

Environmental Assessment

NEW RIVER WATERFRONT PARK
JACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

*A conversion of land protected under Section 6(f)3 of the
Land and Water Conservation Fund Act*

August 3, 2015

Submitted by:

City of Jacksonville
Attn: Richard Woodruff, City Manager
815 New Bridge Street
P.O. Box 128
Jacksonville, NC 28541
Phone: 910-938-5220

Submitted to:

Mr. John Poole, Program Manager
N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
1615 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615
Ph. (919) 715-2661 John.Poole@ncmail.net

For:

National Park Service
Southeast Region
100 Alabama Street, SW
NPS/Atlanta Federal Center
Atlanta, GA 30303

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Stateside Assistance Grant Program, provides funds to states, and through states to local agencies, for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation resources. Lands that have received funding through LWCF are protected by section 6(f)3 of the Act unless a conversion is approved by the Secretary of the Interior as delegated to the National Park Service.

Table of Contents

1. PURPOSE, NEED AND BACKGROUND	4
2. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION	5
2.1. Proposed Action	5
2.2. Alternative - No Action	6
3. EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PROJECT AREA	6
3.1. Topography	6
3.2. Soils	6
3.3. Land Use	7
3.4. Wetlands	7
3.5. Prime or Unique Agricultural Lands	8
3.6. Public Lands and Scenic, Recreational, and State Natural Areas	8
3.7. Areas of Archaeological or Historical Value	8
3.8. Air Quality	8
3.9. Noise Levels	9
3.10. Water Resources	9
3.11. Forest and Mineral Resources	10
3.12. Shellfish or Fish and Their Habitats	10
3.13. Wildlife and Natural Vegetation	11
3.14. Artificial Light Conditions	11
4. PREDICTED ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF PROJECTS	11
4.1. Topography	11
4.2. Soils	12
4.3. Land Use	13
4.4. Wetlands	13
4.5. Prime or Unique Agricultural Lands	13
4.6. Public Lands and Scenic, Recreational, and State Natural Areas	13
4.7. Areas of Archaeological or Historical Value	14
4.8. Air Quality	14
4.9. Noise Levels	15
4.10. Water Resources	15
4.11. Forest and Mineral Resources	16
4.12. Shellfish or Fish and Their Habitats	16
4.13. Wildlife and Natural Vegetation	16
4.14. Artificial Light Conditions	17

5. MITIGATIVE MEASURES	17
6. FIGURES AND CORRESPONDENCE	19
6.1 Location Map	20
6.2 Topography Map.....	21
6.3 Landuse Map	22
6.4 Existing Wetlands and Shoreline Map.....	23
6.5 Proposed Wetlands and Shoreline Map.....	24
6.6 1961 Historical Photo.....	25
6.7 1972 Historical Photo.....	25
6.8 Jacksonville Landing Artist Rendering.....	26
6.9 State Historic Preservation Office.....	27
7. STATE AND FEDERAL PERMITS REQUIRED.....	28

1. PURPOSE, NEED AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Summary and Purpose

The City of Jacksonville and Onslow County propose to remove federal protection from 1.28 acres of the New River Waterfront Park and replace it with 5.23 acres located directly across the river. The City and County respectively own 0.78 and 0.50 acre of the 1.28-acre site to be replaced and 3.07 and 2.16 acres of the 5.23-acre conversion site. The site once redeveloped, is to be known as Jacksonville Landing. [Figure 6.1](#) illustrates the location of the proposed conversion site in relation to the replacement site. [Figure 6.8](#) is a concept drawing of Jacksonville Landing.

The conversion site is a park located adjacent to the eastern side of the New River in a downtown setting. The conversion site includes a boardwalk, fishing pier, general picnic area with tables and benches, a dual launch boat ramp, and parking. The purpose of the proposed conversion is to allow for greater and enhanced usage of the New River while also allowing for the enhanced recreational uses at the replacement site. The replacement site is a larger tract of land located directly across the river that is to be redeveloped to include a boardwalk, fishing pier, general picnic area, restrooms, three boat launches, a canoe/kayak launch, and parking. The proposed project represents an improvement over the conversion site in that there is no restroom building or canoe/kayak launch at the conversion site. Additionally, the project will result in three boat ramps versus the existing two as well as, vastly improved parking. Single vehicle parking will be increased from 35 to 60 spaces while boat trailer parking will go from 10 to 69 spaces.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to help evaluate the environmental consequences of the proposed action on the human environment and allow the affected public to understand the context for the proposed action. Alternatives to the proposed action included that of no action. Sections 3 and 4 of this EA discuss potential resources that may be affected by the proposed action.

1.2. Need and Background

The only access to the New River in the City of Jacksonville is located directly across from the proposed replacement site on the east side of the river. The next closest public ramp is located approximately 19 miles downstream from Jacksonville in Sneads Ferry. Currently, there are no public ramps upstream of the conversion site on the New River.

The current public access boat ramp offers limited trailer spaces (10) and limited vehicle parking that is shared with the adjacent courthouse. With the growth of Jacksonville, this boat ramp is not adequate to serve the sportsmen using the New River. Currently, the NC Wildlife Resource Commission receives numerous complaints about the lack of parking at this site.

As a result, the proposed replacement site was selected, in part, due to its close proximity to the existing boat ramp. Once the new facility is constructed, the existing boat ramps will be

closed.

In reviewing other boat ramps to include Wilmington, Morehead City and Emerald Isle, Jacksonville's existing boat ramp is significantly undersized. These public boating access sites offer an average of 40 trailer parking spaces per site and as well as additional vehicle parking. In addition, these waterfront communities have multiple places to access a public waterway in each community. Whereas, Jacksonville has one public boating access point.

The proposed BAA would significantly increase the amount of parking (69 trailer parking spaces and 60 single vehicle spaces) which will provide more opportunities for the public to access the New River.

By comparison, the existing ramp in Jacksonville does not meet the demands of the public for access to the New River. It is the policy of the State to promote public water access. The proposed project aligns with the State's policy.

1.3. Location

Conversion Site: The 1.28 acre New River Waterfront Park is located in an urban setting. It is essentially sandwiched between the New River to the west and the Onslow County Justice Complex to the east which is comprised of the Courthouse, Sheriff's Office and the County jail.

Replacement Site: The 5.23-acre site is comprised of a mixed use of commercial/retail businesses, and a restaurant with the remainder of the site including open areas and old dilapidated warehouse structures. There is however, only one active business with the remainder no longer in operation. Again, the site will be named Jacksonville Landing once redeveloped.

2. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1. Proposed Action

The City and County propose to relocate the functions of the existing, federally protected tracts to a 5.23-acre site directly across the New River where general picnic area, boardwalk, and fishing pier will be replicated. The larger site will also allow for expansion of some services and features. As stated earlier, vehicle parking will be increased from 35 shared spaces to 60 dedicated car spaces while boat trailer parking will go from 10 to 69 spaces. The number of boat launches will increase from two to three. Additionally, a restroom building will be added. Long term plans include the construction of a sheltered visitor's information/interpretive center.

