



Natural Resource Services, Inc.

Written Narrative in Support of a
Request for Preliminary Determination

Anchor Auto Group Parking Lot
194 Sayles Hill Road; A.P. 17, Lot 15
North Smithfield, Rhode Island



Prepared for:
Joe Casali Engineering, Inc.
300 Post Road
Warwick, RI 02888

Prepared by:

Scott P. Rabideau, PWS
Principal Biologist

June 9, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Natural Resource Services, Inc. (NRS) has been retained by Joe Casali Engineering Inc. (JCE) to assist with the preparation and submission of a Request for Preliminary Determination (PD) to the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Office of Water Resources (OWR), Freshwater Wetland Program (FWP). NRS has prepared this narrative for JCE's client Benoit Residential Realty, LLC who is the applicant for the project. They are applying for a permit to construct a parking lot within a previously residential lot area.

This narrative has been prepared pursuant to Section 1.9(B) of the Rules and Regulations Governing the Administration and Enforcement of the Freshwater Wetlands Act (hereafter the regulations).

PROJECT SCOPE

The applicant is proposing to construct a parking lot within the lot located at 194 Sayles Hill Road. The lot was previously residential and had a single-family home and garage outbuilding; the property also maintained a large fenced yard area. This lot was acquired by the applicant to construct additional parking for the surrounding Anchor Auto Group dealership located adjacent to the property along a developed section of Eddie Dowling Highway. The home was demolished after April 2020 and the area is now vacant and cleared. Outside of these limits, the land remains forested.

NRS was originally retained to delineate any freshwater wetlands present within the area in 2014. An expansion of the Anchor Auto Group Dealership was reviewed and authorized by the DEM under application number 15-0078. A follow up visit was conducted February 4, 2014 where NRS hung additional flagging within this location. The flag series labeled F1 through F33 on the JCE plans represent the limit of a forested wetland. Within the forested wetland there is a short segment of intermittent stream which emanates from an old dug well. The channelized water flows down slope to where it enters two culverts. This watercourse receives a 100 foot riverbank wetland designation.

The applicant previously submitted an application for this project under application number 21-0084 and received a deficiency letter on April 21st 2021. This narrative will address one of the Departments review comments in order to continue the application process.

The applicant request permission to construct the proposed parking lot within the 100 foot riverbank wetland of the intermittent stream. The proposed parking lot will provide additional on-site inventory parking that is greatly needed for the growing business. The applicant asks permission to construct this within the limit of disturbance (LOD) depicted on the JCE plans. This LOD is primarily within the existing limits of clearing, and connects to the existing Anchor Auto Group Access Driveway. This connector driveway will have infiltration trenches on either side. A fence will surround

the lot, and will have an asphalt berm along its north/northeastern edge and a boulder wall along its north eastern edge

The JCE plans depict the home addition along with all the infrastructure and required elements. The plans identify the appropriate erosion controls along the entire LOD. Also identified in the plans is the underdrain collection system proposed to maintain water quality and mitigate stormwater as well as Best Management Practices (BMPs) to be utilized throughout construction.

AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION

Section 1.9(B) of the regulations require PD applications to include a written narrative which describes in detail the efforts made to avoid impacts to wetland functions and values. For any impacts which are considered unavoidable, the narrative must also address the efforts undertaken by the applicant to minimize these impacts to the maximum extent possible.

The assessment of impact avoidance and minimization must be made with a clear knowledge of the project's primary purpose. In this instance, the applicant is requesting to construct a parking lot to create additional parking for their expanding business.

Avoidance

(AA) Whether the primary proposed activity is water-dependent or whether it requires access to freshwater wetlands as a central element of its primary purpose (e.g., a pier);

The primary purpose of the project is not water dependent nor does it require access to freshwater wetlands as a central element of the primary purpose.

