



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT
701 SAN MARCO BOULEVARD
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32207-8175

January 14, 2025

Regulatory Division
North Branch
Cocoa Permits Section

PUBLIC NOTICE

Permit Application No. SAJ-2015-02725 (SP-JMB)

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: The Jacksonville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has received an application for a Department of the Army permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. §1344) as described below:

If you are interested in receiving additional project drawings associated with this public notice, please send an e-mail to the project manager by electronic mail at john.m.baehre@usace.army.mil.

APPLICANT: Blue Origin Florida, LLC
Shannon Gordon
8082 Space Commerce Way
Merritt Island, FL 32953

WATERWAY AND LOCATION: The project would affect aquatic resources associated with Newfound Harbor (HUC 030802020202). The project site is located west of the intersection of Ransom Road and Space Commerce Way in Section 1 and 12, Township 23 South, Range 36 East, Brevard County, Florida.

Directions to the site are as follows: From SR-528, proceed to Exit 49 north, North Courtenay Parkway. Turn west on Space Commerce Way and continue to Ransom Road.

APPROXIMATE CENTRAL COORDINATES: Latitude 28.508966°
Longitude -80.680548°

PROJECT PURPOSE:

Basic: Commercial rocket manufacturing facility

Overall: The overall project purpose is the expansion of a research and development facility to manufacture rocket launch components within John F. Kennedy Space Center.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: Historically, wetlands on the ±300-acre Blue Origin Campus included herbaceous and forested wetlands. Conversion to citrus grove in the 1940's resulted in east-west drainage ditches placed throughout the property, wetland

alteration, and subsequent reductions in water levels and hydroperiod. Initial construction of the Blue Origin manufacturing campus began in 2016 with several subsequent support facilities authorized, resulting in the current campus layout.

The project site consists of a north area (referred to as Area 2) and a south area (referred to as Tier 2 South Campus). Collectively, these two areas consist of the following upland and freshwater wetland land uses:

Shrub and Brushland (3200) - A narrow strip of uplands near the southern Area 2 project boundary has been classified as Shrub and Brushland. This area encompasses approximately 0.22 acres and is dominated by wax myrtle, saltbush, broomsedge, chalky bluestem, and blackberry.

Brazilian Pepper (4220) - Approximately 9.3 acres are comprised of previously cleared areas converted to citrus. This community is dominated by varying densities of large, mature Brazilian pepper with an understory dominated by caesarweed, tropical whiteweed, and guinea grass. Scattered native species include sabal palm, beautyberry, wild coffee, shortleaf wild coffee, marlberry, and crownbeard.

Temperate Hardwoods (4250) - This ±0.9-acre community is dominated by sabal palm, sugarberry, American elm, Brazilian pepper, marlberry, wild coffee, and shortleaf wild coffee.

Streams and Waterways (5100) - Approximately 0.60 acres of manmade ditches/swales are located in several locations throughout the property.

Mixed Wetland Hardwoods (6170) - Approximately 17 acres of the project site supports a Mixed Wetland Hardwoods community that is dominated by scattered American elm, sugarberry, laurel oak, live oak, and cabbage palm that shade wax myrtle, saltbush, primrose willow elderberry, winged loosestrife, marshmallow, sand cordgrass, swamp fern and golden canna. Brazilian pepper is also found scattered throughout.

Exotic Wetland Hardwoods (6190) - Approximately 5.2 acres are dominated by large, mature Brazilian pepper with little to no understory. Native species observed in these wetlands include scattered saltbush, marsh pennywort, and winged loosestrife. Surface water is present in the lower elevations with hydric soils that support inundation at or above the surface for extended periods. These wetlands are very low quality due to the dominance of Brazilian pepper and historic alterations.

Vegetated Non-Forested Wetlands (6400) - Approximately 21.44 acres of the project site is a man-made non-forested wetland marsh dominated by pickerelweed, duck potato, golden canna, pipewort, roadgrass, spike rush, and cattails.

PROPOSED WORK: The applicant seeks authorization to fill 43.64-acres (27.23 north, 16.41 south) of wetlands and 0.60-acres (0.20 north, 0.40 south) of surface waters to expand the Blue Origin Research and Development Campus.

The expansion shall include new manufacturing facilities and required stormwater management system essential to the Blue Origin OLS Manufacturing Complex and the New Glenn Rocket Program.

New Area 2 facilities include a (1) Test Processing Area Phase 2 & 3, (2) Metal Forming Facility, (3) Hardware Integration Facility, and (4) Tank Farm Expansion. New Tier 2 Deep South facilities include (1) Hardware Assembly Facility, (2) Structure Manufacturing Facility, (3) Vehicle Storage Facility, (4) Light Industrial Facility, and (5) Smart Part Manufacturing Facility. Due to the specific processes necessary for manufacturing of this nature, integration of the new facilities with existing manufacturing facilities is critical.

AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION INFORMATION – The applicant has provided the following information in support of efforts to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the aquatic environment:

“Wetland impact avoidance and minimization measures are not feasible due to numerous unique circumstances for this particular project as well as for the entire Blue Origin OLS Manufacturing Complex of which the proposed project is a small part. Blue Origin executed leases for 3 contiguous areas referred to as OLS Manufacturing Complex North Campus, South Campus, and Deep South (Tier 1 and 2). Blue Origin executed a lease in 2016 to construct what is now called OLS Manufacturing Complex North Campus. This area comprised the northern portion of the International Space Research Park (ISRP) for which an EIS was completed and a FONSI issued in 2004. Blue Origin had to construct a 54-acre wetland creation area within this initial lease area to mitigate wetland impacts resulting from the construction of the OLS Manufacturing facilities. At the time there were no private wetland mitigation banks so on-site permittee sponsored wetland mitigation was the only available option at that time as Blue Origin owned no other land at KSC or in the basin. This mitigation area encumbered a large portion of the lease area.

The manufacturing and assembly of the New Glen rocket, its hardware, and myriad of components is an extremely complicated process. This process which has evolved over time and Blue Origin has identified new manufacturing requirements, efficiencies, and implementation strategies. Blue Origin soon realized that they required additional area to construct numerous new manufacturing facilities. This led to the execution of a second lease with KSC for what is referred to as OLS Manufacturing South Campus and it is immediately south of North Campus.

The manufacturing process and its needs have continued to evolve and Blue Origin has since competed for and been awarded contracts with NASA KSC for new unanticipated programs. This required additional facilities, so the Deep South parcel (Tier 1 and Tier 2) was leased from NASA KSC. As a result, Blue Origin has encumbered approximately 95% of the initial ISRP EIS area and have invested hundreds of millions of dollars developing the OLS Manufacturing Complex (OLSMC), have rebuilt the

launch complex 36 and 11 (LC 36/11) for launching the New Glen rocket, and have made road improvements for the over 10-mile transportation route of the rocket from the OLSMC to LC36/11.

The manufacturing process and Blue Origin's investment to date necessitates co-locating the proposed facilities at the existing OLSMC. As a result, it is essential Blue Origin maximize the development of Area 2 and Deep South Tier 2 sites. Finding another location is not feasible as Blue Origin does not hold a lease for other lands in the area. Furthermore, if Blue Origin were to avoid or minimize wetland impacts, only a small island of the original Area 2 wetland or small portions of the Deep South Tier 2 wetlands would remain, which would greatly diminish their ecological value and potential use by listed species due to the presence of a manufacturing complex circling the remnant wetlands."

With regards to the North Project Area:

"No alternative site is available that is near the current Blue Origin Manufacturing Complex that would allow the construction of additional manufacturing facilities to be close enough to the existing complex.

It is important to note that Blue Origin Florida, LLC was invited by Space Florida to develop the OLS Manufacturing Complex at Exploration Park on property leased from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) at Kennedy Space Center (KSC). The manufacturing complex was developed in conjunction with Blue Origin Launch Facilities to be developed at LC-36 near the coastline of Merritt Island. Roadway improvements have been completed for transportation of the space vehicles from the manufacturing complex to the launch complex. The location of the manufacturing complex at the KSC property is important because of the logistics of the space vehicle movements. Alternative sites in Brevard County have been excluded from consideration because of the prohibitions and impracticalities of transporting large space vehicle components from a manufacturing site to the launch site.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for Exploration Park, formerly International Space Research Park (ISRP), included an analysis of alternative sites within the area of the selected site. The EIS concluded that Exploration Park was the preferred alternative with the least impact. Impacts were deemed to be unavoidable, but the EIS proved that the site impact would have a lessor impact than the alternatives. The analysis described the Exploration Park area as that previously used for Citrus Grove operations, having already been disturbed, compared to alternative sites composed mostly of native cover. The Record of Decision (ROD) agreed with the determination that Exploration Park provided the least impact compared with alternative sites in the area.

The proposed projects are fully utilizing all grounds of Exploration Park for expansion of the OLS Manufacturing Complex. Blue Origin proposes to integrate all space vehicle manufacturing facilities at the Complex. The integration of facilities at the single location, although wetland impacts are required, shall provide the least overall impact to

the natural systems at KSC for the same reason as demonstrated in the EIS Alternatives Analysis. The whole of Exploration Park and the proposed expansion sites contained in the Tier One and Tier Two projects uses the areas of KSC previously utilized as citrus groves. The impacts at Exploration Park are less than impacts that would result in other sites in the region.”

With regards to the South Project Area:

“The ISRP footprint was historically active citrus grove until 2005 to 2006 with a few scattered wetlands that were not cleared. After 2006, the area quickly became dominated by Brazilian pepper and guinea grass. As a result, the ISRP footprint provided little habitat value for wildlife and was the most appropriate site for commercial aerospace development. Developing any other areas would likely result in impacts to natural high-quality uplands and wetlands that contain and/or support listed wildlife species.

The applicant has executed a 50-year lease with NASA KSC for the Deep South parcel, which contains the proposed Tier 2 project area and comprises the remainder of the ISRP boundary. The proposed Tier 2 area is best suited as the project area because it will impact abandoned citrus groves now dominated by exotic vegetation. Alternative locations for the proposed project, if located to the west, would impact native habitats and these areas contain vast acreages of undisturbed wetlands.