The conversion is proposed because the City and County believe that funds will be better utilized redeveloping a site that is appropriately sized for a riverside park and boat launch rather than trying to rehabilitate an undersized park.

2.2. Alternative - No Action

Under the 'No Action' alternative, the 1.28 acres of the New River Waterfront Park would continue under LWCF protected status and thereby, remain as a park area. This option was not selected as a proposed alternative because the existing dual boat ramps and parking are insufficient. Again, there are only 35 vehicle parking spaces in proximity to the park. Many of those spaces are utilized by persons conducting business at the Onslow County Justice Complex. Also, the vehicle-with-trailer parking spaces only number ten.

The ability to procure the conversion site for recreational uses that include improved water access than that provided by the conversion site is an uncommon opportunity. This is because more and more waterfront property is being acquired by private interests resulting in fewer opportunities for the public to access our public trust waters. More public water access is needed by the citizens and residents of the State. In fact, one of the goals of the Coastal Area Management Act is to increase the number of public water accesses in the State (CAMA Article 7, Part 1, §113A-102 (a) and Article 7, Part 6, §133A-134.3).

3. EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PROJECT AREA

3.1. Topography

Conversion Site: The topography of the conversion site is essentially flat. Site elevations range from 2 to 4 ft. MSL with most of the site being at roughly 4 ft. as shown by [Figure 6.2](#). Review of [Figure 6.2](#) also indicates that a small portion of the conversion site is located within the floodway. The remainder of the site is located within a floodplain (Zone AE). Jurisdictional wetlands exist along the shoreline at the northern extents of the site. The existence of wetlands is addressed in a subsequent section of this document.

Replacement Site: Review of [Figure 6.2](#) shows that elevations of the western three quarters of the site are in the range of 10 to 12 ft. MSL. Gentle relief occurs across the eastern quarter of the site as the site transitions from an elevation of roughly 10 ft. MSL to the shoreline of the New River. Jurisdictional wetlands exist along the shoreline of the replacement site. Again, wetlands are addressed in a subsequent section of this document.

3.2. Soils

Conversion and Replacement Site: There are no known geologic resources on either of the sites. The soils are classified as Urban (Source: *Web Soil Survey*. United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Conservation Service. Retrieved on May 5, 2015 from <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>). Urban soils are created in the process of urbanization. They exhibit several general characteristics some of which include: 1) great vertical and special variability; 2) modified soil structure leading to compaction; 3) presence of a surface crust on bare soil which often impedes infiltration; 4) restricted aeration and water drainage; and 5) interrupted nutrient cycling and modified soil organism activity (Source: Craul, Phillip J. 1985. *A Description of Urban Soils and Their*

Desired Characteristics. International Society of Arborculture).

3.3 Land Use

Conversion Site: [Figure 6.3](#) depicts the City's land use plan at and in the vicinity of the conversion and replacement sites. The figure shows the conversion site's land use to be a Park. Park zones are defined as land owned or maintained by the City of Jacksonville and/or Onslow County in which recreation, sports and leisure activities take place and that they are open to the public.

Replacement Site: [Figure 6.3](#) shows the majority of the site as Mixed Use as the proposed land use on this property and is intended for development that blends two or more of the following uses: residential, commercial, cultural and institutional. The remaining portion is shown as Conservation area. Conservation areas include lands of significant environmental or conservation value, including floodplains and wetlands. Allowable conservation uses include piers, dock, boat ramps, parks and the like. The replacement site will offer boating access and associated parking which combines the commercial and cultural components of the current uses.

3.4. Wetlands

Wetlands are often referred to as swamps, lowlands, marshes, bottomlands, and sloughs. They border vital nursery areas and filter pollutants from overland or stormwater runoff, while protecting shorelines and producing detritus for export to other habitats. Fish use wetland habitat in various ways; for instance young blue crabs, shrimp, and southern flounder are among the many commercial fisheries species inhabiting the edges of tidal salt marsh. Adult sea trout, red drum, and flounder prowl the edge of marshes feeding on shrimp, killifish, and other prey hiding among the vegetation.

Conversion Site: This site is located within a floodplain. There are 5,501 square feet of existing CAMA and USACE 404 of wetlands along the shoreline at the northern extents of the site, close to the US 17 Bridge (see [Figure 6.4](#)). The wetlands consist of a combination of plant species which include *Spartina patens*, *Spartina cynosuroides*, cat tails, Wax Myrtles and various sedges and rush.

Replacement Site: A portion of the site is located within a flood plain. There are 38,979 square feet of existing CAMA and USACE 404 wetlands along the site's shoreline from near Old Bridge Street northward to the US 17 bridge (see [Figure 6.4](#)). The wetlands consist of a combination of plant species which include: *Spartina patens*, *Spartina cynosuroides*, cat tails, Wax Myrtles (19), various sedges and rush, Maple Trees (4), Oak Trees (15), Eastern Red Cedar trees (3), Black Willows (7), Bald Cypress (11), Pines (5), Holly (3), Bamboo, Elderberry (26) and Sweet Bay Magnolia (3).

3.5. Prime or Unique Agricultural Lands

Conversion and Replacement Site: There are no prime or unique agricultural lands on either the conversion site or replacement site.

3.6. Public Lands and Scenic, Recreational, and State Natural Areas

Conversion Site: The conversion site is a park located adjacent to the New River in a downtown setting. The site includes a dual launch boat ramp and associated parking that is severely undersized in comparison to facilities in similar municipal locations along the coast and for the demands that it receives. Similar sites in Morehead City, Wilmington and Oak Island contain a minimum of 30-40 trailer spaces, whereas the current site only has ten parking spaces for boaters. There is not enough room to expand due to the Onslow County Sheriff's Office, court house and jail being located directly adjacent to the existing parking lot. There are 567 square feet of natural waterfront shoreline in the northeast corner of the New River close to the Highway 17 Bridge (See [Figure 6.4](#)). The shoreline provides habitat for recreational fishing and bird watching. There is also a scenic and recreational area for picnicking or meditation. The existing canopy vegetation consists of Bald Cypress (5), Eastern Red Cedar (1), Holly (12), Red Bay Magnolia (1), Crepe Myrtles (6), Black Willow (1), Wax Myrtle (3), Elderberry (2) and privet (13).

Replacement Site: As currently structured, the replacement site is comprised of non-public parcels that are for retail and other commercial enterprises. The remainder of the site is either open areas or old dilapidated warehouse structures that are no longer in use. There is also 746 square feet of natural waterfront shoreline that extends from near Old Bridge Street northward to the US 17 Bridge (See [Figure 6.4](#)). The shoreline provides habitat for recreational fishing and bird watching as well as a scenic and recreational area for picnicking or meditation. The existing upland canopy vegetation near the shoreline consists of Bald Cypress (11) and Pines (3). While the replacement site's shoreline is not specifically intended for use by the public, people are seen visiting the shoreline and fishing occasionally. These activities are indicative of the potential that this site holds for recreational uses if properly developed.

