PUBLIC NOTICE FOR
CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDED ACTION
AFFECTING WETLAND

Mulberry Mills, AL 161kV New Transmission Line Right-of-Way and Construction

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is seeking your comments on proposed wetland impacts and TVA's determination of no practicable alternative. Comments must be received no later than fourteen (14) days from the date of notice publication. Public input for further wetland avoidance or minimization strategies shall be considered in TVA's ultimate project design and implementation. Any comments, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and will be available for public inspection as requested.

Submit comments regarding wetland impacts resulting from this project to:
Kenneth McMahan, kmcmahan@tva.gov

TVA proposes to build a new transmission line on a newly acquired 100' wide 5.6-mile long right-of-way near Mulberry Mills, AL. This project will require new construction across wetlands. Therefore, this project is subject to Executive Order 11990 (EO11990), which requires federal agencies to minimize wetland destruction, loss, or degradation, and preserve the natural and beneficial wetland values while carrying out the agency's responsibilities. This project involves clearing tall woody vegetation for the new right-of-way and constructing transmission towers and overhead wires within the corridor. To do so, vehicular access across these wetlands would be necessary and tree, sapling, and shrub vegetation would be removed. Although vehicular access across these wetlands would be temporary, woody vegetation would not be permitted to regrow within the right-of-way for the lifetime of the utility line.

W001 comprises 0.05 acres of forested wetlands on the proposed right-of-way, within a small tributary floodplain that discharges to Marriott Creek. W001 is dominated by loblolly pine and black gum trees, which would be cleared to accommodate the new right-of-way.

W002 comprises 0.04 acres of forested wetlands on the proposed right-of-way, within a small tributary floodplain that discharges to Marriott Creek. W002 is dominated by loblolly pine, sweetgum, and tulip poplar trees, which would be cleared to accommodate the new right-of-way.

W007 comprises 0.03 acres of scrub-shrub wetlands on the proposed right-of-way, within a relatively recent private clearcut. W007 is dominated by loblolly pine, sweetgum, and winged sumac saplings and shrubs, which would be cleared to accommodate the new right-of-way.

The total 0.03 acres of scrub shrub wetlands and 0.09 acres of forested wetlands on the proposed right-of-way would be permanently converted to emergent, meadow-like habitat and maintained as-such long term. Woody wetland vegetation, in general, have deeper root systems and contain greater biomass (quantity of living matter) per area than do emergent wetlands which do not grow as tall. As a result, forested wetlands tend to provide higher levels of wetland functions, such as sediment retention, carbon storage, and pollutant retention and transformation (detoxification), all of which support better water quality. Consequently, the clearing and conversion of forested wetlands to lower-growing herbaceous wetlands reduces wetland functions that would otherwise support healthier and improved downstream water quality (Wilder and Roberts 2002; Ainslie et al. 1999; Scott et al. 1990). Although the newly emergent wetland habitat would provide the same suite of wetland functions as their previously forested counter part, it would be at a reduced level due to the removal of woody vegetation.

For this proposed Mulberry Mills, AL project, no structures are proposed in identified wetland boundaries. However, per the Clean Water Act Section 404(b) guidelines, wetland habitat conversion is considered a secondary impact resulting from fill associated with structure placement in wetlands for transmission line construction. Because of the degradation to wetland function, the proposed forested wetland conversion to emergent subject to the regulation of the USACE Mobile District and ADEM, and the associated mitigation requirements to ensure no net loss of wetland resources across the landscape. The USACE and ADEM exert this oversight through an established permit process that ensures maintenance of the physical, biological, and chemical integrity of the nation's waters, including wetlands, and the objectives of the CWA are upheld. The permitting process involves a demonstration of wetland avoidance, minimization of disturbance, and compensation for loss of wetland functions and values within the larger watershed basin. TVA would obtain the necessary Section 404/401 CWA permits and any required compensatory mitigation to ensure the proposed wetland impacts are compensated to the extent deemed appropriate such that wetland functions and values remain at the current capacity and no further degradation to water resources occurs within larger affected basins.