In addition, the Tier 2 area is integral to expansion of the South Campus manufacturing facilities that will produce space launch vehicle and vehicle components for assembly on-site. The large berth of the completed space launch vehicle, in excess of 24-feet wide, cannot be transported from remote manufacturing sites elsewhere. The site was developed with an 8-mile corridor improvement between the manufacturing complex and the launch complex to accommodate the large vehicle transport.

COMPENSATORY MITIGATION – The applicant has offered the following compensatory mitigation plan to offset unavoidable functional loss to the aquatic environment:

To compensate for the proposed functional loss, the applicant is proposing a Permittee Responsible Offsite Mitigation Area (PROMA) to provide 15.97 functional gain credits. The off-site mitigation improvements will offset the loss of wetland functions resulting from the proposed project and will provide greater long-term ecological value than the wetlands to be impacted. No mitigation is proposed for the manmade upland cut surface waters.

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

The Corps has evaluated the undertaking for effects to historic properties as required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and has followed the guidelines of 33 CFR Part 325, Appendix C.

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) was subject to a Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (March 2003) which determined that the ISRP will have no effect on archaeological sites or historic resources which are listed, determined eligible, or considered potentially eligible for listing in the National Registry of Historic Places. A review of the site history revealed intensive land disturbances including past clearing, grading, and row planting for agriculture management. The APE has been extensively modified by previous work, and while historic properties may have at one time existed, the Corps presumes these properties would have been lost as a result of such activities. Additionally, the area is comprised of poorly drained and very poorly drained hydric soils with low probability to contain historic properties. In consideration of the information noted, the Corps has determined that the project would have No Potential to Cause Effects to Historic Properties.

ENDANGERED SPECIES:

The Corps has determined the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the eastern black rail, wood stork, eastern indigo snake, or their designated critical habitat.

The Corps has determined the proposed project would have no effect on the Florida scrub-jay, crested caracara, Everglade snail kit, or their designated critical habitat.

The Corps has determined the proposed project would have no effect on Carter's mustard or Lewton's polygala. In addition to the site lacking suitable habitat, an October 2024 listed plant species survey of the site found no federally listed plant species.

The Corps will request U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurrence with this determination pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH): This notice initiates consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service on EFH as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act 1996. The proposal would impact approximately 43.64-acres of freshwater wetlands and surface waters which ultimately discharge to the Indian River. Our initial determination is that the proposed action would not have a substantial adverse impact on EFH or Federally managed fisheries in the Newfound Harbor basin (HUC 030802020202). Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

NAVIGATION: The proposed activity is not located in the vicinity of a federal navigation channel.

SECTION 408: The applicant will not require permission under Section 14 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (33 USC 408) because the activity, in whole or in part, would not alter, occupy, or use a Corps Civil Works project.

NOTE: This public notice is being issued based on information furnished by the applicant. This information has not been verified or evaluated to ensure compliance with laws and regulation governing the regulatory program. The jurisdictional line has not been verified by Corps personnel.

COMMENTS regarding the potential authorization of the work proposed should be submitted in writing to the attention of the District Engineer through the Cocoa Permits Section, 400 High Point Drive, Cocoa, Florida 32926 within 30 days from the date of this notice.

The decision whether to issue or deny this permit application will be based on the information received from this public notice and the evaluation of the probable impact to the associated wetlands. This is based on an analysis of the applicant's avoidance and minimization efforts for the project, as well as the compensatory mitigation proposed.

QUESTIONS concerning this application should be directed to the project manager, John Baehre, in writing at the Cocoa Permits Section, 400 High Point Drive, Cocoa, Florida 32926, by electronic mail at John.M.Baehre@usace.army.mil or by telephone at (321) 504-3771 extension 0013.

IMPACT ON NATURAL RESOURCES: Coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Marine Fisheries Services, and other Federal, State, and local agencies, environmental groups, and concerned citizens generally yields pertinent environmental information that is instrumental in determining the impact the proposed action will have on the natural resources of the area.

EVALUATION: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including cumulative impacts thereof; among these are conservation, economics, esthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historical properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food, and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Evaluation of the impact of the activity on the public interest will also include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, EPA, under authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act or the criteria established under authority of Section 102(a) of the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other Interested

parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition, or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this determination, comments are used to assess impacts to endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Water Quality Certification (WQC) has been obtained from the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) which issued Permit No. 143199-19 and 143199-20.

COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT CONSISTENCY: Coastal Zone Consistency Concurrence) has been obtained from the from the St. Johns River Water Management District. In Florida, the State approval constitutes compliance with the approved Coastal Zone Management Plan.

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC HEARING: Any person may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the designated comment period of the notice and must state the specific reasons for requesting the public hearing.

Figure 1

Location Map (8082 Space Commerce Way, Merritt Island, FL 32953)

Blue Origin Area 2 and Tier 2 Deep South