3.7. Areas of Archaeological or Historical Value

Conversion Site and Replacement Site: The State Historic Preservation Office, within the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, was asked to review the project area. Per their letter dated April 17, 2015 and referenced herein ([Figure 6.9](#)), the review showed that no historic resources would be affected by the project.

3.8. Air Quality

Conversion Site: The only emissions caused by the conversion site are vehicular exhaust emissions associated with those travelling to the park as well as, vehicles and motorized boats maneuvering during boat launches. These exhaust emissions are thought to be

insignificant relative to those caused by vehicles travelling the nearby streets.

Replacement Site: Emissions from the replacement site are thought to be typical of a mixed use commercial site as there are no known industrial type activities occurring within the boundaries of the site. Like the conversion site, emissions from the replacement site are thought to be insignificant relative to those caused by vehicles travelling the nearby streets.

3.9. Noise Levels

Conversion Site: There is very little noise generated by the site since it is a park; however, the site is subject to noises typical of a downtown area to include personal and commercial vehicles, police and fire vehicles, etc. Site generated noise is far less than that emanating from the major arterial highway located several hundred feet to it, US 17. In addition, the site is located within the Marine Corps Air Station New River Flight Path Overlay District.

Replacement Site: The noise from the site is minimal given that it is currently home to one commercial business and vacant warehouses. Like the conversion site, noise at the replacement site is far less than that emanating from the adjacent US 17. In addition, the site is located within the Marine Corps Air Station New River Flight Path Overlay District.

3.10. Water Resources

Conversion and Replacement Site: Both sites are adjacent to the New River with the conversion site on the east and the replacement site on the west. The New River at this location is classified as SB. SB waters are tidal salt waters protected for primary and secondary recreation activities such as fishing, boating, swimming, diving, skiing, and other similar used involving human body contact with water.

Stormwater runoff water quality is regulated by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program. The NPDES program is intended to control and reduce pollutants to water bodies from surface water discharges. Compliance with the NPDES Permit is mandated by State and federal statutes and regulations.

In addition, the City of Jacksonville has adopted a Stormwater Ordinance to protect, maintain and enhance the public health, safety, environment and general welfare by establishing minimum requirements and procedures to control the adverse effects of increased post-development stormwater runoff and nonpoint and point source pollution associated with new development and redevelopment as well as illicit discharges into municipal stormwater systems. It has been determined that proper management of construction-related and post-development stormwater runoff will minimize damage to public and private property and infrastructure; safeguard the public health, safety, and general welfare; and protect water and aquatic resources.

The Stormwater Ordinance seeks to meet its general purpose through the following specific objectives and means:

- a. Establishing decision-making processes for development that protect the integrity of watersheds and preserve the health of water resources;
- b. Establishing minimum post-development stormwater management standards and design criteria for the regulation and control of stormwater runoff quantity and quality;
- c. Establishing design and review criteria for the construction, function, and use of structural stormwater BMPs that may be used to meet the minimum post-development stormwater management standards;
- d. Establishing provisions for the long-term responsibility for and maintenance of structural and nonstructural stormwater BMPs to ensure that they continue to function as designed, are maintained appropriately, and pose no threat to public safety;
- e. Establishing administrative procedures for the submission, review, approval and disapproval of stormwater management plans, for the inspection of approved projects, and to assure appropriate long-term maintenance.
- f. Controlling illicit discharges into the municipal separate stormwater system.

3.11. Forest and Mineral Resources

Conversion and Replacement Site: Each site has a small number of trees, however, neither site contains an area large enough or densely covered in trees to be considered forested.

Neither site is known to have mineral resources.

3.12. Shellfish or Fish and Their Habitats

Conversion Site: The New River has been designated as a Primary Nursery Area (PNA) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the east side of inland waters north and coastal waters south of a line beginning at a point on the west shore 34° 45.1654' N - 77° 26.1222' W; running easterly along the southern side of the US Hwy 17 bridge to a point on the east shore 34° 45.2007' N - 77° 25.9790' W. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) designates PNA as Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC), as well as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). This run of the New River includes that which is adjacent to the site.

Primary Nursery Areas are where young finfish and crustaceans spend the major portion of their initial growing season for reasons such as food, cover, bottom type, salinity, temperature, and other factors. Primary nursery areas are those areas in the estuarine system where initial post-larval development takes place. These are areas where populations are uniformly early juveniles. Fish habitats are interdependent. What happens to one habitat can affect the entire ecosystem. Most fish species use different habitats at

different life stages. The diversity and productivity of fish populations depends on the integrity of the entire aquatic ecosystem. The area is closed to all shell fishing due to elevated Fecal Coliform levels associated with stormwater runoff. The only Endangered species that utilizes this area are the Atlantic Sturgeon.

Replacement Site: The replacement site is located directly across the New River from the conversion site. As such, it is also located adjacent to the PNA.

3.13. Wildlife and Natural Vegetation

Conversion Site: The site is a mix of uses with the paved areas being the majority of the site. The remainder is a combination of, lawns, landscaping, and boardwalk. Consequently, no critical habitats are expected to exist at the site. Furthermore, review of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Critical Habitat Mapper revealed no mapped critical habitats within proximity to the site (Source: *Critical Habitat Mapper*. United States Fish & Wildlife Service. Retrieved on May 6, 2015 from <http://ecos.fws.gov/crithab/>). There is a wetland area along the shoreline at the northern extents of the property that likely serves as an area for shelter, reproduction and feeding. Again the site is located to the New River PNA.

Replacement Site: The site includes a mix of buildings, paved areas, areas of earthen and rock drives, and grassed areas. As such, no critical habitats are thought to exist at the site. In fact, review of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Critical Habitat Mapper revealed no mapped critical habitats within proximity to the site (Source: *Critical Habitat Mapper*. United States Fish & Wildlife Service. Retrieved on May 6, 2015 from <http://ecos.fws.gov/crithab/>). There is a wetland area all along the shoreline of the site that likely serves as an area for shelter, reproduction and feeding. Again the site is located to the New River PNA.

3.14. Artificial Light Conditions

Conversion Site: The artificial lighting conditions are consistent with that of a downtown environment. Sources of this light are buildings, street lights, security lights, and vehicular lights.

Replacement Site: The artificial lighting conditions are consistent with that of a commercial corridor with mixed use environment. Sources of this light are buildings, street lights, security lights, billboard lights, and vehicular lights.

4. PREDICTED ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF PROJECTS

4.1. Topography

Conversion Site: *Negligible Impacts* – Slight alteration of the land surface in proximity of the dual boat ramp is expected subsequent to their closure. This alteration will be part of the work to create a living shoreline to replace the boat ramps.

Closure of the two boat ramps is planned subsequent to the new boat ramps being placed into service. This closure will be required as part of the CAMA permit issued by the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management for the project at the replacement site.

Replacement Site: *Negligible Impacts* – Existing buildings on the site are to be demolished and the resulting debris properly disposed of through recycling of the majority of the building materials offsite. The redeveloped site is to include 117,254 square feet of impervious, built upon area (BUA). This BUA of the redeveloped site will be less than the existing BUA of 118,113 square feet.

