

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**LaGrange Primary-Oselgee Creek 230kV Transmission Line
& Oselgee Creek 230kV Substation Construction
Troup County, Georgia**

**RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE
United States Department of Agriculture**

**Georgia Transmission Corporation
Georgia 110**

**Prepared by:
Environmental and Historic Preservation Division
Rural Utilities Service**

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A. INTRODUCTION

Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC) plans to submit a financing request to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to construct the proposed LaGrange Primary-Oseligee Creek 230kV Transmission Line and the Oseligee Creek 230kV Substation (collectively, the Project) in Troup County, Georgia. RUS is considering this financing request. Prior to taking a federal action (i.e., providing financial assistance), RUS is required to complete an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review (42 U.S. Code §§ 4321-4347) and USDA Rural Development's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR 1970). After completing an independent analysis of an environmental report prepared by GTC and its consultant, RUS concurred with its scope and content. In accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102, RUS will adopt the report and issue it as the Agency's Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Project. RUS finds that the EA is consistent with federal regulations and meets the standards for an adequate assessment. RUS considers the proposed Project an undertaking subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), (54 U.S.C. §§ 300101 – 306108), and its implementing regulation, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800).

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE / NEED

Georgia Transmission has proposed the construction of the LaGrange Primary-Oseligee Creek 230kV Transmission Line and the Oseligee Creek 230/25kV Substation in Troup County, Georgia, to mitigate a number of identified contingencies and thermal limitations relating to changes in energy flow patterns caused by the displacement of fossil fuel resources, particularly the retirement of older coal facilities. As currently proposed, the transmission line, stretching from the city of LaGrange to the city of West Point, Georgia, is approximately 16.5 miles in length and requires the installation of approximately 125 transmission line structures/poles. It will require easement from private and public landowners that is 25-30 feet in width when collocating with public roads and 100-feet in width elsewhere. This easement will be cleared from ground-to-sky of woody plant materials to establish an area of low growing vegetation. In addition to the line, the proposed project also entails constructing a new 230/25kV substation along State Line Road in West Point, Georgia. Approximately 11.5-acres has been purchased for the substation; and as much as 6.0-acres will be cleared and graded to provide a level substation pad, access drives, parking, and drainage controls. Lastly Diverse Power, a local, low-voltage distribution cooperative, will draw service from the proposed substation and will construct a 4-bay, 25kV low-side facility within its fenced yard. Diverse Power will also install underground distribution feeders to connect the new power source to its existing distribution network. All of Diverse Power's work will occur onsite at the Oseligee Creek substation or within existing distribution and road easements.

C. ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

1. No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, RUS would not provide financial assistance to GTC and the proposed Project would not be constructed. There are no environmental consequences, but GTC would fail to adequately address the electric reliability concerns identified in the northwest region of the state. In this scenario, thermal limitations would persist and if certain existing lines are not in operation, then limitations are observed on other existing transmission lines that could lead to cascading overloading conditions and blackouts.

2. Action Alternative (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Action Alternative, RUS would consider financing the proposed Project, and GTC would construct the LaGrange Primary-Oseligee Creek 230kV Transmission Line and the Oseligee Creek 230kV

Substation in Troup County, Georgia. This alternative resolves the reliability issues and helps maintain the flow of reliable power. In addition, the Action Alternative creates an additional transmission source increasing operational flexibility and system resiliency. It is also relatively cost-effective, and the project lead time is reasonably less when compared to other alternatives. Possible environmental impacts associated with the Action Alternative are analyzed in the EA.

3. Other Alternatives Considered

Other Alternatives considered, including transmission line route and substation site alternatives are documented in the Alternatives section of the EA.

D. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS and MITIGATION

The EA for the proposed Project was prepared during the National Energy Emergency as per Executive Order 14156 signed on January 20, 2025. Taking into account emergency procedures, the agency prepared a more concise, focused document that addressed potential impacts to land use, floodplains, wetlands and waters, biological resources, cultural and historic properties, aesthetics, and transportation. In accordance with the requirements of § 1970.104(b), a summary of anticipated impacts on the human environment is provided below, including any mitigation measures deemed necessary to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts. GTC is responsible for implementing any mitigation measures.

