riverine wetlands					
Headwater Forest	Е		1.9 acres		Existing agricultural fields to be converted to nonriverine wetlands					
Headwater Forest	С		1.4 acres		Existing agricultural fields upland to be graded to nonriverine wetlands					
Headwater Forest	R		7.3 acres		Previously drained nonriverine wetlands					
TOTAL 417.1 acres										

* R = Restoration; E = Enhancement; C = Creation; P = Preservation

2.0 HYDROLOGY

2.1 Success Criteria

Success criteria for wetland hydrology at Grove Creek require inundation or saturation within 12 inches of the ground surface for a consecutive period of 12.5 percent of the growing season. The soil survey for Duplin County does not contain growing season data; therefore, due to its close proximity, the Sampson County soil survey was used. The estimated growing season begins March 18 and ends November 4 (239 days). In order to attain hydrologic success, saturation within 12 inches of the ground surface is required for at least 30 consecutive days (12.5 percent of the growing season).

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2.2 Hydrologic Description

Seven groundwater monitoring gauges and four surfacewater monitoring gauges were maintained and monitored throughout the year 5 (2010) growing season (Figure 3). Graphs of groundwater/surfacewater hydrology and precipitation from an onsite rain gauge for year 5 (2010) are included in Appendix A.

2.3 Results of Hydrologic Monitoring

2.3.1 Site Data

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Eleven gauges were maintained and monitored for the year 5 (2010) growing season. Groundwater hydrology within 12 inches of the soil surface occurred for greater than 12.5 percent of the growing season at all gauges except Gauge GW2-4 and GW11. Table 2 summarizes success criteria achievement for Site gauges.

Grove Creek (EEP Project Number .00038)											
Causa	Success Criteria Achieved/Max Consecutive Days During Growing Season (Percentage)										
Gauge	Year 1 (2006)	Year 2 (2007)	Year 3 (2008)	Year 4 (2009)	Year 5 (2010)						
CW2	Yes/98 days	Yes/60 days	Yes/32 days	Yes/48 days	No/20 days						
Gw2	(41 percent)	(25 percent)	(13.4 percent)	(20.1 percent)	(8.4 percent)						
CW2	No/14 days	No/8 days	No/13 days	No/14 days	No/13 days						
GW3	(5.9 percent)	(3.3 percent)	(5.4 percent)	(5.9 percent)	(5.4 percent)						
CIVIA	Yes/46 days	No/13 days	Yes/33 days	No/21 days	No/23 days						
GW4	(19.2 percent)	(5.4 percent)	(13.8 percent)	(8.8 percent)	(9.6 percent)						
CW5	Yes/98 days	No/18 days	Yes/88 days	Yes/42 days	Yes/45 days						
GWS	(41 percent)	(7.5 percent)	(36.8 percent)	(17.6 percent)	(18.8 percent)						
CW9	Yes/239 days	Yes/69 days	Yes/87 days	Yes/37 days	Yes/51 days						
GW8	(100 percent)	(28.9 percent)	(36.4 percent)	(15.5 percent)	(21.3 percent)						
CWO	Yes/239 days	Yes/89 days	Yes/82 days	Yes/102 days	Yes/54 days						
Gwy	(100 percent)	(37.2 percent)	(34.3 percent)	(42.7 percent)	(22.6 percent)						
CW11	Yes/31 days	No/9 days	Yes/39 days	No/7 days	No/23 days						
GWII	(13.0 percent)	(3.8 percent)	(16.3 percent)	(2.9 percent)	(9.6 percent)						
563	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days						
803	(100 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)						
664	Yes/239 days	Yes/213 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days						
564	(100 percent)	(89.1 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)						
9.07	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days						
865	(100 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)	(100 percent)						
800	Yes/239 days	Not able to	Not able to	Yes/239 days	Yes/239 days						
SG6	(100 percent)	determine*	determine*	(100 percent)	(100 percent)						
C ++	/		67 days	97 days	45 days						
cererence**			(28 0 percent)	(40.6 percent)	(18.8 percent)						

*This gauge does not monitor groundwater levels below the soil surface; therefore, it is not possible determine the number of days the groundwater level was within 12 inches of the soil surface. However, it is expected that the groundwater level remained near the soil surface.

**Reference was not installed prior to the 2008 (Year 3) monitoring season.

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2.3.2 Climatic Data

Climatic data for the five-year monitoring period has been compared to 30-year historical data from the station in Clinton, North Carolina (Figure 4) (NOAA 2004). Average rainfall for the year 5 (2010) growing season was 6 inches less than mean 30-year historic rainfall for January-May 2010 with 13.9 inches of rain onsite compared to 18.9 inches for mean historic rainfall for the same period.

2.4 Hydrologic Conclusions

Eleven gauges were maintained and monitored for the year 5 (2010) growing season. Groundwater hydrology within 12 inches of the soil surface occurred for greater than 12.5 percent of the growing season at all gauges except Gauge GW2-4 and GW11. However, GW 3 is located on the upland/wetland margin. Hydrophytic vegetation and hydric soils were present at all gauges.

3.0 VEGETATION

3.1 Success Criteria

Wetland vegetation success criteria at Grove Creek will require an average across the Site of 320 stems per acre of approved target species surviving for the first three years of monitoring, 290 stems per acre in year four, and 260 stems per acre in year five.