The site will be graded for the parking lot, restroom building, future visitor center, open areas, and boat ramp approaches. Since the site is generally level, any topographical alteration should be minimal. Some temporary alteration to topography within areas that are disturbed during construction will be necessary for the excavation of utility trenches. When possible, excavated soils will be returned to the trenches following installation of the utilities. Per North Carolina State requirements, a plan for controlling sediment and erosion along with a permit application will be submitted to North Carolina Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources to control any potential runoff.

The portion of the site located within the floodplain (see [Figure 6.2](#)) will be graded and thereafter a portion of the parking lot and the boat ramp approaches will be constructed. Again, given the already sloping nature of this area towards the river, topographical alteration should be minimal since boat ramps will be located at this end of the site.

4.2. Soils

Conversion Site: *No Impacts* – As stated earlier, slight alteration of the land surface in proximity of the dual boat ramp is expected subsequent to their closure. The soil profile across the majority of the site has already been disturbed by past construction for buildings, parking areas, and drives. This is evidenced by the Urban classification assigned to the soils at the conversion site. Urban soils are created in the process of urbanization and are characterized by a modified soil structure leading to compaction.

Replacement Site: *Negligible Impacts* – Soils will be disturbed during construction of the project. The soil profile across the majority of the site has likely already been disturbed by past construction for buildings, parking areas, and drives. Again, soils across the site are classified as Urban.

4.3. Land Use

Conversion Site: *No Impacts* – No changes in the land use of the site are expected immediately pursuant to the conversion. It is anticipated however, that the conversion site will eventually undergo one of two changes. Under one scenario, the site will be maintained as a park; however, the existing parking lots will be converted to green space that may include additional recreational features such as picnic tables, benches, etc. The alternate scenario has the site being converted to mixed use that could include residential, commercial, cultural, and institutional uses.

Replacement Site: *No Impacts* – Section 3.3 stated that the current land use designations of the site, Mixed Use and Conservation, allow for residential, commercial, cultural, and institutional uses as well as, piers, dock, boat ramps, parks and the like. The planned redevelopment of the replacement site is consistent with these allowable uses. The project will however, require review and site plan approval from the City of Jacksonville Planning Board.

4.4. Wetlands

Conversion Site: *Improved Impacts* – Section 3.4 noted that there are 5,501 square feet of existing CAMA and 404 wetlands along the shoreline at the northern extents of the site, close to the US 17 Bridge (see [Figure 6.4](#)). Additional wetlands are to be added subsequent to closure of the dual boat ramps. Closure of the two boat ramps is planned subsequent to the new boat ramps being placed into service. The two ramps are to be replaced by a shoreline inclusive of wetland plants that will stabilize the shoreline and create habitat which should improve water surface quality.

Replacement Site: *Minor Impacts* – Creation of the three boat ramps at the replacement site will necessitate dredging approximately 8,320 square feet of river bottom. Additionally, approximately 3,969 square feet of vegetated wetlands are to be filled that include approximately 100 square feet of coastal wetlands and 3,869 square feet of upland wetlands. This means that approximately 36,687 square feet of wetlands area is expected to remain once the project is complete.

A number of actions have been and will be undertaken to minimize the impacts of dredging as well as, the loss of wetlands. These actions are discussed in Section 5, "Mitigative Measures."

4.5. Prime or Unique Agricultural Lands

Conversion and Replacement Site: *Not Applicable* - There are no prime or unique agricultural lands present at either site.

4.6. Public Lands and Scenic, Recreational, and State Natural Areas

Conversion Site: *Negligible Impacts* – As stated earlier, the dual boat ramps will be closed after the three new boat ramps are placed into service at the replacement site. Closure of the two boat ramps is planned subsequent to the new boat ramps being placed into service. This required closure represents a minimal impact because the new site will include three ramps and vastly improved parking capacity. Additionally and as stated earlier, the boat close ramps will be replaced with a living shoreline area to be established subsequent to the closure. There are 567 square feet of natural waterfront shoreline on the East side of the New River close to the Highway 17 Bridge. The Shoreline provides habitat for recreational fishing and bird watching as well as a scenic and recreational area for picnicking or meditation.

Replacement Site: *Improved Recreational Impacts* - The site will be redeveloped as a park to include parking for 69 boat trailers of which 3 are to be ADA accessible, 60 single vehicle spaces of which two are ADA accessible, a canoe/kayak launch, sidewalks, two waterfront boardwalks to be 6' wide covering an overall length of 568± ft., fishing platform, three boat launches to include ADA accessible floating docks, a restroom building, benches, bicycle rack, and picnic tables.

The project represents an improvement over the conversion site in that there is no restroom building or canoe/kayak launch at the conversion site. Additionally, the project will result in three boat ramps versus the existing two as well as, vastly improved parking. The conversion site is severely undersized in comparison to facilities in similar municipal locations along the coast. There is not enough room to expand the conversion site due to the adjacent Onslow County Justice Complex.

4.7. Areas of Archaeological or Historical Value

Conversion Site and Replacement Site: *Not Applicable* – There are no known areas of archeological or historical value at either site.

4.8. Air Quality

Conversion Site: *No Impacts* – No changes in the land use of the site are expected within the foreseeable future; therefore, no changes in air emissions/air quality are expected.

Replacement Site: *Negligible Impacts* - During project construction, ambient air quality will be affected by an increase in airborne particulates that result from the land clearing and exhaust emissions associated with construction of the proposed project. The impact to public health that will result from these activities is expected to be negligible. Proper vehicle maintenance, frequent wetting of exposed soils, and proper use of required erosion control BMPs is expected to minimize these adverse effects. No open burning of cleared vegetation and construction debris will take place as a result of this project.

Once the site is constructed vehicle emissions are expected to increase over that which is currently emitted at the site by the few vehicles that travel over the site. The increase will of course, be the result of boat launches supported by a 129± vehicular parking lot. Such emissions are however, typically deemed acceptable.

4.9. Noise Levels

Conversion Site: *Negligible Impacts* - No activities that would raise ambient noise levels are required in order to cause the conversion other than the very temporary presence of equipment when permanently closing the two boat ramps.

Replacement Site: *Negligible Impacts* - Noise levels during project construction will likely increase due to the use of machinery. However, construction activities will be limited to daylight hours, Monday through Friday, and likely will not occur on weekends or holidays. The increase in noise levels during construction will be temporary and noise levels resulting from construction are unlikely to be significant.

Once the construction activities have been completed the noise levels should become that typical of a park setting located in a commercial business corridor. The park will be subject to noise from vehicles, boats, landscape maintenance activities, and those individuals using the park; however, this minor noise will likely be vastly overshadowed by that emanating from the immediately adjacent US 17 arterial highway. Consequently, it is not anticipated that these minor noises or noise levels will be uncharacteristic or detrimental to the replacement site or the adjacent properties.

