

Project: US Route 78 Improvements, Phase 3  
Project ID: P032003

Environmental Assessment  
Appendix L

*Biological Assessment of US 78  
Phase 3B Roadway Improvements*

Biological Assessment of US 78 Phase 3B Roadway Improvements  
Dorchester County, South Carolina  
SCDOT PID #P032003

Prepared by Judson Goff, Red Bay Environmental  
September 20, 2017

Pursuant to Section 7 of *The Endangered Species Act* a field reconnaissance of the project area was conducted that coincided with the wetland/waters of the United States delineation. The following list of Federally documented threatened and endangered species for Dorchester County, South Carolina was compiled from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Heritage Trust Database. The State documented species included below are listed as state threatened and state endangered, as indicated, by the SCDNR Heritage Trust Database.

**Animals (Federal)**

Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	BGEPA*
Red-cockaded woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	Endangered
American wood stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	Threatened
Atlantic sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>	Endangered
Shortnose sturgeon	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	Endangered
Northern long-eared bat	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Threatened

**Animals (State)**

Spotted turtle	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	State Threatened
Rafinesque's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus rafinesquii</i>	State Endangered
Swallow-tailed kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>	State Endangered
Least tern	<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	State Threatened
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus Polyphemus</i>	State Endangered
Gopher frog	<i>Rano capito</i>	State Endangered

**Plants (Federal)**

American chaffseed	<i>Schwalbea americana</i>	Endangered
Canby's dropwort	<i>Oxypolis canbyi</i>	Endangered
Pondberry	<i>Lindera melissifolia</i>	Endangered

\* Federally protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA)

**Methods**

The field reconnaissance of the project area (May-June 2015 and September 2017) referenced above included a review of the existing on-site habitat conditions. The suitability of on-site habitat types was determined by the listed species' habitat requirements and preferences as compared to the existing habitat composition of the project area.

## **Results**

The proposed project consists of improving the existing roadway to improve existing and anticipated traffic conditions. The project area is located entirely within an existing, well-maintained urban land use area that is dominated by adjacent residential and commercial development associated with the Town of Summerville. The residential development includes both single and multi-family homes along with school facilities. The commercial development ranges from convenience stores and restaurants, auto repair, etc. to multi-use shopping centers. There are several scattered, undeveloped areas along the project corridor that consist of small, fragmented woodlands that are dominated by mixed pine-hardwood upland communities of common distribution throughout the coastal plain physiographic province of the state. These undeveloped areas are prior disturbed and generally consist of former home sites or commercial sites. There are no forested wetlands within the project area and the existing waters consist of channelized drainage features that have been altered to provide stormwater runoff for immediately adjacent and higher gradient developed areas. These features are developed on both banks and do not contain a developed riparian zone. As typical for these types of drainageways, there are periods of inundation during periods of high rainfall followed by extended periods of dry-down or low-flow during drier periods as the surface flow within these systems is more intermittent/seasonal in nature.

