

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 #3886
Name of Project:	Barber Creek Water Reclamation Facility Expansion
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Barrow County

Background

The scale of the project is a greater than 50 percent expansion of the existing wastewater treatment facility’s capacity, based on the information provided by the project engineer; therefore, a DRI review is required during the local government’s approval process for the project. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 1/3/2023–1/18/2023.

Proposed Development

Barrow County proposes to expand an existing wastewater treatment plant from a capacity of 0.5 MGD to 1.5 MGD. The expansion would be located on the 39-acre, two-parcel site of the existing water reclamation facility, which is located partly in the City of Statham and partly in Barrow County, south of University Parkway (695 Wylie McGuire Rd., Statham). The parcel numbers are XX 132001 (Barrow County) and ST06 002A (City of Statham). No existing uses would be displaced by the proposed expansion. The proposed expansion project would include a new dewatering building, a new yard drain pump station, and two new clarifiers, totaling approximately 5,791 square feet of new building space. In addition, the existing sequencing batch reactor structure would be converted to vertical loop reactors. The expansion project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in July 2025.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as “316 Innovation Corridor” and “Public/Institutional” on the Character Areas Map (dated 03/29/2022), which includes both Barrow County and the City of Statham. In the jointly-developed Barrow County Comprehensive Plan, “316 Innovation Corridor” is described with an intent of creating “opportunities for employment centers and large-scale commercial uses where a location benefits from direct

SR 316 access.” Future land uses identified in this character area include bio-tech and life sciences, R&D centers, advanced manufacturing, information technology, back office, distribution/warehousing, mid-rise office, large-scale medical; also, commercial uses that serve a regional market area. The “Public/Institutional” Character Area is described with an intent of identifying “public buildings and functions in the community outside of the Downtown character area.” Future land uses identified in this character area include schools, libraries, and other city buildings or properties. The consistency of the proposed project with the indicated character areas is summarized in the table below.

CHARACTER AREA	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH DESCRIPTION
Public/Institutional (Barrow County portion of site)	As a government facility, a wastewater treatment plant is consistent with the description and land uses identified for this character area.
316 Innovation Corridor (City of Statham portion of site)	A wastewater treatment plant is not consistent with this character area’s description or identified land uses. However, it should be noted that this project would be an expansion of an existing wastewater treatment plant, not a new use for the site, and the proposed activities would not be expected to detract from the intent of this character area. In addition, of the new facilities shown on the site plan for this project, only the proposed dewatering building would be located within the City of Statham.

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 complements existing and planned transportation options—especially non-automobile transportation modes. The proposed project is consistent with the Regional Plan, as summarized in the table below.

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Match the region’s workforce	The applicant states that the regional workforce is sufficient to fulfill the demand created by the project.
Price in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure	No information was provided with the application that would enable evaluation of this recommendation.
Create a sense of place	Not applicable to this project.
Create diverse and affordable housing	While this project would not create housing on its own, expanding wastewater treatment capacity would enable the development of additional housing within the area served by the sewer system.
Build a compact development pattern on existing infrastructure	This project would be located on the site of the existing wastewater treatment plant and would connect with existing conveyance and treatment infrastructure.
Complement existing and planned transportation options	Not applicable to this project.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project would affect a water supply watershed because the expanded plant is located within the Oconee River Basin and would discharge more water into the watershed. Multiple water suppliers withdraw downstream from this facility’s discharge site. The applicant states that the project would

be done in accordance with requirements of Georgia EPD, and that water quality will be adequate for downstream users.

The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountain and river corridors, floodplains, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources. Refer to the attached site plan for any stream, floodplain, and buffer locations.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 2 wetland acres onsite and 91 wetland acres within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 2 acres of "Conservation" land onsite and 99 acres of "Conservation" land within one mile of the site. This "Conservation" land includes less than one acre of threatened Regionally Important Resource (RIR) land onsite and 32 acres of threatened RIR land within one mile of the site. No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

The applicant projects an increase of 20-25 trips of heavy truck traffic to the facility annually. No traffic study was performed for the proposed project. The project would be served by the Barrow County water and sanitary sewer system of the Barrow County Wastewater Department with an estimated daily demand of 0.0016 MGD for the water system and 0.0 MGD of sewage. The project would increase the capacity of the Barber Creek Water Reclamation Facility to 1.5 MGD by July 2025. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated.

The applicant states that after completion of the current phase of the project, an estimated 5-7% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and that existing buffers on the site will be maintained. The applicant also states that pervious parking, bio-retention swales, and other measures will be considered during the design process. No information about stormwater infrastructure was included on the site plan. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing streams, associated wetlands, and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and downstream from the site. Low impact design measures, like bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure should be incorporated into the project design. 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 estimates that the project would be worth \$15 million at build-out in 2025. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$385,000/acre. The project is tax-exempt. 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 new utility fees and property taxes on the new development enabled by this development would cover.

Comments from Affected Parties

None received.