3.2 Description of Planted Areas

According to the 2004 *Grove Creek Mitigation Plan*, seedlings were to be planted at a minimum density of 680 stems per acre and included:

- 1. water oak (Quercus nigra)
- 2. willow oak *(Quercus phellos)*
- 3. laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*)
- 4. swamp chestnut oak (Quercus michauxii)
- 5. green ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica)
- 6. river birch (*Betula nigra*)
- 7. bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum*)
- 8. water tupelo (*Nyssa biflora*)

3.3 Results of Vegetation Monitoring

Seven 10-meter square vegetation plots were established as depicted in Figure 2 in November 2006. These plots were surveyed in July 2010 for the year 5 (2010) monitoring season using the *CVS-EEP Protocol for Recording Vegetation, Version 4.0* (Lee et al. 2006) (<u>http://cvs.bio.unc.edu/methods.htm</u>); results are included in Table 3 and pictures are included in Appendix B. The taxonomic standard for vegetation used for this document was *Flora of the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, and Surrounding Areas* (Weakley 2007). No reference area was studied; therefore, no comparisons could be made to reference conditions.



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Based on the number of stems counted, the average plot density monitored at this Site is greater than 260 stems per acre and is considered successful. The average plot density has been measured at 659 planted stems per acre for 2010 (year 5) monitoring. The dominant species identified at the Site were bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), and water oak (*Quercus nigra*). Five out of the seven individual vegetation plots were well-above the success criteria with 728 to 1092 planted stems per acre. Vegetation plots 5 and 7 were low with 121 and 243 planted stems per acre, respectively as the result of previous high water levels; however, when including natural recruits of appropriate species, the stem counts increase well above 260 stems per acre.

Table 3. Stem Counts for Planted Species Arranged by Plot												
Grove Creek (EEP Project Number .00038)												
	Y ear 5 (2010) Individual Plots (0.0247 acre each)							(2010)	(2009)	(2008)	(2007)	(2006)
Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals
Betula nigra				5	2	5		12	12	12	10	9
Fraxinus pennsylvanica		4	10	3	1	7		25	25	24	19	11
Nyssa sp.									2	2		
Quercus sp.									1	2	2	2
Quercus lyrata	5	1		3		2		11	11	11	11	11
Quercus michauxii	2	1	1	6				10	10	9	8	7
Quercus nigra	7	3		5		2		17	16	15	14	14
Quercus phellos	5			1				6	5	5	5	5
Taxodium distichum		11	7	4		4	6	32	32	33	33	27
Ulmus sp.		1						1	1			
Total Stems Per Plot	19	21	18	27	3	20	6	114	115	113	102	86
Stems Per Acre	769	850	728	1093	121	809	243	659	665	654	560	497

3.4 Conclusions

Based on the number of stems counted, the average plot density monitored at this Site is greater than 260 stems per acre and is considered successful for 2010 (year 5) monitoring. The average plot density was measured at 659 planted stems per acre. The stems per acre totals have increased from year to year due to resprouts from plants heavily grazed by deer (mostly smaller green ash stems) or with previous dieback for unknown causes.

4.0 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Eleven gauges were maintained and monitored for the year 5 (2010) growing season. Groundwater hydrology within 12 inches of the soil surface occurred for greater than 12.5 percent of the growing season at all gauges except Gauge GW2-4 and GW11. However, GW 3 is located on the upland/wetland margin. Hydrophytic vegetation and hydric soils were present at all gauges. Based on the available gauge and rain data, as a whole the Site should be considered successful for the year 5 (2010) monitoring period.

Based on the number of stems counted, the average plot density monitored at this Site is greater than 260 stems per acre and is considered successful for 2010 (year 5) monitoring. The average plot density was measured at 659 planted stems per acre. The stem per acre totals have increased from year to year due to resprouts from plants heavily grazed by deer (mostly smaller green ash stems) or with previous dieback for unknown causes.

Problem areas within the Site are depicted on Figure 5 with pictures included in Appendix B. Poor planted stem survival has been observed in the vicinity of vegetation Plots 5 and 7 and surface water gauges (SG3-6). Natural recruits are colonizing these areas and aquatic herbaceous species proliferated during the year 5 (2010) monitoring season including cat tail (*Typha latifolia*), woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), and bigpod sesbania (*Sesbania herbacea*). Poor survival of planted stems may have resulted from drought during planting followed by excessive inundation. Other problems within the Site include beaver activity, an area of poor herbaceous growth, and continual mowing of access roads and a small patch for deer hunting as well as four wheeler tracks throughout the Site.

In summary, Grove Creek Mitigation Site was successful for hydrology and vegetation for the Fifrth Annual Monitoring Year (2010) period.



5.0. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A YEAR 5 (2010) GROUNDWATER/SURFACEWATER GAUGE GRAPHS

Grove Creek Ground Water Gauge 2 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Ground Water Gauge 3 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Date

Grove Creek Ground Water Gauge 4 Year 4 (2009 Data)



Grove Creek Ground Water Gauge 5 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Ground Water Gauge 8 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Ground Water Gauge 9 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Ground Water Gauge 11 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Date

Grove Creek Surface Water Gauge 3 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Surface Water Gauge 4 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Surface Water Gauge 5 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Surface Water Gauge 6 Year 5 (2010 Data)



Grove Creek Ground Water Reference Gauge Year 5 (2010 Data)



APPENDIX B VEGETATION MONITORING PHOTOGRAPHS

Appendix B Vegetation Plot and Problem Area Photographs Taken July 2010









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Appendix B (continued) Vegetation Plot and Problem Area Photographs Taken July and November 2010



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