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MEMORANDUM

To: John Page, Parson Brinkerhoff

From: Lorrie Laliberte Boswell, CZR Incorporated

Date: 16 June 2015

RE: Mid-Currituck Bridge Task Order No. 20

Purpose: Provide summary information of data from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program's database regarding any changes within the Preferred Alternative impact area (larger of the right-of-way and slope-stake + 25' boundary areas) compared to information reported in the 2011 Natural Resources Technical Report.

In July 2014, the Natural Heritage Program (NHP) replaced the term "significant natural heritage area" (SNHA) with "natural heritage natural area" (NHNA) (pers. com. Suzanne Mason January 29, 2015). "Elements of occurrence" records are exemplary or unique natural communities, rare animals, or important animal assemblages (NHP 2015) and may or may not occur in NHNAs. The most recent NHP database (updated January 12, 2015) of NHNAs and elements of occurrences (NHP 2015) was downloaded and projected on an image with the right-of-way and slope stake +25 boundaries to determine if any new elements occurred within the potential impact area since the writing of the 2011 Natural Resources Technical Report.

The most eastern boundary area of the North River/Great Swamp NHNA occurs within the right-of-way of the Preferred Alternative along the western side of US 158. Its boundary along US 158 is unchanged from what was presented in the 2011 NRTR. The North River Game Lands occur within the North River/Great Swamp NHNA west of US 158 in both Currituck and Camden Counties. At least one northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and one Rafinesque's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*) were captured within the North River Game Lands section in Camden County (numbers not given). The eastern boundary of the game lands is approximately 2 miles from the Preferred Alternative through Maple Swamp. As such, this game land continues to be unaffected by the Preferred Alternative.

The bridge approach road between US 158 and Currituck Sound would cross through Maple Hill Gordonia Forest Natural Heritage Natural Area (MHGFNHNA), which is still recognized by the NHP as a NHNA, with no boundary change from what was presented in the NRTR. However, much of the Preferred Alternative in the MHGFNHNA has been logged. The logging of the MHGFNHNA was

addressed in the 2011 NRTR. Within MHGFNHNA, there are two NHP element occurrences of natural communities near the Preferred Alternative, divided by the existing powerline corridor. These two communities are classified by NHP as non-riverine swamp forest and have not been logged. Neither community is within the right-of-way or slope stake +25 area of the Preferred Alternative. One polygon (approximately 12 acres) abuts the right-of-way impact boundary on the north side of the powerline corridor and the other polygon (approximately 7 acres) is on the south side of the powerline corridor. Their locations and community classifications are unchanged since the 2011 NRTR.

In the northern portion of Currituck Sound, NHP has new records of an Atlantic sturgeon in 2012 and a manatee in 2012. Exact locations for these records are unknown, but both were within or in close proximity to the proposed bridge over Currituck Sound. At the time the 2011 Biological Assessment (BA) was prepared there were no sightings of the Atlantic sturgeon in Currituck Sound on record. However, the BA indicated and took into consideration in its findings that Atlantic sturgeon are expected to exist in Currituck Sound, at least part of the year. The BA indicated and took into consideration that sporadic occurrences of manatee in the vicinity of Currituck Sound have occurred over the past several decades.

There are no other recent elements of occurrence or NHNAs within the Preferred Alternative's right-of-way or slope stake +25 impact areas.

Figure 3-5 in the 2012 FEIS and Figure 7 of the 2011 NRTR continue to accurately reflect the NHNAs (then SNHAs) in the project area.

SOURCES:

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North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. 2015. Biotics Database. Office of Land and Water Stewardship. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.