4.10. Water Resources

Conversion Site: *No Impacts* - Slight alteration of the land surface in proximity of the dual boat ramp is expected subsequent to their closure. This alteration will be part of the work to create a living shoreline to replace the boat ramps.

Replacement Site: *Minor Impacts* - Creation of the three boat ramps at the replacement site will necessitate dredging approximately 8,320 square feet of river bottom. Additionally, approximately 3,969 square feet of vegetated wetlands are to be filled that includes approximately 100 square feet of coastal wetlands and 3,869 square feet of upland wetlands.

A number of actions have been and will be undertaken to minimize the impacts of dredging as well as, the loss of wetlands. These actions are discussed in Section 5, "Mitigative Measures."

4.11. Forest and Mineral Resources

Conversion and Replacement Site: *Not Applicable* - There are no forest or mineral resources at either site.

4.12. Shellfish or Fish and Their Habitats

Conversion Site: *Negligible Impacts* – There is potential for the transport of sediment to the river during the permanent closure of the two boat ramps. The potential for this migration will be temporary. Additionally, an oyster covered rock seal is to be placed in the water just beyond the boat ramps prior to closure of the ramps. This seal will serve to contain any sediment that may be generated while the ramps are being permanently closed.

The rock seal will not only serve to contain sediment migrating to the water during the closure of the ramps but will also be the first step in creating a living shoreline. Wetland plants will be rooted in the river bottom behind the seal. The establishment of these wetland plants will create shellfish and fish habitat.

Replacement Site: *Negligible/Minor Impacts* – Creation of the three boat ramps at the replacement site will necessitate dredging approximately 8,320 square feet of river bottom. Additionally, approximately 3,969 square feet of vegetated wetlands are to be filled that includes approximately 100 square feet of coastal wetlands and 3,869 square feet of upland wetlands.

A number of actions have been and will be undertaken to minimize the impacts of dredging as well as, the loss of wetlands. These actions are discussed in Section 5, "Mitigative Measures."

4.13. Wildlife and Natural Vegetation

Conversion Site: *No impacts* - No changes in the wildlife that frequent the existing park or to the vegetation that exists within the park are expected.

Replacement Site: *Improved impact* - The new landscaping plan for the boat ramp will add 160 new trees and 632 shrubs and bushes. The list of trees include: Live Oak (31), Black Gum (16), Red Maple (23), Iron wood (39), Carolina Silver bell (8), River Birch (11), Eastern Red Bud (12), Flowering Dogwood (12) and Sweetbay Magnolia (8). The shrubs and bushes are to include: Virginia Sweetspire (113), Shamrock Inkberry (128), Inkberry Holly (81), Sweet Pepperbush (108), Yellow Anise (163), Yaupon Holly (14), Wax Myrtle (16) and Elderberry (9). The trees upon reaching maturing will allow for birds and small mammals to take refuge and supply amply food storage. The shade provided by the upper canopy will allow citizens to visit the area even in the heat of the summer. All of the trees are tolerant of very marshy or wet conditions as well as dry. Ospreys and Bald Eagles, which are both protected, could utilize the height for fishing in the area to feed

their young as well as nesting. North American River Otters and American Alligators will utilize the vegetated areas to forage. The shrubs and bushes were chosen to attract local pollinators of both insect and bird populations.

4.14. Artificial Light Conditions

Conversion Site: *No Impacts* - No changes to the lighting of the site are required in order to cause the conversion.

Replacement Site: *Negligible Impacts* - Development standards for exterior lighting are regulated by the City of Jacksonville Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Specifically, Section 5.5 Exterior Lighting regulates light spillage and glare to ensure the safety of motorists and pedestrians, and to ensure lighting does not adversely affect land uses on adjacent properties. More specifically, this section is intended to:

- a. Regulate lighting to assure that excessive light spillage and glare are not directed at adjacent properties, neighboring areas, and motorists;
- b. Ensure that all site lighting is designed and installed to maintain adequate lighting levels on site; and
- c. Provide security for persons and land.

In all new developments, the UDO requires lighting to be directed downward (dark sky). In addition, upwardly directed lighting shall not be used to illuminate structures, except for low-wattage architectural lighting.

All outdoor lighting and indoor lighting visible from outside shall be designed and located so that the maximum illumination at ground level at a property line shall not exceed 2.5 foot-candles.

In addition, both sites are within the Flight Path Overlay (FPO) which prohibits any use, development, or activity if it produces light emissions - either direct or indirect (reflective) - of such intensity and directed in such directions as to impair pilot visibility or otherwise interfere with the safe operation of overhead aircraft. Because of the strict standards of the UDO and FPO, the impacts created by artificial lighting will be negligible.

5. MITIGATIVE MEASURES

The primary impacts of the proposed conversion will be from the construction of three side-by-side boat ramps at the replacement site. As was stated earlier, creation of the three boat ramps will necessitate dredging approximately 8,230 square feet of river bottom. Additionally, approximately 3,969 square feet of vegetated wetlands are to be filled that include approximately 100 square feet of coastal wetlands and 3,869 square feet of upland wetlands.

Dredging for the boat ramps along with the installation of related bulkheads are expected to result in temporary water quality impacts. It is worth noting that selecting an alternate site along the New River located beyond the PNA is not an option since the entire New River is designated as a PNA. Therefore, a number of changes to the originally envisioned project have been accepted to mitigate impacts. Practices are also to be instituted during the work to minimize impacts. The changes and planned practices are as follows:

- The original dredging foot print was to cover approximately 24,000 square feet (64 ft. x 267 ft.) and required approximately 1,300 cubic yards of dredging to get to a depth of 6.5 feet. In consultation with the regulatory agencies having jurisdiction, the dredging footprint was reduced to 8,230 square feet (64 ft. x 130 ft.) and 431 cubic yards of dredging to get a depth of 4.5 feet. During low water, the channel will be marginally useful for boaters, anglers, and other recreational users at a depth of 3 ft. Therefore, the proposed disturbance in the PNC has been significantly reduced in an effort to minimize adverse impacts.
- In order to protect juvenile shrimp and finfish populations, no dredging/excavation will be conducted between April 1 and September 30 of any year.
- All excavated materials are to be confined above normal water and landward of regularly or irregularly flooded wetlands behind adequate dikes or other retaining structures to prevent spillover of solids into any wetlands or surrounding waters
- The concrete ramps are to be poured at an upland location and pushed into place once hardened. "Live" concrete will not be allowed to contact the waters.
- An educational kiosk is to be erected on the site informing and educating the public about the value of PNA's and the potential for impacts to PNA's from boating.
- Channel markers are to be installed to clearly designate the navigational channel leading from the boat ramp to the main channel.

