

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Calestown Road, Mitchumtown Road, Green Bay Road, and Spring Pond Road

**USDA Forest Service – Region 8
Francis Marion National Forest
Francis Marion Ranger District
Berkeley County, South Carolina**

The Francis Marion Ranger District, Francis Marion National Forest (FMNF) has decided to grant Berkeley County a public road easement in order to make improvements to four sections of roadways that cross National Forest System (NFS) lands along Green Bay Road, Mitchumtown Road, Calestown Road and Spring Pond Road totaling 3.4 miles. This action is needed to respond to a special use request from Berkeley County. In addition, Berkeley Electric Cooperative, Inc. will relocate a powerline along some of these road segments at the same time. An adjustment will be made to the current right-of-way special use permits.

Decision

I have decided to implement alternative 2. This alternative with design criteria and monitoring best meets the Purpose and Need as stated in *Calestown Road, Mitchumtown Road, Green Bay Road and Spring Pond Road* environmental assessment.

My decision will grant Berkeley County a Federal Roads and Trails Easement (FRTA), 16 U.S.C. 533 to make surface improvements to approximately 3.4 miles of existing roadway along Green Bay Road, Mitchumtown Road, Calestown Road and Spring Pond Road. Paving will include 0.93 miles of Spring Pond Road, 1.45 miles of Calestown Road, 1.54 miles of Mitchumtown Road and 0.42 miles of Green Bay Road. The project area is located in the western portion of the Francis Marion Ranger District in Berkeley County, South Carolina. Berkeley County will pave the existing roadways with two 11-foot lanes. Associated unpaved drainage ditches will also be included adjacent to the roadway to capture and convey surface water flow during storm events.

Connected actions will include the relocation of overhead power lines maintained by Berkeley Electric Cooperative, Inc. to maintain service in conjunction with road paving activities.

The roads will be managed under a special use permit with the U.S. Forest Service and Berkeley County; powerlines will be managed under an amended special use permit to Berkeley Electric Cooperative, Inc. along Calestown Road and Mitchumtown Road.

Calestown Road (see attached maps) – A portion of Calestown Road will be paved from the intersection with North Highway 17-A (US 17-A) for a distance of approximately 1.45 miles. Calestown Road intersects US 17-A approximately 3,800 linear feet from the intersection with Santee River Road (SC 45). The portion of the project within the FMNF includes approximately

3,000 linear feet from the intersection with US 17-A to near Hidden Pond Road (to west of the roadway) and to the west and east of the roadway near the southern end of the project limit. A 50 foot right-of-way width will be established for road maintenance. The overhead powerline along this road will be relocated. Approximately 2.94 acres of NFS lands will be within the right-of-way.

Spring Pond Road (see attached maps) – Spring Pond Road will be paved from the intersection with US 17-A to its intersection with Santee River Road (SC 45), to include the intersection with Kinlaw Road (S-8-1308). The total segment length is 0.93 miles. The portion of the project within FMNF land includes approximately 1,800 linear feet from the intersection with US 17-A to Kinlaw Road (to the south of the roadway). A 50 foot right-of-way width will be established for road maintenance. Approximately 1.03 acres of NFS lands will be within the right-of-way.

Mitchumtown Road (see attached maps) – Mitchumtown Road will be paved and receive related improvements from the intersection with Bethera Road (S-8-48) to its intersection with Brandon Road. The total segment length is 1.54 miles. The portion of the project within FMNF land includes 1,900 linear feet near the intersection with Bethera Road and near Raintree Lane, to the north and south of the roadway. A 50 foot right-of-way width will be established for road maintenance. The powerline along this road will be relocated. Approximately 2.18 acres of NFS lands will be within the proposed right-of-way.

Green Bay Road (see attached maps) – Green Bay Road will be paved and receive related improvements from the intersection with United Drive (S-8-598) to the current end of county maintenance. The total segment length is 0.42 miles. The portion of the project within FMNF land includes 700 linear feet at the eastern extent of the project limit, to the north and south of the roadway. A 50 foot right-of-way width will be established for road maintenance. Approximately 0.80 acres of NFS lands will be within the.