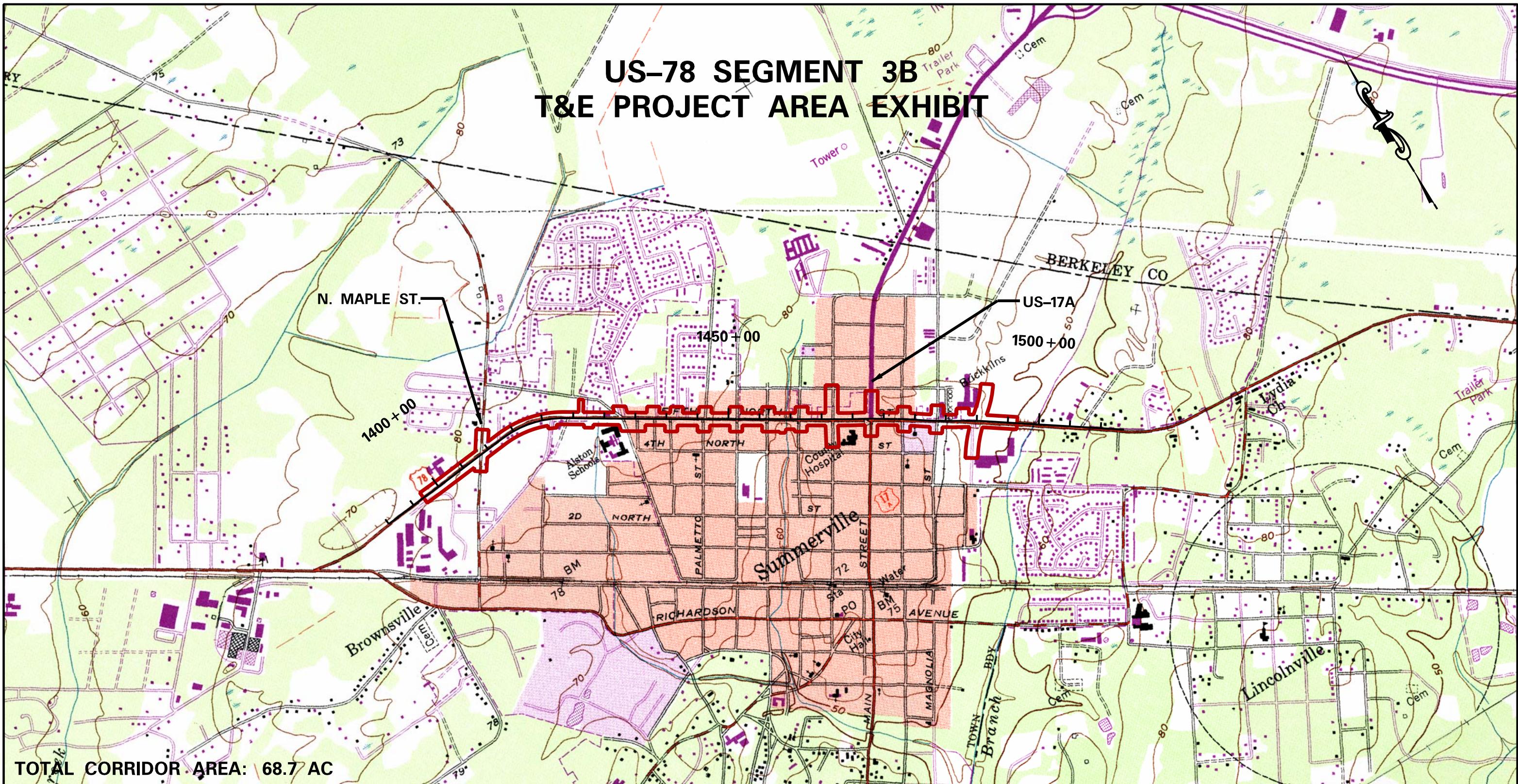
Based on the on-site reconnaissance and its situation within an existing urban corridor, the project area does not contain suitable habitat preferred by the Federal listed threatened and endangered species or the State listed threatened and endangered species for Dorchester County. The specific habitat types preferred by the documented species are not present within the project area. The roadway section is generally level and there are no bridge sections within the project corridor. The SCDNR records indicated that there are no documented species occurrences within the vicinity of the project area. The disturbance associated with the proposed roadway improvements is limited to the immediate vicinity of the current roadway sections and its intersection with secondary roadways. The duration of disturbance would also be limited to the period required for construction. Accordingly, the proposed project will not affect the documented Federal & State threatened and endangered species.

