

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) has completed its review of the following Development of Regional Impact (DRI). This report contains the NEGRC’s assessment of how the proposed project relates to the policies, programs, and projects articulated in the Regional Plan and Regional Resource Plan. Also included is an assessment of likely interjurisdictional impacts resulting from the proposed development, as well as all comments received from identified affected parties and others during the fifteen-day comment period.

The materials presented in this report are purely advisory and under no circumstances should be considered as binding or infringing upon the host jurisdiction’s right to determine for itself the appropriateness of development within its boundaries.

Transmittal of this DRI report officially completes the DRI process. The submitting local government may proceed with whatever final official actions it deems appropriate regarding the proposed project, but it is encouraged to take the materials presented in the DRI report into consideration when rendering its decision.

Project I.D.:	DRI #3593
Name of Project:	Jackson Quarry
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Jackson County

Background

The developer’s request for a rezoning and special use permit from Jackson County initiated the review. Five of the parcels are zoned for General Industrial (GI) and two more are zoned as Agricultural Rural Farm District (A2). All parcels would be rezoned for Heavy Industrial (HI). Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 3/1/22—3/16/22.

Proposed Development

Calmat Co., doing business as Vulcan Materials Company, is proposing a 200-acre expansion of a current Vulcan Materials mine, along Valentine Industrial Parkway, in unincorporated Jackson County (parcel numbers: 091 012b, 079 002, 079 002a, 079 003a, 079 004a, 078 012, and 079 009a). The existing mine covers 100 acres next to I-85, and the expansion site is currently wooded with several streams and a very large pond that borders Bill Wright Road. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date of one year from the start of construction. This mine expansion is expected to be active for the next 75 years.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as “Urban” on the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan’s Character Area Map (dated 12/07/20). Industrial land uses are permitted and encouraged in these locations. The Urban Character Area states that development in this Area should connect to sewer lines, provide pedestrian access, and demonstrate availability of public water, fire protection, and other public services. Development should not place an excessive burden on public services, and it should screen negative views. The site is also listed as “Industrial” on the Plan’s Future Land Use Map. This category includes mines in rural or agricultural areas. The Plan states that impervious surfaces should be limited to less than 60%, should maintain buffers between

the site and I-85, and heavy industry should not be near residential areas. The mine does not require the kind of infrastructure and services that are characteristic of the Urban Character Area. However, as an industrial use, it fits within the envisioned land use, as designated on the Future Land Use Map. Since the site will not require the level of infrastructure envisioned by the Urban Character Area, the primary concern is screening the project from I-85 and non-industrial development. The site plan shows a 100-foot buffer is planned for the site so it appears that the screening requirement would be satisfied. Overall, the project appears consistent with the local comprehensive plan.

The site is identified as “Developed” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018). The Regional Plan recommends development that matches the region’s workforce, prices in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure, creates a sense of place, builds a compact development pattern on existing infrastructure, creates diverse and affordable housing, and compliments existing and planned transportation options—especially non-automobile transportation modes. Mines are a special use that cannot be judged by the usual recommendations listed above. However, they do pose unique environmental hazards such as water, air, and noise pollution, as well as seismic impacts that aren’t generated by other land uses. In addition, they can create an obstacle for establishing/maintaining a sense of place and for pedestrian and bicycle movement through an area. There are a handful of houses bordering the expansion site that could be impacted by land disturbance activity, noise, dust, and negative aesthetics. Prior to approval, the applicant should demonstrate that these unique hazards have been mitigated to the best of their ability.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project would likely impact nearby wetlands although the site plan does not clearly show the location of the wetlands. The applicant also stated that none of the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountain and river corridors, floodplains, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources would be impacted. The site plan shows several streams that cross the property. Although no mining is proposed in those areas, three stream crossings would be built that could negatively impact those waterways.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 19 acres of wetlands onsite and 343 acres of wetlands within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 18 acres of “Conservation” land onsite and 340 acres of “Conservation” land within one mile of the site. This “Conservation” land includes seven acres of Regionally Important Resource land onsite and 52 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site. No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

The site plan proposes forested buffer areas along the streams; however, no legend, notation, or labels identify them as buffers or areas to be protected. An estimated 0.05% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. The site plan appears to show an existing “lake” that is used as an onsite water resource. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing streams and associated wetlands to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite. At minimum, the project should be in accordance with the latest edition of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (Blue Book) and meet all relevant EPD requirements. The applicant states that, “Stormwater detention ponds, silt fencing, and other erosion and sedimentation controls will be employed in conjunction with a perimeter buffer in accordance with the Surface Mine Land Use Plan.”

Maldino and Wilburn, LLC performed a traffic study (dated October 25, 2021) that projects 306 new daily trips, including 52 AM peak hour trips, and 52 PM peak hour trips from the proposal. Truck traffic would comprise 90% of the daily trips (276 daily trips). The study estimates that, when fully operational, the quarry would have 10 employees. The signalized intersections in the study area are projected to continue to operate at an acceptable level of service. The study does recommend adding a right turn lane on Valentine Industrial Parkway. The proposal does not appear to pose an overall traffic problem, but increased truck traffic could accelerate the need for roadway maintenance. The County should account for these expenses when judging whether to approve the rezoning.

The project would be served by a private well for potable water and industrial water demand would be covered by recycling water that has been collected onsite. Wastewater treatment would be provided by a septic system with an estimated daily demand of 0.000156 MGD. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated. Neither solid waste nor hazardous waste would be generated.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth over \$22 million at build-out one year from the start of construction and generate \$215,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$110,000 and generate approximately \$1,075 in tax revenue. Prior to approval, the County should measure the life cycle costs of the infrastructure needed to serve this project to ensure that they would not be committing to more maintenance expenses than the new tax revenue can cover.

Comments from Affected Parties

Alan Hood, Airport Safety Data Program Manager, Georgia Department of Transportation

This proposed project is 3.5 miles west of the Jackson County Airport (JCA), and is located outside of any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact the airport.

However, if any construction or construction equipment reaches 200' AGL or more, an FAA Form 7460-1 must be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration. That may be done online at <https://oeaaa.faa.gov>. The FAA must be in receipt of the notification, no later than 120 days prior to construction. The FAA will evaluate the potential impact of the project on protected airspace associated with the airports and advise the proponent if any action is necessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed development.