(BB) Whether any areas within the same property or other properties owned or controlled by the applicant could be used to achieve the project purpose without altering the natural character of any freshwater wetlands;

While the applicant does own several adjacent properties as part of the Anchor Auto Group, these properties are already utilized to the maximum extent practicable, as depicted in the previous application number 15-0078. The proposed development within the subject parcel will be confined to areas previously disturbed by the pre-existing residence and will not result in any significant alterations to naturalized freshwater wetlands. The project as proposed will avoid the forested wetland and most of the 100 foot riverbank wetland. The proposed driveway connects to the existing Anchor Auto Group access driveway instead of Sayles Hill Road due to stipulations from the Town restricting any additional access to the public roadway. Thus, cutting in this area is necessary to retain access. There are no additional areas within this lot or other properties owned by the applicant that could be used to achieve the project purpose without altering the natural character of the existing freshwater wetland.

(CC) Whether any other properties reasonably available to, but not currently owned or controlled by, the applicant could be used to achieve the project purpose while avoiding wetland alterations. A property is reasonably available if, in whole or in part, it can be acquired without excessive cost, taking individual circumstances into account, or, in the case of property owned or controlled by the same family, entity, group of affiliated entities, or local, state or federal government, may be obtained without excessive hardship;

There are no properties reasonably available that would allow the applicant to achieve the primary project purpose while completely avoiding wetland alterations. The proposed project does not include any forested wetland alterations or alterations to the 100 foot riverbank wetland that were not previously disturbed by the former residential use.

(DD) Whether alternative designs, layouts or technologies could be used to avoid freshwater wetlands or impacts on functions and values on the subject property or whether the project purpose could be achieved on other property that is reasonably available and would avoid wetlands;

The design and layout developed by JCE takes full advantage of the currently disturbed areas. The proposed project will not impact the functions and values of nearby freshwater wetland areas. Under proposed conditions, minimal work is proposed within the 100-foot riverbank and have been confined to previously disturbed areas. This design avoids the direct loss of any naturalized vegetation within the riverbank wetland, with only a small amount of clearing outside of all wetland resource areas for the access driveway and infiltration trenches.

(EE) Whether the applicant has made any attempts (and if so what they were) to avoid alterations to freshwater wetlands by overcoming or removing constraints imposed by zoning, infrastructure, parcel size or the like;

The applicant is constrained by certain town requirements. The proposed driveway connects to the existing Anchor Auto Group access driveway instead of Sayles Hill Road due to stipulations from the Town restricting any additional access from the business to the public roadway. However, the applicant has avoided impacts to the forested wetland in the area by proposing aisle widths less than the Town requirements (20-feet instead of 24-feet). The proposed driveway entrance has also been reduced (18-feet instead of 24-feet to avoid any impacts to the wetland and an existing utility pole. Access to the parking lot will be for staff only and will be utilized infrequently.

(FF) Whether the feasible alternatives that would not alter the natural character of any freshwater wetlands on the subject property or on property that is reasonably available, if incorporated into the proposed project would adversely affect public health, safety or the environment.

There are no other available alternatives that would result in less impact to wetland features while still achieving project goals and might adversely affect public health, safety, or the environment. Proposed features have been located to avoid wetland impacts to the maximum extent practicable.

Minimization

(AA) Whether the proposed project is necessary at the proposed scale or whether the scale of the wetland alteration could be reduced and still achieve the project purpose;

The proposed parking lot is scaled to accommodate the needs of a growing, local business. Work proposed within the 100 foot riverbank wetland has been confined to a disturbed area that was previously maintained as residential lawn. The existing tree line has been maintained to the extent practicable. Cutting has been minimized within the proposed access drive, and entirely avoided within wetland resource areas.

(BB) Whether the proposed project is necessary at the proposed location or whether another location within the site could achieve the project purpose while resulting in less impact to the wetland;

The proposed project is necessary at the proposed location due to its proximity to the adjacent Anchor Auto Group. The subject parcel is already owned by the applicant and was acquired to further service the growing needs of the business. The location of the proposed addition on the current designs represents the least impactful design to wetlands while still achieving the projects goals.

(CC) Whether there are feasible alternative designs, layouts, densities or technologies, that would result in less impact to the wetland while still achieving the project purpose;

Several design and layouts were considered for the proposed project. The selected and currently proposed layout has been designed to achieve the primary project purpose while minimizing impacts to the existing freshwater wetlands. As previously discussed, the proposed site improvements have generally been limited to previously disturbed areas. This location is also in close proximity to the busy Eddie Dowling Highway, and fragmented due to the surrounding dealership from the more heavily wooded and naturalized areas located further to the north west of the property. In addition, the applicant is proposed various BMPs which will significantly improve the quality of stormwater leaving the site.