As referenced above, the review of the SCDNR Heritage Trust Database indicated that are no documented species occurrences within the vicinity of the project area. Due to the limiting factors of the urban land uses within the project area referenced above and the lack of suitable on-site habitat preferred by the listed species as identified by the on-site reconnaissance of the project area, the results of this biological assessment indicate that the proposed project will not affect the federal or state listed threatened and endangered species documented for Dorchester County. In addition, the proposed project will not affect any critical habitat documented by the USFWS. No further study of the project area as regards the listed species is recommended at this time.



Judson A. Goff  
Red Bay Environmental

# US-78 SEGMENT 3B T&E PROJECT AREA EXHIBIT



0 1500 3000  
R - 1500'

FROM: 0.27 MILES WEST OF N. MAPLE ST.  
TO: 0.09 MILES SOUTHEAST OF SC-165

DORCHESTER COUNTY

OCTOBER 3, 2017

## R. L. (Rudy) Powell

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**From:** Judson Goff <jagoff@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 4, 2018 11:51 AM  
**To:** Tilley Bull; R. L. (Rudy) Powell  
**Subject:** FW: [EXTERNAL] US Highway 78 Phase 3A & 3B Improvements  
**Attachments:** US 78 Phase 3B Biological Assessment (Federal & State Species).pdf; US78\_Corridor\_Designation 2.pdf; US78\_Corridor\_Designation ZOOM In 2.pdf; Pages from 2 - Protected Species Report (For Mark Caldwell).pdf; dorchester\_county.pdf

Tilley & Rudy:

Please see below from Mark Caldwell at the USFWS.

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**From:** Mark Caldwell <[mark\\_caldwell@fws.gov](mailto:mark_caldwell@fws.gov)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 4, 2018 10:17 AM  
**To:** Judson Goff <[jagoff@comcast.net](mailto:jagoff@comcast.net)>  
**Subject:** FW: [EXTERNAL] US Highway 78 Phase 3A & 3B Improvements

Judd,

The Service has received and reviewed the biological assessment for phase 3 of the U.S. Hwy 78 improvements in Dorchester County. Phase 3 of U.S. Hwy 78 traverses a moderately developed area immediately northwest of Summerville, SC, with some occurrences of wooded habitat. We are not aware of any federally protected species within the Phase 3 corridor of U.S. Hwy 78. As such, we agree with your determination that Phase 3 will not affect threatened or endangered species or federally designated critical habitat. Please note that due to obligations under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), potential impacts of this project must be reconsidered if: (1) new information reveals impacts of this identified action may affect any listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered; (2) this action is subsequently modified in a manner, which was not considered in this assessment; or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by the identified action.

The Service has included a list of species that have been petitioned for listing under the ESA as well as Candidate Species. These species are collectively referred to as ARS and may occur in Dorchester County, South Carolina. Although there are no Federal protections afforded to ARS, please consider including them in your project development. Incorporating proactive measures to avoid or minimize harm to ARS may improve their status and assist with precluding the need to list these species. Additional information on ARS can be found at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation>

Mark

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Carolina Ecological Services  
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843-727-4218 – facsimile

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**From:** Judson Goff <[jagoff@comcast.net](mailto:jagoff@comcast.net)>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 31, 2018 12:16 PM  
**To:** [mark\\_caldwell@fws.gov](mailto:mark_caldwell@fws.gov)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] US Highway 78 Phase 3A & 3B Improvements

Mark:

Thank you again for your time this week to discuss the remaining Phase 3 of the US Highway 78 Improvements project and for your review of this final phase. Per our discussion, I've included excerpts from the original project file and species review which covered Phases 1, 2 & 3A. Also attached are two corridor exhibits which identify the phases of the project. Phase 3B is the portion of Phase 3 that is within the Town of Summerville (developed area). I've attached a SCDOT-format Biological Assessment that describes that portion of the project corridor. Per the attached exhibit, this area extends just beyond the Berlin G. Myers Parkway intersection, but does not extend all the way to Sawmill Branch Canal. Please let me know if you have any questions as you review the attached information.

Thank you for assistance! Have a great Labor Day Weekend,

Judd