

**PUBLIC NOTICE FOR
CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDED ACTION
AFFECTING WETLAND**

Woods Grove 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:
Rebecca Howell, rphowell@tva.gov**

TVA proposes to build a new 5.3-mile 161-kv transmission line (TL) feed to Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's (BREMC) Woods Grove substation. For the first 1.8 miles (Structures 3-18), the existing R.O.W would be widened from 75' to 100' (12.5' on each side of existing R.O.W). 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 trees, saplings, 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 is a scrub shrub wetland on the access road. Due to its size and habitat function, this wetland scores as moderate quality, indicating a good provision of wetland function. Wetland vegetation included sycamore, green ash, and soft rush. W001 may incur temporary impacts for access.

W002 is an emergent wetland on the access road. Due to its size and habitat function, this wetland scores as moderate quality, indicating a good provision of wetland function. Wetland vegetation included sycamore, fox sedge, soft rush, and button bush. W002 may incur temporary impacts for access.

W003a is an emergent wetland that runs along Hyatt Mill Creek on the access road. Due to its size and habitat function, this wetland scores as moderate quality, indicating a good provision of wetland function. Wetland vegetation included sycamore, fox sedge, soft rush, and button bush. W003a may incur temporary impacts for access.

W003b is a forested wetland adjacent Hyatt Mill Creek within the project area. Due to its size and habitat function, this wetland scores as moderate quality, indicating a good provision of wetland function. Wetland vegetation included red maple and swamp agrimony, which would be cleared to accommodate the widening of the right-of-way.

W004 is an emergent wetland on the access road. Due to its size and habitat function, this wetland scores as low quality, indicating a poor provision of wetland function. Wetland vegetation included sycamore, fox sedge, soft rush, and button bush. W004 may incur temporary impacts for access.

W005 is an emergent wetland on the access road. Due to its size and habitat function, this wetland scores as moderate quality, indicating a good provision of wetland function. Wetland vegetation included sycamore, fox sedge, soft rush, and button bush. W005 may incur temporary impacts for access.

W006 is an emergent wetland on the access road. Due to its size and habitat function, this wetland scores as low quality, indicating a poor provision of wetland function. Wetland vegetation included sycamore, fox sedge, soft rush, and button bush. W006 may incur temporary impacts for access.

A total of 1.30 acres of wetlands is located within the proposed project area. The 0.05-acre forested wetland (W003b) 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, has 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. Although the newly emergent wetland habitat would provide the same suite of wetland functions as their previously forested counterpart, it would be at a reduced level due to the removal of woody vegetation.

Because of the degradation to wetland function, the proposed forested wetland conversion is subject to the regulation of the USACE Nashville District and NCDEQ and the associated mitigation requirements to ensure no net loss of wetland resources across the landscape. 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 proposed 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.

Figure 1: Project Area Map



Figure 2: Wetland Impacts Map