(DD) Whether reduction in the scale or relocation of the proposed project to minimize impact to the wetland would result in adverse consequences to public health, safety or the environment.

The project cannot be relocated or scaled down while still achieving the goals of the project. However, a portion of the proposed project involves utilizing several stormwater management structures to significantly improve the quality of stormwater from the site.

MITIGATION MEASURES

In addition to the design features mentioned in the previous avoidance and minimization sections, a series of mitigation measures were put into the proposed design to control for erosion, protect vegetation, and mitigate storm water effects.

Soil erosion and sedimentation control measures in the form of a silt fence shall encircle the limit of disturbance. The erosion controls shall be installed prior to construction and be monitored throughout. The design, installation and maintenance of these measures have been configured in accordance with the RI Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook (2016). More detailed information regarding the installation and maintenance of these sediment and erosion controls can be found on the site plans.

The current vegetation will be protected from the propose project as the exiting limit of clearing will be maintained in all wetland resource areas. However, the habitat value of much of this wetland is fairly low. The area is covered by invasive species such as multiflora rose and tree of heaven. There is also a thick matting of fox grape overtopping much of the shrubs and trees in the area. Within the forested wetland is dominated by skunk cabbage. As previously mentioned, this area is fairly fragmented from the other wooded habitat within the area. NRS has recommended a double row of screening vegetation to be planted along the inner edge of the LOD. This will provide screening cover, as well as enhance the viability of habitat within the forested wetland for small bird and mammal species. An additional area of shrub plantings along the access road is also proposed as a habitat enhancement.

Detailed instructions to address storm water management have been included on the site plans. A catch basin within the parking lot will direct stormwater into a 4 inch underdrain system for water quality. It will be treated before its release out of the parking lot. Also included on the site plans are two infiltration trenches on either side of the proposed access drive to mitigate stormwater along the roadway. These have been designed to accommodate stormflow in accordance with the RI Stormwater Design and Installation Standards Manual (2015).