The following design criteria are also included as stipulations in the special use permits.

1. Identified national register or eligible properties will be marked and avoided during site disturbing activities associated with road reconstruction and power line relocation. If cultural resources are discovered during implementation, work will stop and the site will be evaluated for National Register eligibility.
2. Mechanical activities will not be conducted within 200 feet of RCW cavity trees during the RCW breeding season (April 1st – July 31st) to reduce the potential impact of disturbance on nesting activities. Mechanical activities within RCW clusters will only take place between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset.
3. There will be no movement of heavy equipment through RCW active cluster areas. There will be no staging or storing of materials in active RCW cluster areas. Heavy equipment will not operate within the drip line of any cavity trees.
4. No RCW cavity trees will be removed.

5. There will be no major impacts to nearby jurisdictional wetlands. South Carolina Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used during construction to minimize temporary impacts. Roadway drainage will be contained within adjacent vegetated ditches. Ditches will not be blocked and should any temporary impacts occur, the ditches will be returned to normal function upon completion of project activities.
6. Equipment used in association with this project will be subject to equipment cleaning provisions to prevent the introduction and spread of non-native plants. Seeding and planting along the roadside will consist of native and non-invasive species and will be planted immediately following construction activities. Priority will be placed on using local and regional seed sources to include native perennial roadside plants.
7. Construction equipment and associated activities will stay within designated clearing limits while conducting work across NFS lands.
8. Seeding of annuals, native, and non-native perennial plants will occur as soon as possible on areas disturbed during project activities, particularly in areas near or adjacent to wetlands.
9. Erosion control measures such as silt fences, diversions and temporary rock sediment dams will be installed to trap sediment in areas where runoff water has the potential to leave the project site. Erosion control devices will be maintained in working order throughout project activities and until plant growth is established and stable enough to control runoff and erosion.
10. The culvert near station point 62+00 on Mitchumtown Road will be replaced with a 60-inch structure with a natural bottom.

Monitoring

Activities and effects will be monitored to ensure compliance with the Forest Plan and that design criteria are followed.

Reasons for the Decision

I considered the environmental effects of the alternatives in making my decision. The reasons for selecting Alternative 2 were:

- My decision will provide for improved and safer driving conditions for residents who live along these roads and for the public.
- My decision will reduce resource impacts associated with these roads.
- My decision will allow Berkeley County and Berkeley Electric Cooperative Inc. to more efficiently manage and maintain their rights-of-way.

In making this decision, I also considered the Forest Plan and associated Environmental Impact Statement.

Alternatives Considered

One other alternative was considered in detail in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative 1

This alternative would not implement the proposed actions. I did not select this alternative because it did not meet the purpose and need. This alternative would have resulted in the roads being in poor condition for local residents and for the public driving the roads.

Public Involvement

The formal scoping period for this project began in May 2011. A letter describing the proposed action, the purpose and need and requesting public input was sent to individuals and agencies included on a District mailing list on June 21, 2011. Two comments were received during scoping. No comments were received during the 30-day notice and comment period.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

Forest Plan Consistency

The selective alternative is consistent with the *Revise Land and Resource Management Plan Francis Marion National Forest* (Forest Plan). Forest-wide goals, objectives and standards and guidelines for management prescriptions are described in Chapter 2 and 3 of the Forest Plan.

A Biological Evaluation was completed for this project.

For federally threatened and endangered species:

A “May affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination was made for the Red-cockaded woodpecker. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service concurred on this determination in a letter dated August 21, 2012.

For sensitive species:

A “May impact Individuals but not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of viability” determination was made for pineland plantain, pineland or Curtis’s dropseed and Bachman’s sparrow.

The project area was surveyed for heritage resources and a report submitted to the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO consultation concurred with the finding that no properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Class 1) or unevaluated sites (Class 2) will be adversely affected by the project (letter signed on December 3, 2010).