Prime Farmland: Important farmland soils account for approximately 37% (69 acres) of the transmission line; and for approximately 53% (6.2 acres) of the substation site. The NRCS has determined that the utilization of prime farmland soils for transmission line easements does not necessarily result in their conversion to non-agricultural use as many crops and agricultural activities can remain within the transmission line corridor. As such the NRCS AD-1006 is not required for corridors. The substation site received a Farmland Conversion Impact Rating of 115 on the NRCS AD-1006 Form. Pursuant to 7 CFR 658.4(c)(2) no further consideration is needed as the total value for the substation is less than 160.

Formally Classified Lands: The proposed Project does physically cross West Pont River Park Trails, a local park owned by the City of West Point. The proposed project minimizes the amount of right-of-way (ROW) required by paralleling and partially sharing easement with another high voltage transmission line that is already within the passive park. The transmission line easements are also consistent with the overall conservation goals of the passive park as they provide natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species as well as practicable areas for walking and bike trails. As such, no adverse effects to the West Point River Park Trails are reasonably anticipated.

Floodplains: There are 34.1 acres of 100-year floodplains along the project. Of that 20.6 acres are currently forested and will be cleared of woody vegetation and underbrush. This removal of woody species vegetation and underbrush may to an unknown extent increase the rate and intensity in which rain contacts the ground. To reduce erosion and sedimentation, the ROW will have temporary ground cover and later permanent, evenly distributed vegetative cover with a density of at least seventy percent in compliance with state and federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations. In addition, five poles will be located in floodplains. The structures will be single-pole as well as un-guyed. Given the above, the construction of the proposed substation and transmission line is not anticipated to have an adverse effect on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated floodplains.

Wetlands/ Streams: GTC contracted with Sligh Environmental Consulting, Inc. (SECI) to identify and delineate wetlands or waters along the proposed Project. In all, 58 waters and 50 wetlands were identified. GTC intends to improve approximately five (5) existing crossings and to install approximately eight (8) new stream crossings along the transmission line portion of the project. In all, 0.2 acres of wetlands and another 0.2 acres of streams will be impacted. All proposed impacts satisfy the USACE General Conditions

of the current Nationwide Permits (NWP) issued in January 2021 and the Savannah District's Regional Conditions issued in March 2021. Specifically, proposed impacts may be permitted under NWP 3 for maintenance activities and NWP 57 for electric utility line telecommunication activities.

Waters of the U.S: The USACE also regulates work done in, over, or under navigable waters as required by Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. The proposed transmission line will cross over the Chattahoochee River, a navigable water of the US. As such, a permit from USACE is required and will be obtained. No impacts to navigable waters are anticipated.

Biological Resources: IPaC and the USFWS Georgia Ecological Service Field Office (GAES) were consulted. After a request for technical assistance, GAES provided a streamlined project review under EO 14156. The proposed project will have no effect on the whooping crane, eastern black rail, and Georgia rockcress and will not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the tricolored bat, alligator snapping turtle, and monarch butterfly. GTC has voluntarily agreed to prohibit tree clearing activities during the summer pup season (May 1 – July 31) for the tricolored, but notes that clearing activities may extend to the winter hibernation period (December 1 – February 28).

