



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE

75 Spring Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

IN REPLY REFER TO:

SEP 24 1984

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Ms. Elinor G. Adensam, Chief
Licensing Branch No. 4
Division of Licensing
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

50-424/425

Dear Ms. Adensam:

Thank you for your letter of September 12, 1984, requesting our input regarding a transmission line crossing of Ebenezer Creek Swamp in Effingham County, Georgia. Ebenezer Creek Swamp was designated a National Natural Landmark in May 1976.

The objectives of the National Natural Landmark program are:

1. To encourage the preservation of sites illustrating the geological and ecological character of the United States;
2. To enhance the scientific and educational value of sites thus preserved;
3. To strengthen public appreciation of natural history; and
4. To foster a greater concern in the conservation of the Nation's natural heritage.

It is the only Federal program that systematically inventories the entire country and makes comparative judgements so that the best remaining examples of the Nation's natural features may be recognized, regardless of ownership status.

Thus, the National Natural Landmark Program has the potential for slowing the destruction of nationally significant natural areas by calling attention to them, hopefully in time to utilize that knowledge in land-use decision-making. The fact that the program covers privately owned as well as public lands is a unique feature. This enables the Federal Government to promote natural diversity preservation regardless of ownership. Although direct protection cannot be afforded to all landmarks, indirect protection is given by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which requires Federal

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agencies undertaking major actions to file statements describing the effects of such actions on the environment, including natural landmarks, and to propose alternatives to those actions that would have a damaging effect on the landmarks. In addition the National Park Service, through its Regional Offices, is responsible for annually reviewing the status of National Natural Landmarks (NNL's). This review is mandated by Section 8 of the General Authorities Act of 1976, which requires a report on any damaged or threatened NNL's to be delivered to the Congress each year.

In assessing the national significance of Ebenezer Creek Swamp, the evaluator, Dr. Bozeman, professor of Biology at Georgia Southern College, stated:

This site is the best remaining Cypress-Gum Forest in the Savannah River Basin. The physical relationship and interactions between the river and the creek are unique to this system. The evaluator knows of no other area with these exact qualities.

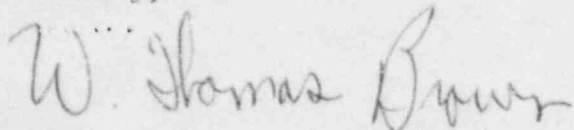
Professor Bozeman also specifically cited the high educational, research and recreational value of the area.

We suggest that alternative routes A or B be selected as they would either not cross the landmark (Alternative B) or cross at a site where environmental damage could be minimized.

If these alternatives are rejected, we regard the construction of larger towers as essential to prevent the destruction of the delicate ecosystem closest to the creek. Alternative B would seemingly allow for a minimum of clearing by increasing the height of the transmission line.

We appreciate your interest in the protection of this important environmental area. If you have any questions, please call Charles Schuler at (404) 221-5838.

Sincerely,



W. Thomas Brown
Associate Regional Director
Planning and External Affairs
Southeast Region

Enclosures

cc:
Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Building
810 Gloucester Street
Brunswick, GA 31520

Natural Landmark Brief

1. Site: Ebenezer Creek Swamp, Effingham County, Georgia
2. Description: This 1,350-acre site occupies the flood plain of Ebenezer Creek, a tributary of the Savannah River. It extends for 4 miles in a more or less east-west orientation from the bridge crossing of State Route 953 to the creek's confluence with the Savannah River. Ebenezer Creek is a blackwater coastal stream which has eroded the west bank of the Savannah River creating a broadly flattened basin overlying residual clays. This basin is topographically uniform in elevation at 15 feet above mean sea level. As a result of this uniformity, any fluctuations in the water level of the Savannah River, such as normal winter flooding or tidal backwater, directly affect the water level in Ebenezer Creek. During winter floods the water level in the creek rises 4 to 5 feet. This large fluctuation is evident from the watermarks left on the extremely swollen bases of the old-growth bald cypress and tupelo gum trees which occur in essentially pure stands along the creek bed. The swamp is in a highly natural and undisturbed condition. Bald cypress trees average between two and three feet in diameter above the butt swell. The creek swamp is reportedly an important spawning area for the anadromous striped bass.

This area is centered about 22 miles north-northwest of the city of Savannah.

3. Owner: The tract is in multiple private ownership.
4. Proposed by: The Center for Natural Areas, Smithsonian Institution in the Atlantic Coastal Plain Natural Region theme study.
5. Significance: This site represents the best remaining cypress-gum swamp forest in the Savannah River Basin. The physical relationship and interactions between the river and the creek are unique to this system. Prolonged flooding caused by this condition has resulted in extreme buttressing of the cypress and tupelo gum trees. The site provides important spawning grounds for the anadromous striped bass as well as habitat for the American alligator.
6. Land use: The area has experienced some limited selective logging but little evidence remains. Currently, the creek is used for recreational fishing and boating. A few fishing camps have been built along the south bank of the creek on the higher bluff areas. In general, the site receives little use and maintains a high degree of natural integrity.
7. Dangers to integrity: Existing threats to the area include improper solid waste disposal and possible seepage of sewage from fish camps along the creek bank. Construction of additional cottages along the banks poses a possible threat as does the potential for logging the area.
8. Special conditions: None.
9. Studied by: Dr. John R. Bozeman, Department of Biology, Georgia Southern College, Statesboro, Georgia.

March 1976