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

I have determined that Alternative 2 will not have a significant effect on the human environment based on the significance criteria of both context and intensity as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act in 40 CFR 1508.27. This alternative with design criteria and monitoring best meets the Purpose and Need as stated in the *Calestown Road, Mitchumtown Road, Green Bay Road and Spring Pond Road* environmental assessment (EA). I have concluded that an environmental impact statement is not necessary based on the following factors:

Context

The physical, biological, and social effects are limited to the project area and immediate adjacent areas, which are analyzed in Chapter 3 of the EA. All actions are consistent with the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Francis Marion National Forest* and all environmental effects are within the range disclosed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Francis Marion National Forest*.

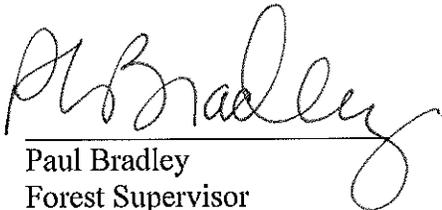
Intensity

1. Both adverse and beneficial impacts of the selected alternative are discussed and there are no significant adverse effects of the selected alternative. There are no known significant irreversible resource commitments or any significant irretrievable losses of timber production. (EA pages 14-37)
2. The assessment describes the risks associated with each of the alternatives. The public will be minimally affected by the selected alternative. (EA, pages 35-39)
3. The analysis identified no significant impacts to any unique areas. (EA, Chapter 3, pages 14-37)
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be controversial based on public involvement. (EA, Chapter 1, page 6)
5. This action is similar to many past actions, both in the analysis area and adjacent areas. There will not be any highly uncertain effects that involve unique or unknown risks. (EA, pages 14-37)
6. This project will not set precedence for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about future projects. (EA, section 1.6, Decision to be Made, page 6)
7. There are no known significant cumulative effects from this project and other past or reasonably foreseeable projects in the area. (EA, pages 14-37)

8. There are no significant impacts on any proposed or listed National Historic places or any loss or destruction of any scientific, cultural or historic places. The direct, indirect and cumulative effects are disclosed in the EA (pages 37-39). Design criteria in the EA will protect sites and any new ones discovered during implementation. SHPO consultation concurred with the finding that no properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Class1) or unevaluated sites (Class 2) will be adversely affected by the project (letter signed December 3, 2011).
9. A Biological Evaluation was completed for this project. A “May affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination was made for the Red-cockaded woodpecker. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination in a letter dated August 21, 2012.
10. The actions do not threatened a violation of federal, state, or local environmental laws. (EA, pages 14-37, Biological Evaluation and Decision Notice, Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations, pages 14-16).

Appeal Opportunities

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11, because no comments were received during the comment period. This project can be implemented immediately. For additional information contact Amy Fore at 843-336-2203, Francis Marion Ranger District, 2967 Steed Creek Road, Huger, South Carolina 29450.