CONCLUSION

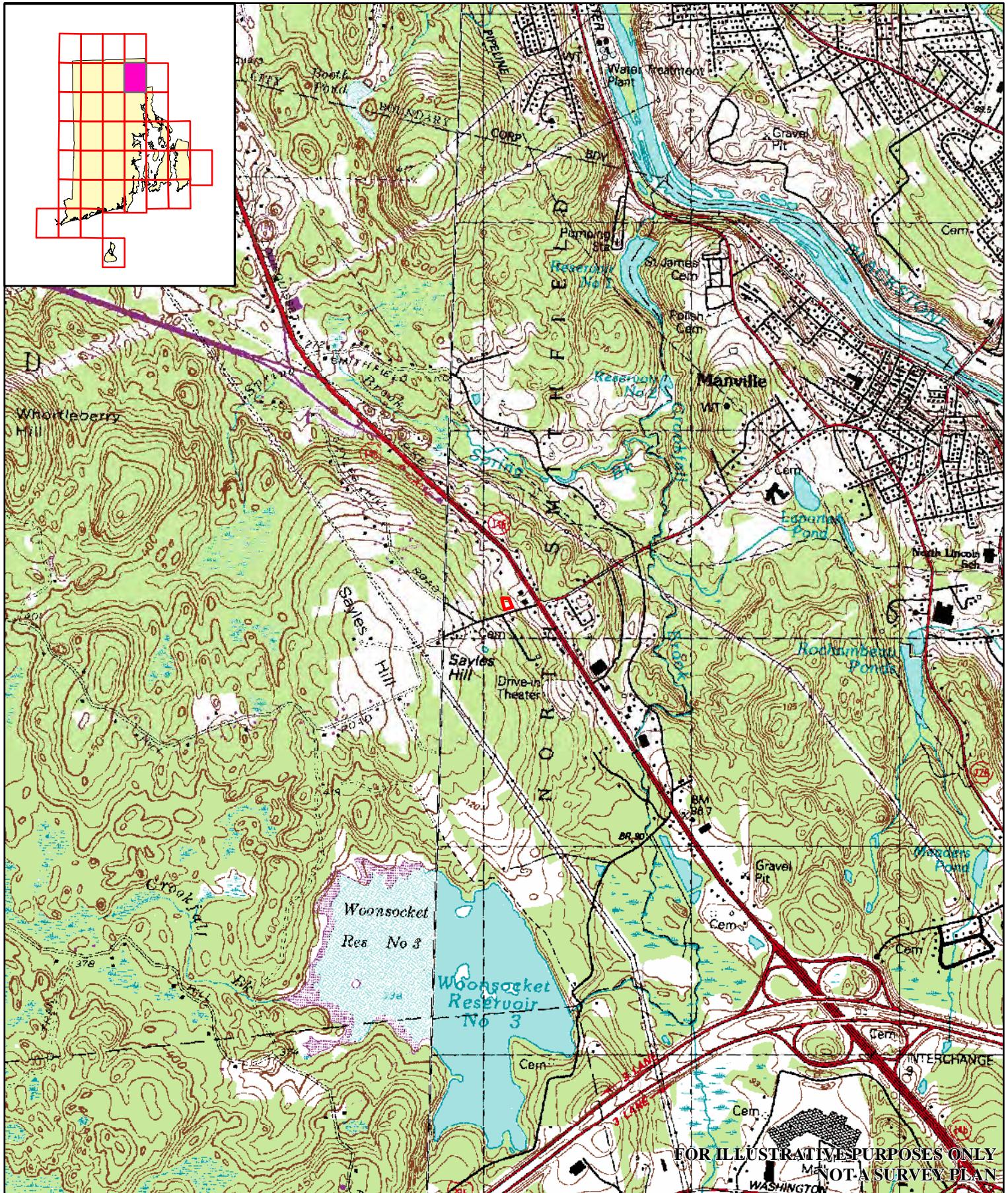
The applicant is seeking permission to construct a parking lot within the property located at 194 Sayles Hill Road in North Smithfield. They request permission to construct this within the 100 foot riverbank wetland of an off site intermittent stream. This will include a parking area with an asphalt berm, boulder wall, access driveway and stormwater management. The project as proposed will only alter already disturbed areas of this 100 foot riverbank wetland and avoid the forested wetland. The lot requires access to the existing Anchor Auto Group driveway due to town requirements. The project will utilize the necessary erosion controls and BMP's in addition to a vegetative buffer to mitigate effects on the freshwater wetlands.

The design plans and supporting documentation submitted with the application should satisfy all of the requirements needed for a PD. The impact avoidance and minimization statement clearly demonstrates that the project as proposed does not represent a random, unnecessary or undesirable alteration to freshwater wetlands and qualifies for approval as an insignificant alteration.

References

- RI Department of Environmental Management. (2015). *Rhode Island stormwater design and installation standards manual*. Providence, Rhode Island.
- RI Department of Environmental Management. (2015). *Rules and Regulations governing the administration and enforcement of the freshwater wetlands act*. Providence, Rhode Island.
- RI Department of Environmental Management. (2010). *Wetland BMP Manual: techniques for avoidance and minimization*. Providence, Rhode Island.
- RIGIS. 1939- 2014. *Topo map & aerial photoviewer*. RI Department of Environmental Management. Providence, Rhode Island.
- RI Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Handbook. (2016). *Rhode Island State Conservation Committee With the Support from Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council Rhode Island Department of Transportation The University of Rhode Island*. Retrieved from: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnates/water/pdf/riesc-handbook16.pdf>

Appendix



USGS Topographic Map
194 Sayles Hill Rd
A.P. 17, Lot 15
 North Smithfield, RI
 Pawtucket Quad Map

— Approximate Site Location

USGS Topographic Series
 Contour Interval 10 Feet
 National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929

0 1,000 2,000 4,000 Feet





**USDA Soil Survey Map
194 Sayles Hill Rd
A.P. 17, Lot 15**

North Smithfield, RI

— Approximate Site Location

0 50 100 200 Feet



RIGIS
Natural Resource Services, Inc.
April 2020 aerial
RI DEM Mapping
PO Box 311
180 Tinkham Lane
Harrisville, RI 02830
p: (401) 568-7390
f: (401) 568-7490
(c) RIGIS