In consideration of wetland degradation resulting from the propose activities, all practicable design measures to minimize wetland disturbance have been incorporated. These measures include:

- Siting the project footprint to minimize wetland impacts to the extent practicable;
- Avoiding structure placement in wetlands wherever engineering/electric design could allow;
- Avoiding vehicular traffic across wetlands wherever an alternative exists;
- No mechanized (tip-over) clearing of woody vegetation in wetlands
- Adherence to wetland Best Management Practices during construction of the transmission line and long-term vegetation maintenance in the right-of-way. including but not limited to:
    - Schedule work activities during dry season work when practicable
    - Use of wood mats, pipe mats, panels or pallets, metal grating, cut-and-cross lay road, pole road, etc. as temporary equipment access
    - Use of low ground pressure equipment or other vehicles with rubberized tracks and wide tires whenever practicable to reduce soil compaction
    - No tire rutting greater than 12”
    - Cutting of woody vegetation within 12” of ground surface, no grubbing
    - Contours within wetland and wetland buffer are restored to preconstruction elevations if altered
    - All disturbed or exposed soils in wetland would be seeded with an approved and appropriate vegetation mix.
    - Only aquatic approved herbicides shall be used in wetland areas for vegetation maintenance.
- Comply with federal/state wetland regulatory requirements to ensure wetland impacts result in no net loss of wetland resources.

TVA concluded the proposed project comports with EO11990 because:

1. The project was designed to avoid wetland impacts to the extent practicable.
2. There is no practicable alternative to avoiding the proposed wetland impacts.
3. The project would conform to all applicable federal and state wetland regulations ensuring no more than minimal impacts to the aquatic environment.
4. With best management practices and compliance mechanisms in place, proposed wetland impacts would be insignificant.

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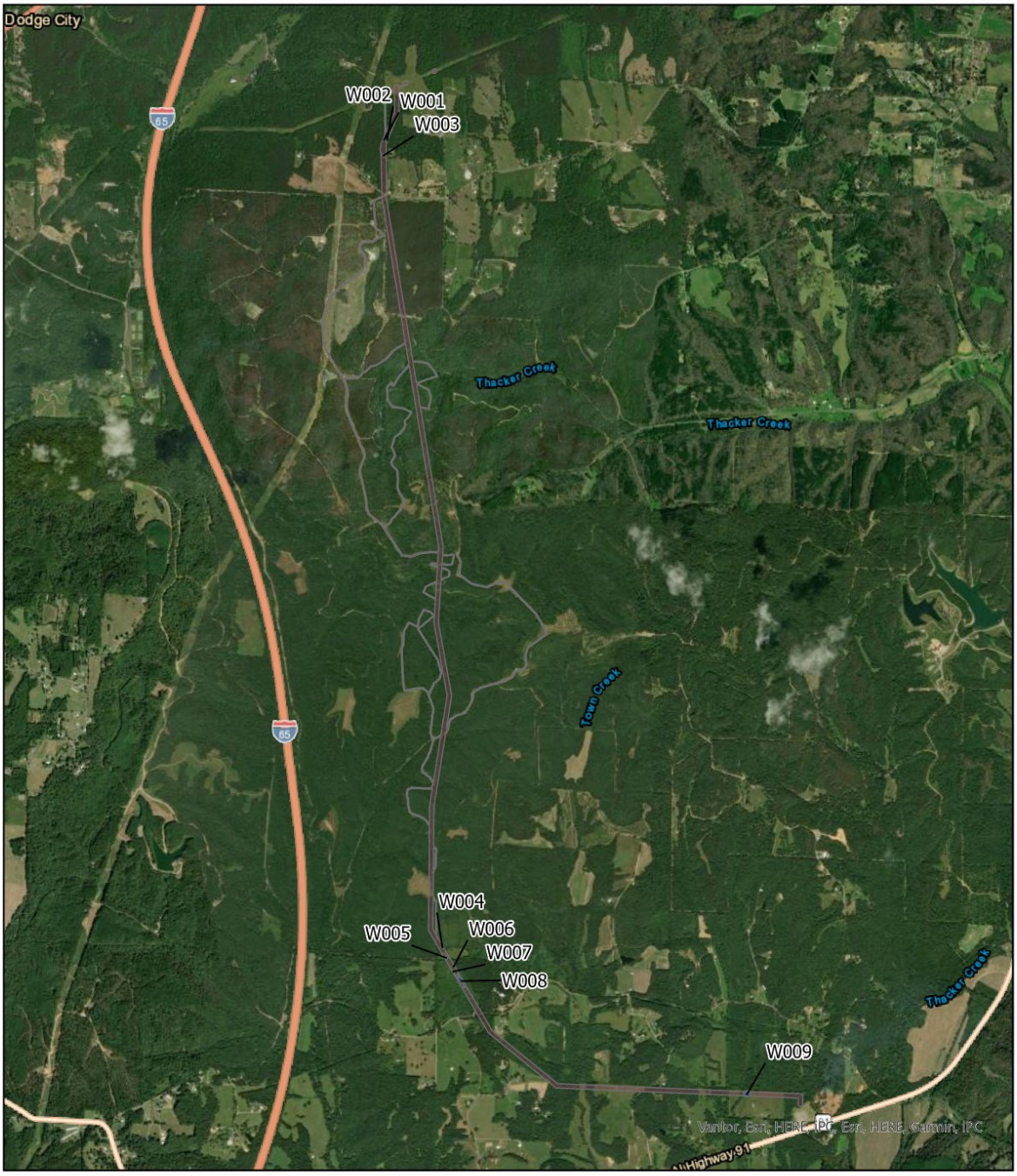
TVA: Mulberry Mills Delivery Point



