4 Environmentally Sensitive Areas

The four-county region has an abundance of significant natural resources. The physical geography, climate, landscape, and availability of natural resources have played a major role in the development of the ARTS. The many cultural and historical structures and sites have created a distinctive character for the area, a kind of traditional southern charm.

*Figures 38 and 39* illustrate the Environmentally Sensitive Areas in the ARTS. The maps are current as of May 2015. Environmentally sensitive areas consist largely of waterways and associated wetlands. Since the study area is highly dependent on these areas, public policy should be directed to preserve and maintain them in their natural state.

The majority of historical areas are located around the urban centers in Richmond and Aiken Counties. Transportation Vision 2040 LRTP recognizes the preservation of natural resources, environmentally sensitive lands and historical sites are essential for maintaining the region attraction as a place to live, work and recreate.

Environmentally Sensitive areas are designated as either:

- Floodplain.
- Wetlands.
- Endangered Species/Wildlife.
- Brownfields.
- Watershed.

Methodology

ARTS environmental analysis was conducted through the consultation of various resources. GIS data was collected from local, regional, state and federal agencies. These agencies include:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Columbia County Planning and Development Department
- Aiken County Planning and Development Department
- GDOT and SCDOT
- LSCOG and CSRA-RC
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
4.1 Floodplain

Floodplain is an area subject to flooding. It is established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through their National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Their Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) delineates the 100-year flood areas, including the floodways. Each County maintains the current floodplain maps for their responsible jurisdiction. The overall Floodplain map of ARTS is presented in Figure 38 depicting the 100-year and 500-year flood areas. These areas have a 1% - or 0.2% for 500-year – chance of flooding. FEMA provides flood insurance through NFIP for people who own property within the Floodplain.
Figure 38: Environmentally Sensitive Areas Floodplain
4.2 Wetlands
Wetlands are defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as “those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas.” While many wetlands have direct connection to water, some wetlands do not, but they do have critical connection to groundwater.

4.3 Endangered Species/Wildlife
Endangered Species/Wildlife is mapped by state and federal agencies including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, National Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services is the principal federal partner responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act by protecting endangered and threatened species, pursuing their recovery and conserving candidate species and species-at-risk so they are not listed under the Endangered Species Act. ARTS is part of Region 3 according to Georgia Department of Natural Resources; and Wildlife Management Area 3 according to South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

4.4 Brownfields
Brownfields are defined by the Environmental Protection Agency as “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” Gas stations, landfills, and industrial properties are examples of brownfields. EPA’s Brownfields and Land Revitalization Programs help fund projects to bring such sites back to life and make them usable again.

4.5 Watersheds
Watersheds are also defined by the Environmental Protection Agency and are considered an “area of land, a bounded hydrological system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of a community.” Areas that drain into streams, lakes, estuaries, and aquifers are examples of watersheds.

22 http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/overview/glossary.htm
The ARTS lies within the central Savannah River Basin. Many of the environmentally sensitive areas (Figure 39) within this region are wetlands associated with the vast network of rivers and streams. The most highly concentrated environmentally sensitive area is along the Savannah River, western Columbia County, southeast of downtown Augusta, GA and in southern Richmond County. Further north, environmentally sensitive areas continue and extend along Horse Creek and Sand River of Aiken County SC. Horse Creek represents a series of creeks that extend from the Savannah River. Butler Creek, Little Horse Creek, and Sandy Run Creek are other notable areas where measurable wetlands exist.
Figure 39: Environmentally Sensitive Areas
4.6  **Historical Districts and Cultural Heritage in the ARTS planning Area**

Both the natural and historical environments are susceptible to damage by human and natural causes. While it is difficult to predict and at times impossible to stop loss by natural causes, damage by humans can be minimized or eliminated through enforcement of applicable regulations and laws. There are several important laws and regulations in place that address the preservation of historic and natural sites in the study area. These applicable laws aim to preserve the balance between natural, historic and cultural resources and the need for development and sustainable elements of the past that continue to preserve the cultural heritage of the region. Current regulations and/or laws in force include the following:

**Federal Laws/Regulations:**
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
- Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act.
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA).

**State Laws/Regulations:**
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)

**Local Laws/Regulations:**
- Local historic preservation ordinances

Historical areas in the ARTS are shown in *Figure 40.* Many historical and cultural sites in the study area are primarily found in and around the urban cores of Aiken, SC, Augusta, GA, and in several outlying areas. Downtown Augusta and historic districts like Olde Town and Summerville have the highest concentration of historic sites as depicted in *Figure 40.*
Figure 40: Historically Sensitive Areas Downtown Augusta
Over a dozen sites are listed in the National Register of Historic Places including: Augusta Canal Industrial District; Pinched Gut Historic District (otherwise known as Olde Town); Broad Street Historic District; Summerville Historic District; Green Street Historic Street; Laney-Walker North Historic District; Harrisburg-West End Historic District; Sand Hills Historic District (also known as Elizabethtown); Bethlehem Historic District; Augusta Downtown Historic District; and Paine College Historic District. In addition to National Historic designation, Downtown, Olde Town, and Summerville also have Local Historic District designation with individually prepared Design Guidelines Manual. These are:

Historic Downtown Augusta (Figure 41), the oldest part of the city was founded and first developed in 1735 by James Oglethorpe. He was the original founder of Augusta and his initial grid for the city continues to remain in existence in Downtown Augusta. The district displays typical characteristics of a traditional central business district, including a wide range of land uses high level of access for vehicles, pedestrian and public transit, a variety of architectural styles, medium to high-density residential development, commercial buildings with no front or side setbacks, and major public and cultural institutions stretched for an entire city block.

Olde Town (or Pinched Gut) is one of the oldest and the largest, most intact downtown residential neighborhood in the city. The primarily residential neighborhood with examples of 19th century architectural styles also includes two substantial cemeteries, Magnolia Cemetery and Cedar Grove Cemetery.

Summerville is commonly known as Augusta’s hilltop neighborhood, contains a large inventory of historic residential structures built in the 18th and early 19th century. The primarily residential neighborhood boasts a variety of architectural period styles and landscape features. Other significant sites within the neighborhood include, the Partridge Inn, Bon Air Apartments, Summerville Cemetery, and Georgia Regents University, Summerville Campus.

The second highest concentration of historic districts and places in the study area can be found in Aiken County (Figure 42), particularly in the City of Aiken, SC.

Looking at the Aiken County region as a whole, numerous historical sites can be found. These are predominately cemeteries scattered throughout the area and generally located near major roadways. Fourteen (14) historic properties can be found in Aiken including the Best Friends Express Station located on Morgan Street. Five historic districts also exist in Aiken County and they include Georgia Avenue, Butler Avenue, Graniteville, Aiken Winter Colony, Aiken Mile Track
and Aiken Training Tack. Within the Aiken Winter Colony is home of one of the largest urban forests in the nation, the 2,100 acre Hitchcock Woods.

Columbia County also contains some locally historic properties. These properties are not listed on either the state or federal historic registry but are an integral part of the county’s historic fabric. Grovetown historic sites include the Bohler House and McGruder Plantation. Hoggie Rock, Walton Cemetery, Peter Crawford Cemetery, and Abilene Baptist Church are the locally historic sites within the ARTS boundary. These sites are illustrated in Figure 43.
Figure 41: Historically Sensitive Areas Augusta
Figure 42: Historically Sensitive Areas Aiken County

Legend
- Historic Properties
+ Cemetery

Aiken Historically Sensitive Areas


Prepared by: Augusta Planning and Development Department

Created on 7/10/2015
Figure 43: Historically Sensitive Areas Columbia County