



3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Chapter 3, “Affected Environment,” describes the existing environment that would be affected by the Alternative 1 (Proposed Project) and the alternatives under consideration in this EIS⁵⁰. Chapter 3 provides the basis for the impact assessment documented in Chapter 4, “Environmental Consequences.” This chapter includes detailed discussions of the affected environment for each resource area listed below:

- Geology and Soils (Section 3.1)
- Hydrology (Section 3.2)
- Water Quality (Section 3.3)
- Vegetation and Wildlife (Section 3.4)
- Waters of the U.S. (Section 3.5)
- Protected Species (Section 3.6)
- Essential Fish Habitat (Section 3.7)
- Transportation (Section 3.8)
- Land Use and Infrastructure (Section 3.9)
- Cultural Resources (Section 3.10)
- Visual Resources and Aesthetics (Section 3.11)
- Noise and Vibration (Section 3.12)
- Air Quality (Section 3.13)
- Climate Change (Section 3.14)
- Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste (Section 3.15)
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice (Section 3.16)
- Human Health and Safety (Section 3.17)
- Section 4(f)/6(f) Resources (Section 3.18)

The discussion of each resource includes the defined study area and the overall existing condition of the resource, including the natural and physical environment. While several resources analyzed in this EIS have a study area that is consistent with the general study area identified on Figure 1.6-1, most resources (e.g., socioeconomics) have a study area that is larger than the general study area, because potential effects extend beyond its boundary. For resources where the study area identified on Figure 1.6-1 is not used, reference to a specific study area and associated map is used. In addition, there are laws and regulations that apply to each resource. Discussion of the applicable laws and regulations for this Project is provided in Chapter 8.

⁵⁰ The Corps recognizes that Palmetto Railways is conducting voluntary cleanup and site preparation of the project site, and that these activities will be required to redevelop the site regardless of whether the DA Permit is issued. Chapter 3 details existing environmental conditions as of September 2015, which is the date of Palmetto Railway’s Project proposal (Appendix B).