Legend

Wetlands

Project Area

0 0.47 0.95 1.9 Miles

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TVA: Mulberry Mills Delivery Point

Legend

Wetlands

Project Area

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

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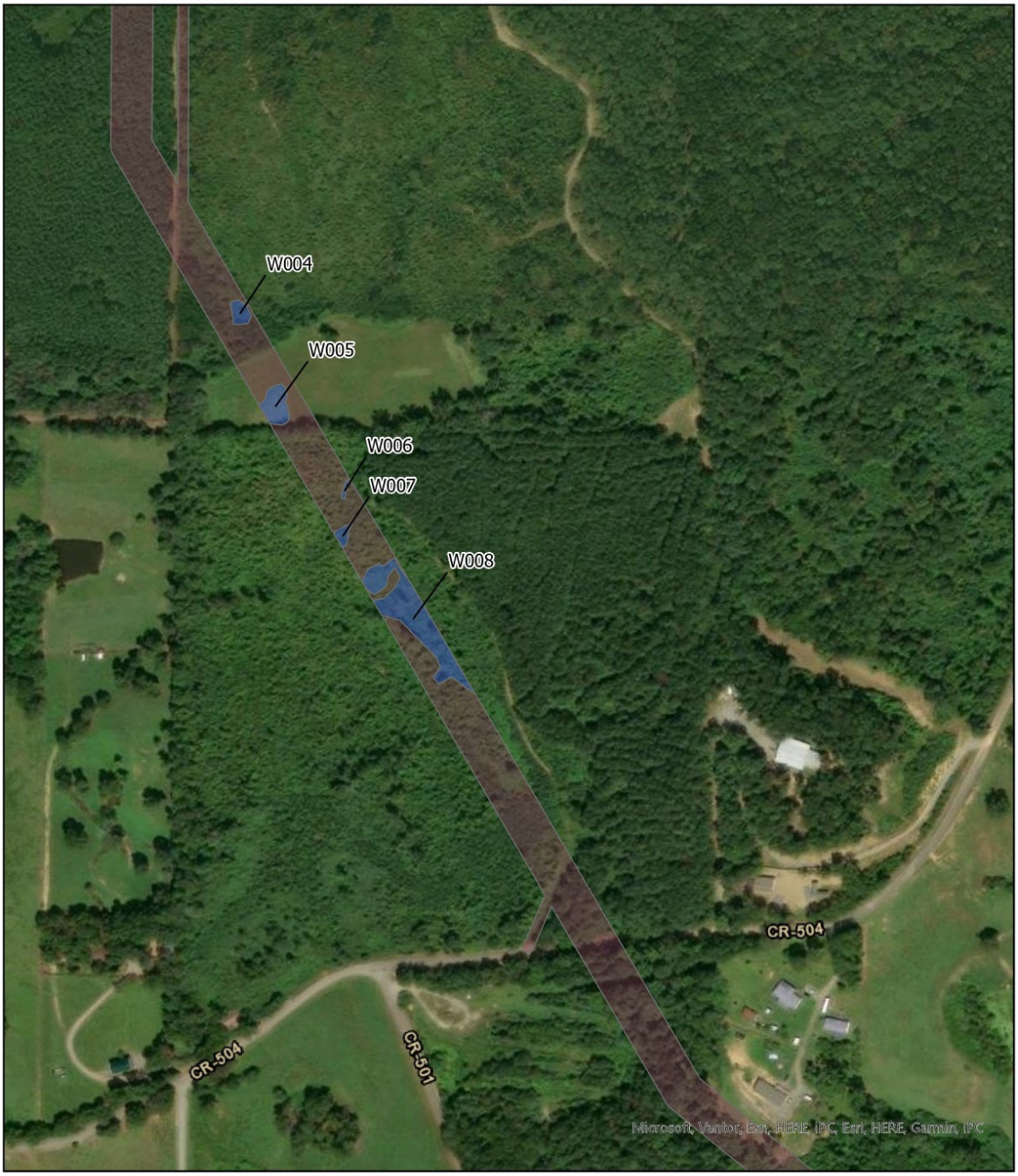
TVA: Mulberry Mills Delivery Point



Legend

Wetlands

Project Area

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

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