Cameron and Daniel,

The proposed action is to restore peatland and pocosin hydrology while also reducing fire risk, on Pantheon Regeneration (Private) and Pocosin Lakes NWR lands by installing weirs/water control structures and jointly managing water levels within the shared boundary canals of these two properties. A total of six weirs/water control structures will be installed on shared canals at the following locations as part of this Inflation Reduction Act funding component: E11-1B, E11-2, E11-3, E11-4, IR-2 and IR-3. These weirs/water control structures will be constructed out of vinyl sheet piling and metal flashboard risers that were attached in the previous email correspondence.

Please see the attached construction example (Not the crossing number that is included in this IRA project, but very similar in nature of design for reference), in addition to the larger map which indicates each of the referenced areas of work for both IRA and Pantheon's private restoration efforts, along the shared canal boundaries within Evans Canal, County Line Canal and Ichabod Canal on the southern boundary of Restoration Area 2 (RA2). The map above shows the general area on the Refuge, where hydrology will be restored (It will be larger than shown on the private side of the property).

The refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), completed in 2007, references this needed management action on Page 76- "Altered hydrology has a great impact on the refuge staff's ability to manage the pocosin habitat for wildlife. Previous owners installed ditches and canals to farm and harvest timber in the area. When it is drained, the deep, organic soil oxidizes, decomposing and evaporating into the atmosphere. The drained soil also burns when wildfires occur. Finally, drained soil will not support the healthy hydrophytic plant communities typical of saturated organic soils or the wildlife populations that have evolved in those communities. Successful maintenance or management of the pocosin will require restoration of hydrology to hold the water table at the surface of the soil. The saturated soil profile will sustain the vegetative community and allow prescribed burning and management of wildfires to achieve habitat manipulation. The plan provides for hydrology restoration, fire management, habitat surveys, development and implementation of management plans, and conversion of some pocosin to Atlantic white cedar and hardwood swamp forest."

The Pocosin Lakes NWR Water Management Plan was approved in 2023 and further supports the restoration actions described in this project request.

Additionally, we have submitted our Section 7 review to FWS Ecological Services and the Section 106/NCSHPO process (through FWS Rick Kanaski) and anticipate those concurrences/authorizations in a few weeks and have the USACE and DWR permits/re-authorizations in hand from the adjacent property owner, Pantheon Regeneration, for the shared canals (attached to this email).

The project is consistent with all the Coastal Management Policies, and I have reviewed the scope against NC's enforceable policies and feels it is consistent in nature. The restoration project has minimal impact onsite, most of which is temporary and beneficial in nature, and has negligible coastal use impacts. This project will not contribute to future development in the area.

Please let me know if I can provide more information for clarity.

Thank you,

Emily Wells

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