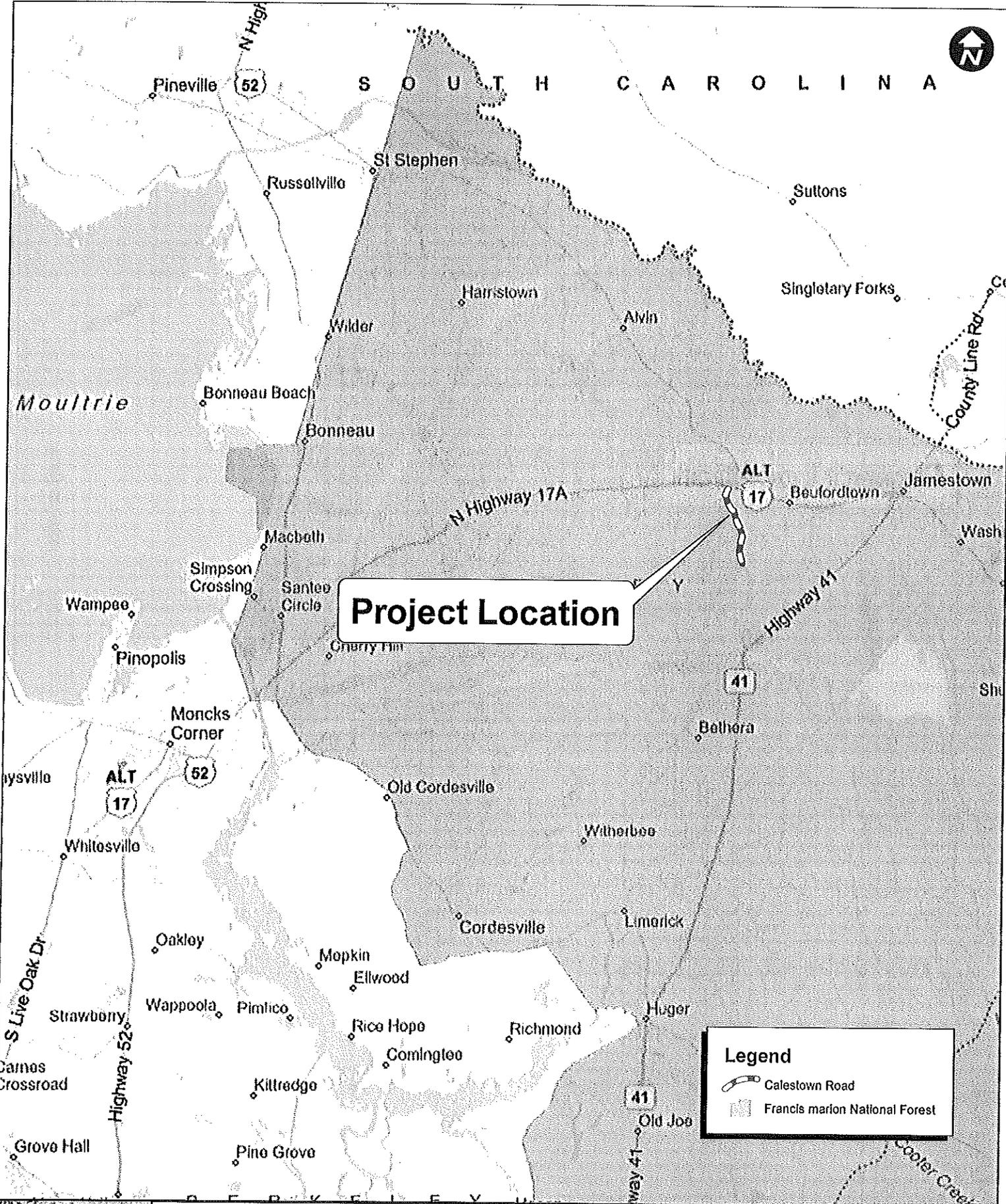


Paul Bradley
Forest Supervisor
Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests

09/04/2012
Date

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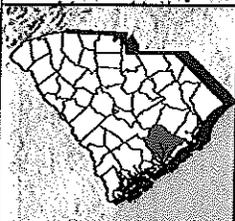
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Project Location

Legend

- Calestown Road
- Francis Marion National Forest



Prepared for:
 Berkeley County
 1003 Highway 52
 Moncks Corner, SC 29461
 (843) 719-4127

