



## **US Army Corps of Engineers®**

Wilmington District

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### **Corps renders Record of Decision on PCS Phosphate Permit Application**

**Wilmington, North Carolina**—Today, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, rendered a Record of Decision and proffered a permit to the PCS Phosphate Corporation to expand its mining operations in Beaufort County, North Carolina. As conditions of the permit, PCS Phosphate must complete extensive compensatory mitigation and monitoring before, during and following all mining and reclamation activities.

Col. Jefferson Ryscavage, Commander of the Wilmington District, said “This Record of Decision culminates a long, complex and thorough process. Our Regulatory Project Manager and staff worked intensively with the applicant, federal and state resources agencies, and environmental organizations over a period of more than eight years. We are confident that we have identified an appropriately drawn and balanced alternative and proffered a permit that will allow continued access to an important mineral resource, while maximizing protection to wetlands, streams and watersheds, and ensuring reclamation, mitigation and stewardship of a sensitive and highly valued coastal ecosystem.”

The original plan put forward by PCS Phosphate has been significantly altered in the eight-year process of completing the Environmental Impact Statement. Eleven alternative plans including a no action alternative were evaluated. The Record of Decision (ROD) selects “Alternative L, with modifications” to be permitted, while requiring extensive mitigation and other actions as conditions for the permit.

This is both the most extensive regulatory permit ever proffered in North Carolina and the largest mitigation effort ever undertaken by an applicant.

Compared with PCS Phosphate’s original proposal, Alternative L reduces impacts to linear feet of stream by about 80 percent and reduces wetlands impacts by about 40 percent. The Corps and the applicant worked closely with resource agencies to protect the highest value ecosystem areas within the alternative selected. A brief table shows PCS Phosphate’s original proposal, the final Alternative L as modified, and the reductions in mined area and impacts achieved.

<u>Original Proposal</u>	<u>Alt. L (modified)</u>	<u>Reduction</u>
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<b>Acres mined</b>	13,961	11,351	2,610
<b>Wetland &amp; open waters impacted</b>	5,668	3,911	1,757
<b>Linear ft. stream</b>	89,150	22,082	67,068

In addition to the more than 1,750 acres of wetlands and 67,000 linear feet of stream avoided, Alternative L reflects substantive efforts to confine impacts to areas of lesser ecological value. Mining will be staged so that the impacts are scheduled to occur only as actual mining operations progress over approximately 36 years. Reclamation begins to restore some values to the impacted areas even as mining activities are ongoing. Reclaimed areas will reconnect to their watersheds and promote the return of appropriate vegetation and wildlife.

Restoration, enhancement and preservation mitigations to be undertaken by PCS Phosphate as conditions of the permit will include more than 10,000 acres of wetland mitigation, and more than 84,000 linear feet of stream. The mitigation plan as a whole meets or exceeds federal guidelines.

Col Ryscavage said “This has been a very carefully weighed decision, because it exemplifies the toughest role our Regulatory program has to be prepared to address—weighing the Nation’s need for a limited resource that is important for food production and industry beside the Nation’s equally important commitment to sustaining an important ecosystem.”

“I am proud of the depth of research and the extensive consultation undertaken by my staff and the Review Team to make a well-researched and balanced Record of Decision possible.”