

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 #4768
Name of Project:	Social Circle Little River WPCP
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Social Circle

Background

The construction or expansion of a wastewater treatment plant automatically triggers a DRI review. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 6/26/2026 to 7/11/2026.

Proposed Development

The City of Social Circle is proposing construction of a 1.5 MGD wastewater treatment facility on an approximately 17-acre site in Social Circle. The proposed facility would include a control building, pump station, sludge dewatering building, 5 aeration basins, 5 clarifiers, and an aerobic digester. The proposed site would have one entrance on Social Circle Parkway. Currently, the site is wooded. The proposed development would occupy property off Social Circle Parkway, east of the Cannon Drive intersection, in Social Circle. The parcel number is SC170078A00. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in June 2028.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

Compatibility with Regional Plan

The site is identified as "Developing" on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/15/2023). The Regional Plan recommends development that

- Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness
- Elevates public health and equity
- Supports and adds value to existing communities
- Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable
- Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options, and
- Protects natural and historic resources.

The following table outlines the proposal's alignment with these recommendations:

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	According to the applicant, the project would generate 4 full-time employees at project buildout, which would benefit the surrounding area by providing employment opportunities. The project would increase the city's wastewater treatment capacity, which would enable future growth in the area, enhancing the economic competitiveness of Social Circle.
Elevates public health and equity	The project could improve public health by increasing the number of homes and businesses that have access to sewer service.
Supports and adds value to existing communities	The proposed development would add value to the existing community by expanding the city's wastewater capacity for future needs.
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	Not applicable to this project type.
Includes transportation choices and is well- connected with existing and planned transportation options	Transportation improvements are not necessary to serve the proposed project, as it is estimated to generate minimal new daily trips.
Protects natural and historic resources	The local government should preserve as much existing vegetation on the site as possible and ensure that sufficient stormwater retention measures are used to avoid the negative effects of runoff into the stream and wetlands on site. The local government should also ensure long-term upkeep of the new system and compliance with Georgia EPD treatment requirements to prevent negative effects downstream from the discharge location.

Compatibility with Regional Resource Management Plan

The chart below summarizes the number of acres within the site area as well as within a one-mile buffer around the site that contains 1) wetlands, 2) conservation land, 3) regionally important resources, and 4) threatened regionally important resources. Please refer to the footnotes for definitions for each of these terms.

Wetland, Conservation, and Regionally Important Resources

	AREA TYPE	AREA (ACRES)	PERCENT OF AREA
SITE AREA (17 Acres)	Wetland Acres ¹	1	5.9%
	"Conservation Land" ²	17	100%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	17	100%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	17	100%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (3,611 Acres)	Wetland Acres	84.2	2.3%
	"Conservation Land"	1,236	34.2%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	1,201	33.3%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	1,236	34.2%

¹ Wetland acres are derived from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI)

² "Conservation" land is derived from the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (6/15/2023).

³ Regionally Important Resources were identified as a part of the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (2/15/2018).

⁴ This area represents the intersection between Conservation areas (identified on the Conservation and Development Map, 6/15/2023), adopted Regionally Important Resources (RIR), and "Developed" and "Developing" Regional Land Use areas (identified on the Regional Land Use Map, 6/15/2023).

The “Conservation land” acreage is part of the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network as identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (dated 8/7/2018). The Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network is intended to serve as a strategically planned and managed network of wilderness, parks, greenways, conservation easements, and working lands with conservation value that benefits wildlife and people, supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, links urban settings to rural ones, and contributes to the health and quality of life for the communities and citizens sharing this network. The City should attempt to align elements of the project with this intent, where possible.

No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources and Stormwater Management

The Little River flows along the site’s eastern border, and there are wetlands located in the southern portion of the site. The applicant states that an estimated 5% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. According to the applicant, a stormwater conveyance system and sediment ponds will be constructed. 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 states that the project is likely to affect wetlands and other environmentally sensitive resources. The site plan includes a 25-foot undisturbed buffer around the Little River. According to the City, a stream buffer variance will be required.

Transportation

No traffic study was submitted for the proposed development. The applicant estimates that the project would produce minimal new daily trips.

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the City of Social Circle water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.01 MGD for the water system and negligible demand for the sewer system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water line extensions are anticipated. The project would require a 0.6-mile sewer line extension.

Solid Waste

The applicant estimates the project would generate 335 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to annual tonnage reports from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, almost all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Walton County is disposed of in a landfill in Barrow County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$35,000,000 at build-out in 2028. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$2,058,824. The project would not generate any local tax revenue as it is City-owned.

Comments from Affected Parties

Hunter Bicknell, Chair of the Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council
See comments attached below.



July 6, 2026

DRI Regional Review
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
305 Research Drive
Athens, Georgia
Submitted via email

Re: Comment Letter, DRI # 4768 – Social Circle Little River WPCP

To Whom It May Concern:

The Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council leads review and revision of the Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan. The focus of the Regional Water Plan is managing water as a critical resource vital to the health, economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the Upper Oconee Water Planning Region.

The 2023 Upper Oconee Water Plan identifies three localities as having a potential shortage in wastewater assimilation capacity, including the City of Social Circle. These results indicate a potential for violation of ambient water quality standards. Because of this analysis, I am pleased to see that the City of Social Circle has proposed construction of a new wastewater treatment plan to provide advanced treatment for a wastewater flow projected to meet future demand (estimated wastewater discharge capacity of 1.5 million gallons per day). This type of infrastructure improvement can address the potential shortfall identified in the 2023 Regional Water Plan and we support efforts by the City of Social Circle to address its long-term wastewater treatment needs. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division consults the regional water plans wastewater discharge permitting process, and the Council supports issuance of permits that protect water quality standards while addressing projected needs for wastewater treatment.

On behalf of the Council, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed project and encourage sustainable use of our shared resources. Our Council remains committed to sound, long-term management of our region's water resources and we stand ready to assist in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hunter Bicknell", is written over the printed name.

Hunter Bicknell

Chair, Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council