Archaeological Resources: Two sites were identified and are recommended potentially eligible for the NRHP. Both sites will be preserved in place by GTC. Any woody vegetation will be removed utilizing hand clearing techniques, and alternate access paths, which are readily available around each site for construction and future maintenance activities, will be used. No vehicular traffic will be allowed within these areas preserved in place. Additionally, fencing will be installed along the periphery of one site. With the implementation of the management strategies, a finding of no adverse effect in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.5(b) is appropriate

Cultural Resources: GTC has contracted with NV5 to identify and to make recommendations of effects to historic properties. Approximately 162 historic resources were identified by NV5. Of that, 21 were recommended eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. RUS in accordance with 36 CFR 800.5, the Criteria of Adverse Effect, has recommended that the proposed undertaking will result in a finding of no historic properties affected for eleven resources and a finding of no adverse effect to ten resources. The proposed project, particularly the LaGrange Primary–Oselgee Creek 230kV Transmission Line component, would result in an adverse effect to the Henry and Lura Miller House (Resource 19) that is a listed property on the NRHP. As such, a finding of adverse effect to the Henry and Lura Miller House in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.5 is appropriate for historic properties.

As part of the alternate Section 106 process outlined in the Programmatic Agreement (PA) executed by RUS, the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and GTC, adverse effects that are similar in nature or repetitive are mitigated programmatically through sponsorship of historic research projects approved jointly by RUS and SHPO. This Project adversely impacts a historic property listed on the NRHP. Through consultation with SHPO and RUS, GTC was able to shift the alignment of the proposed Project to minimize the amount of easement and clearing required on the historic property. As SHPO regarded the impacts to The Henry and Lura Miller House as unavoidable as well as similar in nature to the adverse effects routinely resolved programmatically through the aforementioned PA, no additional mitigation measures are required by SHPO and RUS.

Transportation: The LaGrange Calloway Airport is located within the northern half of project study area. Per FAR 77 criteria, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has been notified of 25 structures that pierced the Part 77 surface: structures 21 to 42. The resulting aeronautical studies determined that all 25

structures do not exceed obstruction standards and will not be a hazard to air navigation. The following three conditions, however, were placed on the Project.

Conditions:

1. Two (2) towers need to be lighted and marked per FAA AC 70/7460-1 M Change 1, Obstruction Marking and Lighting, red lights-Chapters 4, 5 (Red), & 15
 - a. 2024-ASO-16687-OE (STR 28)
 - b. 2024-ASO-16688-OE (STR 29)
2. Construction must start by 6/9/2026.
3. Construction equipment (e.g., cranes) that exceed the approved tower heights need to be permitted by FAA.

E. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

In accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102, GTC published public notices in *LaGrange Daily News* on June 28 and July 2, 2025, announcing the availability of the EA for public review. A copy of the EA with supporting documentation was available for public review on the RUS website at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/lagrange-primary-oseligee-creek-230kv-transmission-line-and-oseligee-creek-23025kv-substation>. RUS did not receive any comments on the EA during the 14-day public comment period that ended on July 12, 2025.

F. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on its EA, RUS has concluded that the proposed Project will have no significant effects to land use, floodplains, wetlands and waters, biological resources, cultural and historic properties, aesthetics, and transportation. After a 14-day public comment period, no other potential significant impacts resulting from the proposed Project have been identified.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and RD's Environmental Policies and Procedures, RUS has determined that the environmental impacts of the proposed Project have been adequately addressed and that no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment will result from construction and operation of the proposed Project. Any final action by RUS related to the proposed Project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant federal and state environmental laws and regulations. Because RUS's action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, RUS will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its potential federal action associated with the proposed Project.

G. LOAN REVIEW AND RIGHT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This FONSI is not a decision on a loan application and therefore not an approval of the expenditure of federal funds. Issuance of the FONSI and its notices concludes RUS's environmental review process. The ultimate decision on loan approval depends upon conclusion of this environmental review process in addition to financial and engineering reviews. Issuance of the FONSI and publication of notices will allow for these reviews to proceed. The decision to provide financial assistance also is subject to the availability of loan funds for the designated purpose in RUS's budget. There are no provisions to appeal this FONSI or the agency's other environmental determinations. Legal challenges to the FONSI may be filed in Federal District Court under the Administrative Procedures Act.

H. APPROVAL

This Finding of No Significant Impact is effective upon signature.

Dated:

CHRISTOPHER A. MCLEAN

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Contact Information

For additional information on this FONSI and EA, email: RUSPublicComments@usda.gov.