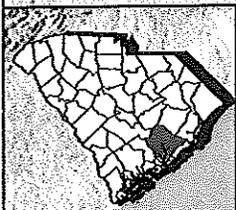
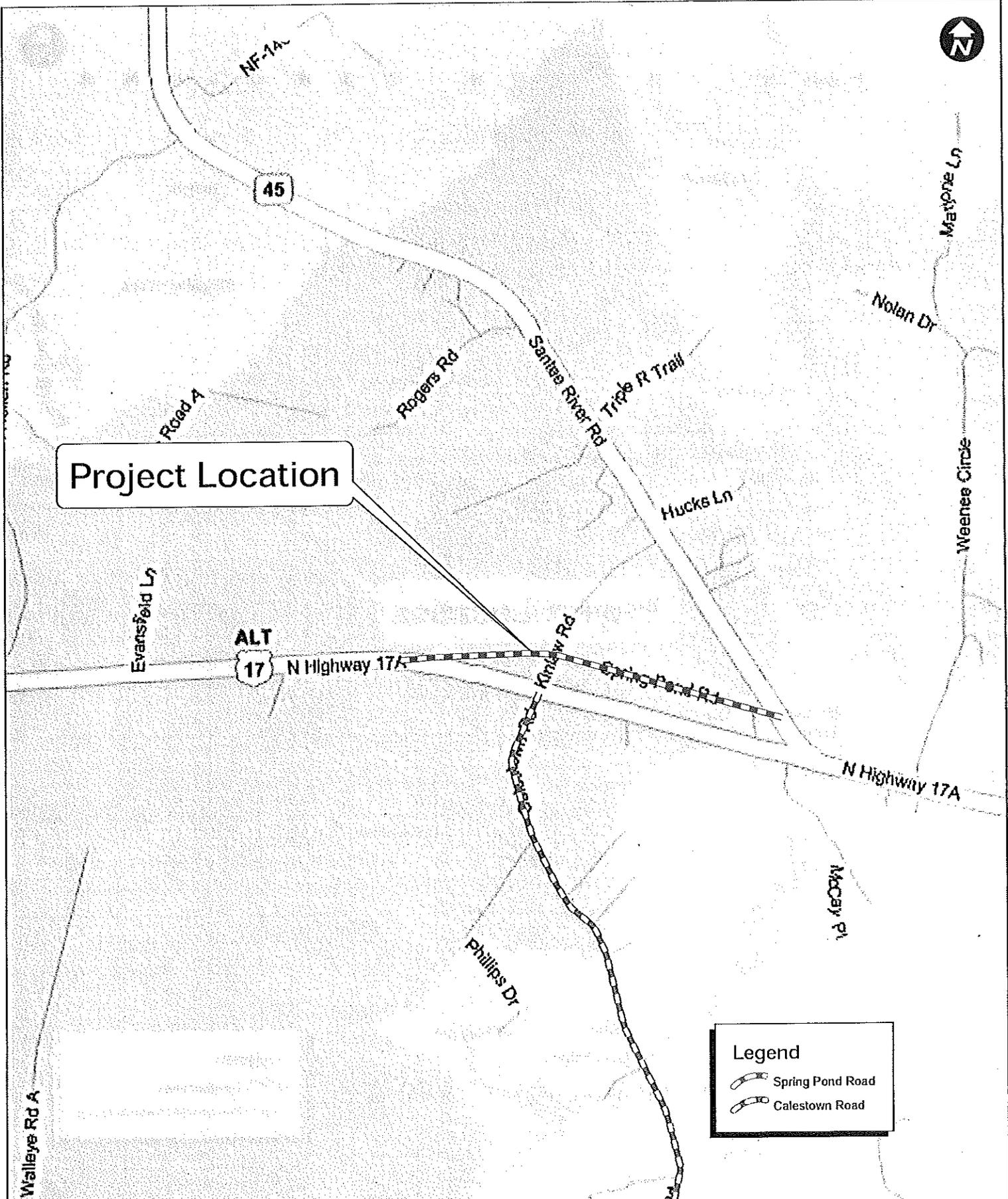
Prepared by:
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Location Map
 Calestown Road Improvement Project
 Berkeley County, SC