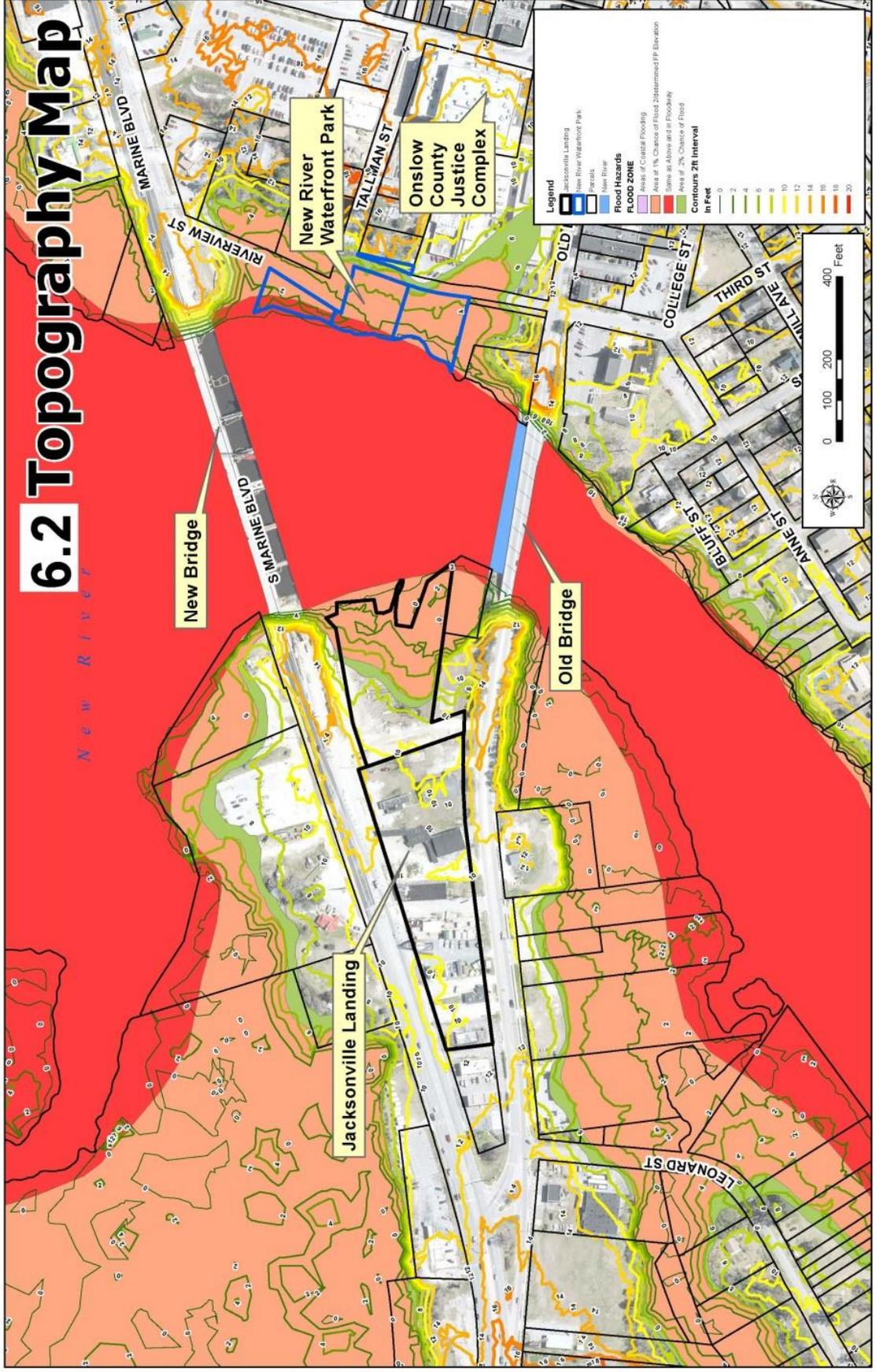
The loss of wetlands is to be mitigated by the creation of additional wetlands. As has been stated previously, additional wetlands are to be added subsequent to closure of the dual boat ramps located directly across the river. Closure of the boat ramps is slated to occur once the boat ramps at the replacement site are placed into service. The two ramps are to be replaced by a 50± ft. long living shoreline inclusive of wetland plants that will stabilize the shoreline and create habitat which should improve water surface quality.

