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ORK SECURES REEVALUATION OF MEGASITE PERMITS

USACE: Reevaluation of permit is "warranted"

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK) received a letter from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) confirming that a "reevaluation of its permit decision regarding its effects determination for water supplies is warranted." ORK made this assertion in its letter of intent (LOI) to sue. ORK filed the LOI with the assertion that USACE overlooked water supply concerns during the permitting process of the Hyundai Megasite in June of 2024.

This reevaluation letter from the USACE confirms ORK's assessment of the permit and supporting documents. It also confirms that the human and environmental impacts from supplying water to the Megasite were not considered in the initial permitting decision, primarily due to the lack of information provided by the Savannah Harbor-Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority (JDA) in their application.

The reevaluation decision requests that JDA provide the USACE with an impact assessment of the Megasite's water supply wells. JDA will need to show that the wells won't have impacts on the Floridan Aquifer, those who rely on it, and the aquatic resources and environment. The assessment will also include "any groundwater and surface water modelling/data that has been collected." USACE will then assess that report and determine if the permit needs to be adjusted. Depending on the findings, JDA may also be required to compensate for any resulting impacts.

"These considerations should have been taken into account from day one," says Damon Mullis, riverkeeper and executive director of ORK, "but we are encouraged to see that the USACE will finally review these issues in full. Once all of the data is on the table, we urge the Corps to independently and vigorously vet and verify this information in its reevaluation, and to be transparent with the public during this reevaluation process." ORK will also continue to carefully monitor the Corps' reevaluation process.

"We are proud of our small organization," added Ben Kirsch, ORK's legal director. "This action is a response to our watchdog efforts and continued advocacy. Without our efforts, those impacts and effects might not have ever been in front of or considered by the Army Corps of Engineers. Importantly, it puts future applicants on notice that both ORK and the Corps will make sure every step of every project is fully considered and protective of our water resources."

The reevaluation letters from USACE, ORK's letter of intent to sue, permit applications, and all documents and data are publicly available at ogeecheeriverkeeper.org/megasite.

About Ogeechee Riverkeeper: *Ogeechee Riverkeeper 501(c)(3) works to protect, preserve, and improve the water quality of the Ogeechee River basin, which includes all of the streams flowing out to Ossabaw Sound and St. Catherine's Sound. The Canoochee River is about 108 miles long and the Ogeechee River itself is approximately 245 miles long. The Ogeechee River system drains more than 5,500 square miles across 21 counties in Georgia. More at ogeecheeriverkeeper.org.*