0 1 2 4 6 Miles

Data Source: SCDNR and ESRI

Figure
1



Prepared for:
 Berkeley County
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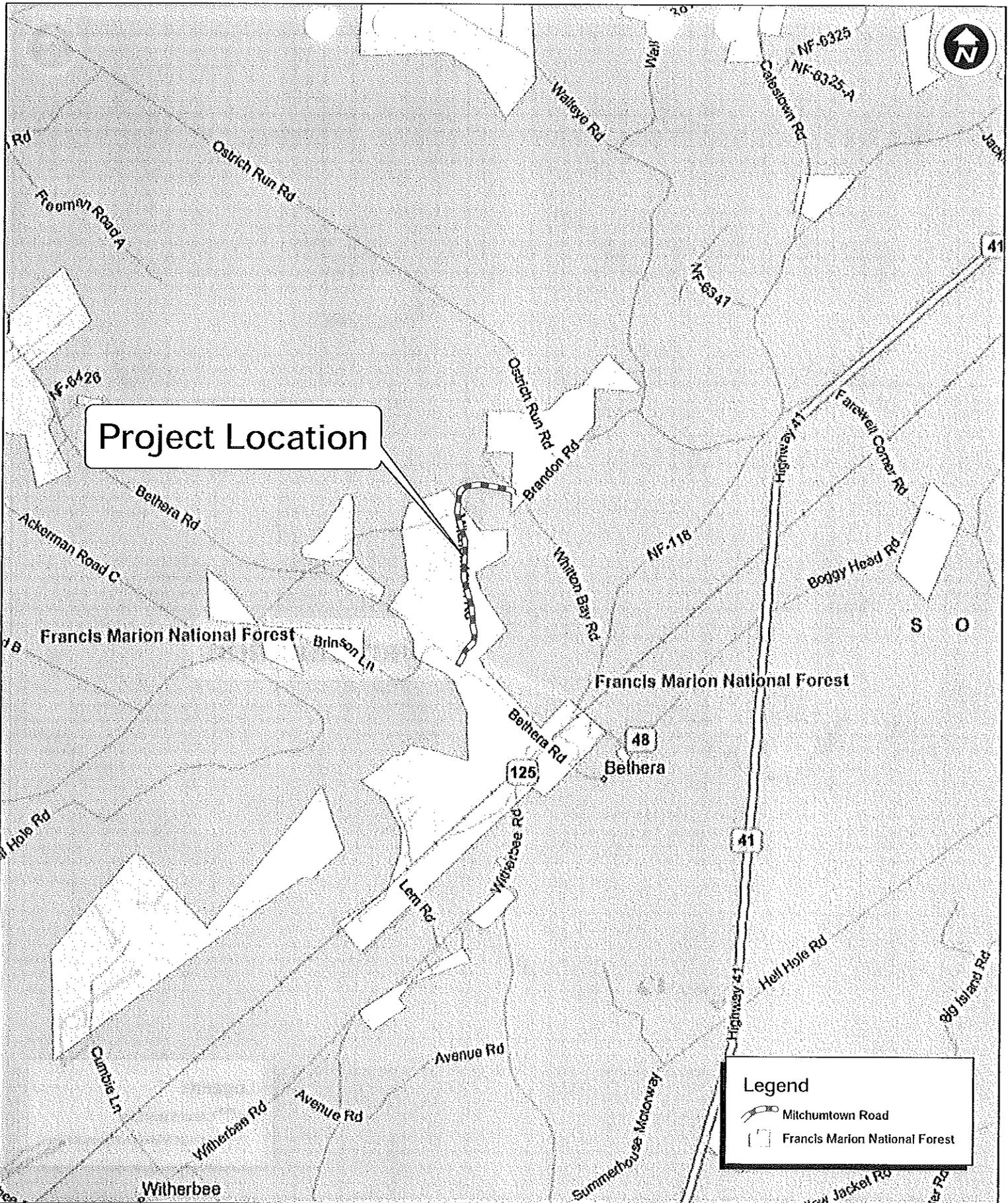
Location Map