6. FIGURES AND CORRESPONDENCE

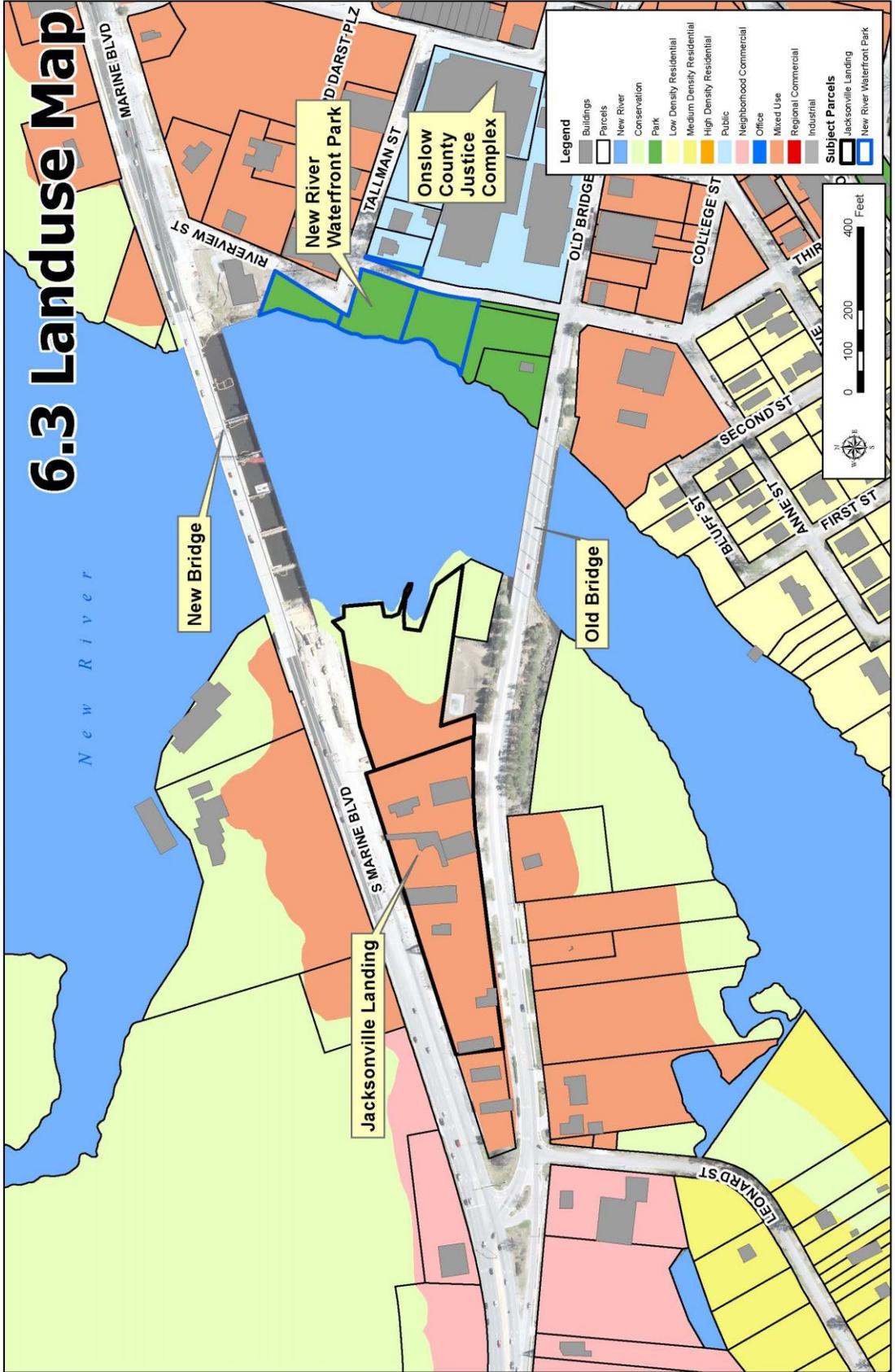
6.1 Location Map



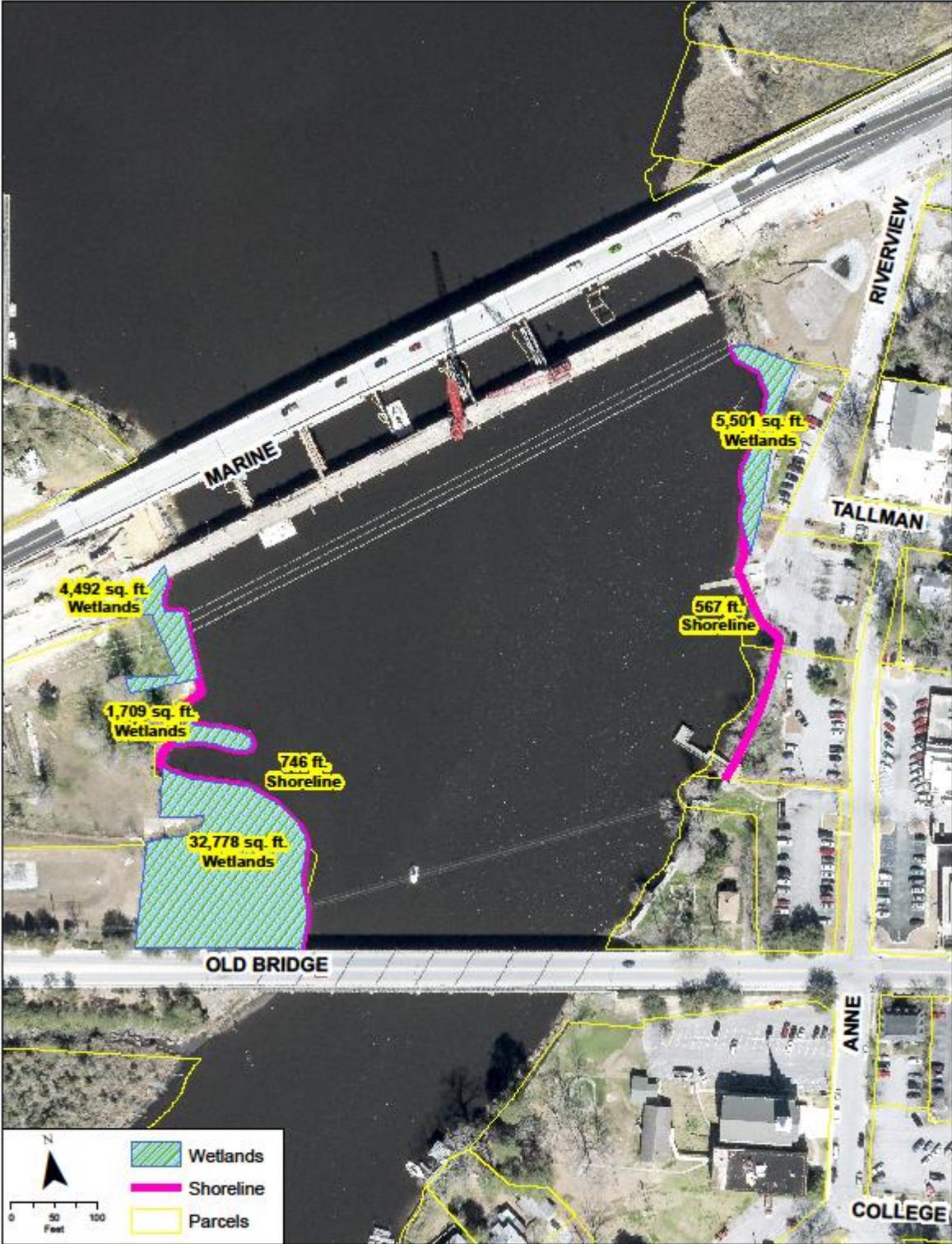
6.2 Topography Map



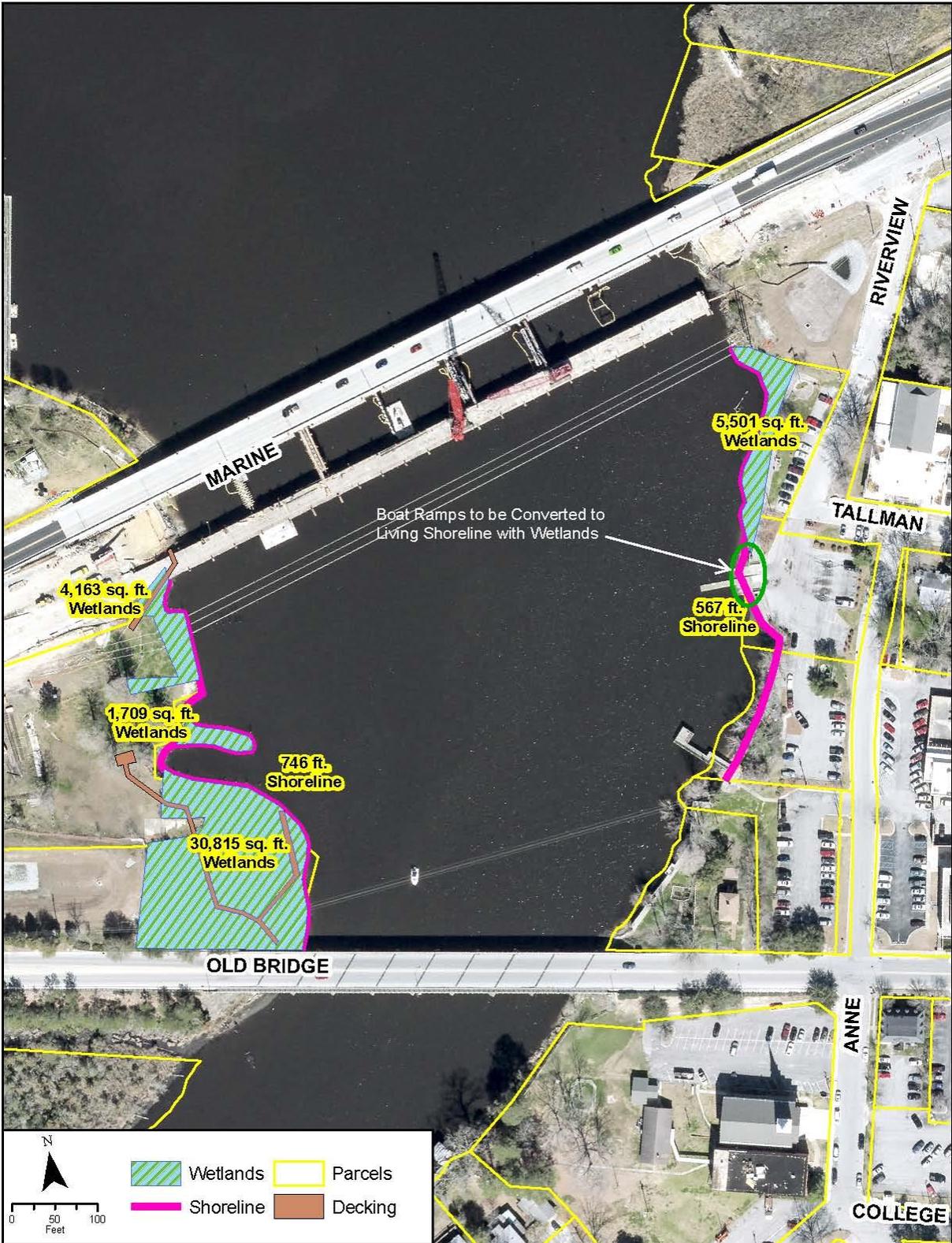
6.3 Landuse Map



6.4 Existing Wetlands and Shoreline Map



6.5 Proposed Wetlands and Shoreline Map



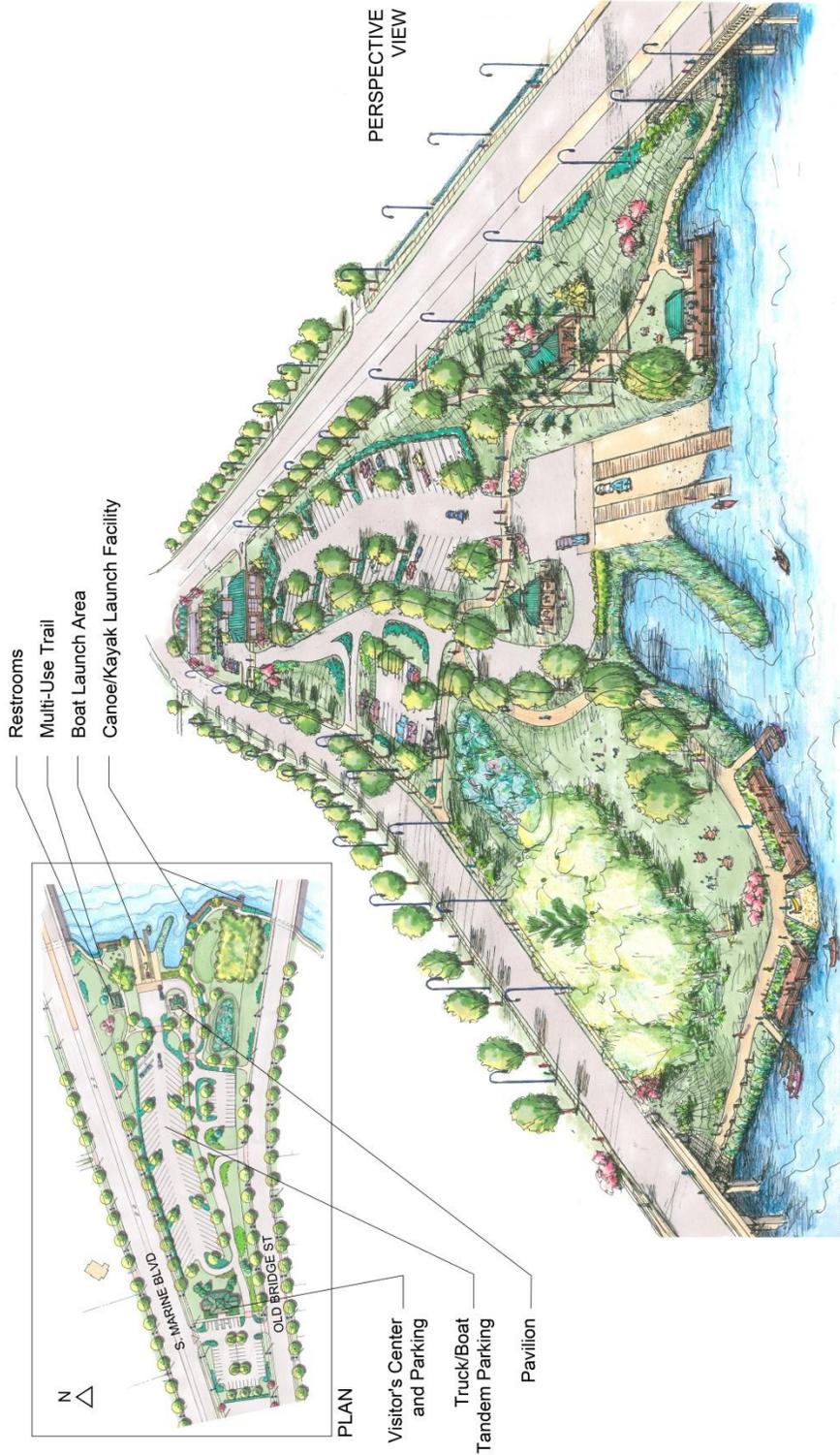
6.6 1961 Historical Photo



6.7 1972 Historical Photo



6.8 Jacksonville Landing Artist Rendering



Proposed Park Area Development Between S. Marine Blvd and Old Bridge St
 Jacksonville, North Carolina



6.9 State Historic Preservation Office



North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office
Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

April 17, 2015

Aldon Cox
City of Jacksonville
PO Box 128
Jacksonville, NC 28540

Re: Convert Land and Water Conservation Fund Project Agreement at the New River Waterfront Park to the Jacksonville Landing Boating Access Area, Onslow County, ER 15-0680

Dear Mr. Cox:

Thank you for your email of March 24, 2015, concerning the above project.

We have conducted a review of the project and are aware of no historic resources which would be affected by the project. Therefore, we have no comment on the project as proposed.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Renee Gledhill-Earley".

for Ramona M. Bartos

Location: 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh NC 27601 Mailing Address: 4617 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-4617 Telephone/Fax: (919) 807-6570/807-6599

7. STATE AND FEDERAL PERMITS REQUIRED

- Stormwater - N.C. Division of Energy, Mineral, and Land Resources
- Erosion Control - N.C. Division of Energy, Mineral, and Land Resources
- CAMA Major - N.C. Division of Coastal Management
- 401 Water Quality - N.C. Division of Water Resources
- Driveway Permit - N.C. Department of Transportation
- General Permit - Army Corps of Engineers
- No-Rise Certification - N.C. Division of Emergency Management Geospatial and
Technology Management Office National Flood Insurance Program