Spring Pond Road Improvement Project
 Berkeley County, SC

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.6
 Miles

Data Source: SCDNR and ESRI

Figure
2



Project Location

Legend

-  Mitchumtown Road
-  Francis Marion National Forest



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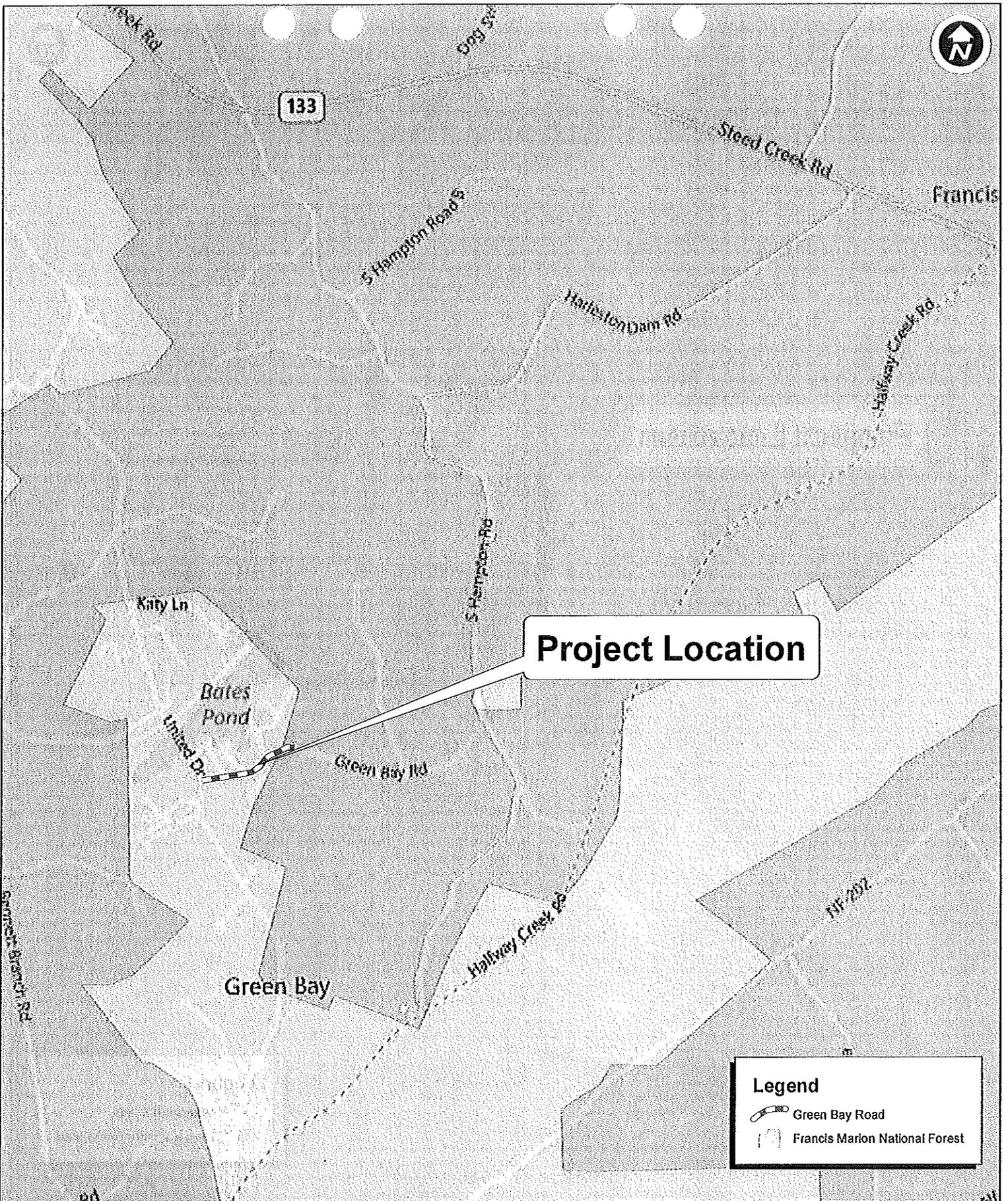
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Location Map
 Mitchumtown Road Improvement Project
 Berkeley County, SC

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Data Source: SCDNR and ESRI

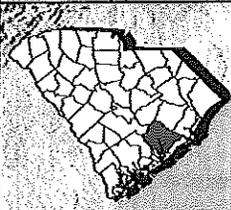
Figure
3



Project Location

Legend

- Green Bay Road
- Francis Marion National Forest



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Location Map
 Green Bay Road Improvement Project
 Berkeley County, SC

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5
 Miles

Data Source: SCDNR and ESRI

Figure
4