

Section 404(b) Evaluation
St. Johns River Crossing
No Build Alternative Alignment
Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Clay and St. Johns Counties, Florida

I. Project Description

A. Location.

The project area encompasses portions of Clay and St. Johns Counties in northeast Florida, south of Duval County. The St. Johns River separates Clay and St. Johns Counties, and the Shands Bridge is the only direct connection between the two Counties within the defined project area. The Shands Bridge is a two-lane bridge that carries State Road (SR) 16 east of Green Cove Springs in Clay County across the river to St. Johns County south of Orangedale. The Buckman Bridge is also in the vicinity of the project area, located in Duval County approximately 12 miles north of the Shands Bridge. The Buckman Bridge is an eight-lane bridge that carries Interstate (I)-295 over the St. Johns River southwest of downtown Jacksonville. I-295 serves as the beltway to the Jacksonville metropolitan area, connecting I-95 south of downtown to I-95 north of downtown near the Jacksonville International Airport. SR 9A completes the eastern portion of the beltway, forming a continuous loop through the entire city.

Please refer to Appendix A, Figure 1, Project Study Area

B. General Description

Area Subject to Section 404 Jurisdiction.

Waters of the United States, including wetlands were identified according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's *Wetland Delineation Manual* (1987) and classified using definitions and guidelines contained in *Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States* (Cowardin, et al., 1979) and the *Florida Land Use, Cover and Forms Classification System* (FDOT, 1999). The attributes of the three parameters of vegetative composition, hydrologic regime, and soil classification determine the presence and type of wetland system. Additionally, submerged aquatic vegetation bed boundaries were determined in the St. Johns River using information obtained from the St. Johns River Water Management District.

The alternatives examined in this Section 404 (b) Evaluation are: No Build, Purple, Black, Pink 1 and 2, Brown 1 and 2, Green 1 and 2, and Orange 1 and 2. These six build alternatives are illustrated in Figure 2 in Appendix A.

There are individual Section 404(b) Evaluations for each of the six build alternative alignments and the No Build Alternative.

C. Authority and Purpose

FHWA carries out the Federal highway programs in partnership with the State and local agencies to meet the Nation's transportation needs. Under Title 23 of the United States Code, the Federal-aid Highway Program provides Federal financial resources and technical assistance to State and local governments for constructing, preserving, and improving the National Highway System. The Florida Department of Transportation is the state agency charged with overseeing the planning, engineering, construction, and maintenance of transportation improvements funded by the FHWA.

D. General Description of Dredged or Fill Material: Not applicable with a No Build Alternative.

1. Description of Proposed Discharge Sites: Not applicable
2. Description of Disposal Method: Not Applicable

II. Factual Determinations: There will be no impacts to the aquatic environment with the No Build

III. Findings of Compliance or Non-Compliance With the Restrictions on Discharge

A. Adaption of the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines to this Evaluation

No discharges proposed with the No Build.

B. Evaluation of Availability of Practicable Alternatives to the Proposed Discharge Site Which Would Have Less Adverse Impact on the Aquatic Ecosystem

The No Build Alternative has the least/no impact on the aquatic environment but does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

C. Compliance with Applicable State Water Quality Standards

The No Build alternative would be in compliance with Florida State Water Quality Standards.

D. Compliance with Applicable Toxic Effluent Standard or Prohibition under Section 307 of the Clean Water Act.

The No Build alternative is in compliance with Section 307 standards.

E. Compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The No Build alternative is in compliance.

F. Compliance with Specified Protection Measures for Marine Sanctuaries designated by the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972

Not applicable.

G. Evaluation of the Extent of Degradation of the Waters of the United States.

The No Build alternative would not cause any degradation of waters of the US.

H. Appropriate and Practicable Steps Taken to Minimize Potential Adverse Impacts of the Discharge on the Aquatic Ecosystem

The No Build alternative has no adverse impact on the aquatic environment.

I. On the Basis of the Guidelines, the Proposed Disposal Sites for the Discharge of Dredged or Fill Material is:

Not Applicable to evaluate a no action alternative as being in compliance.

APPENDIX A

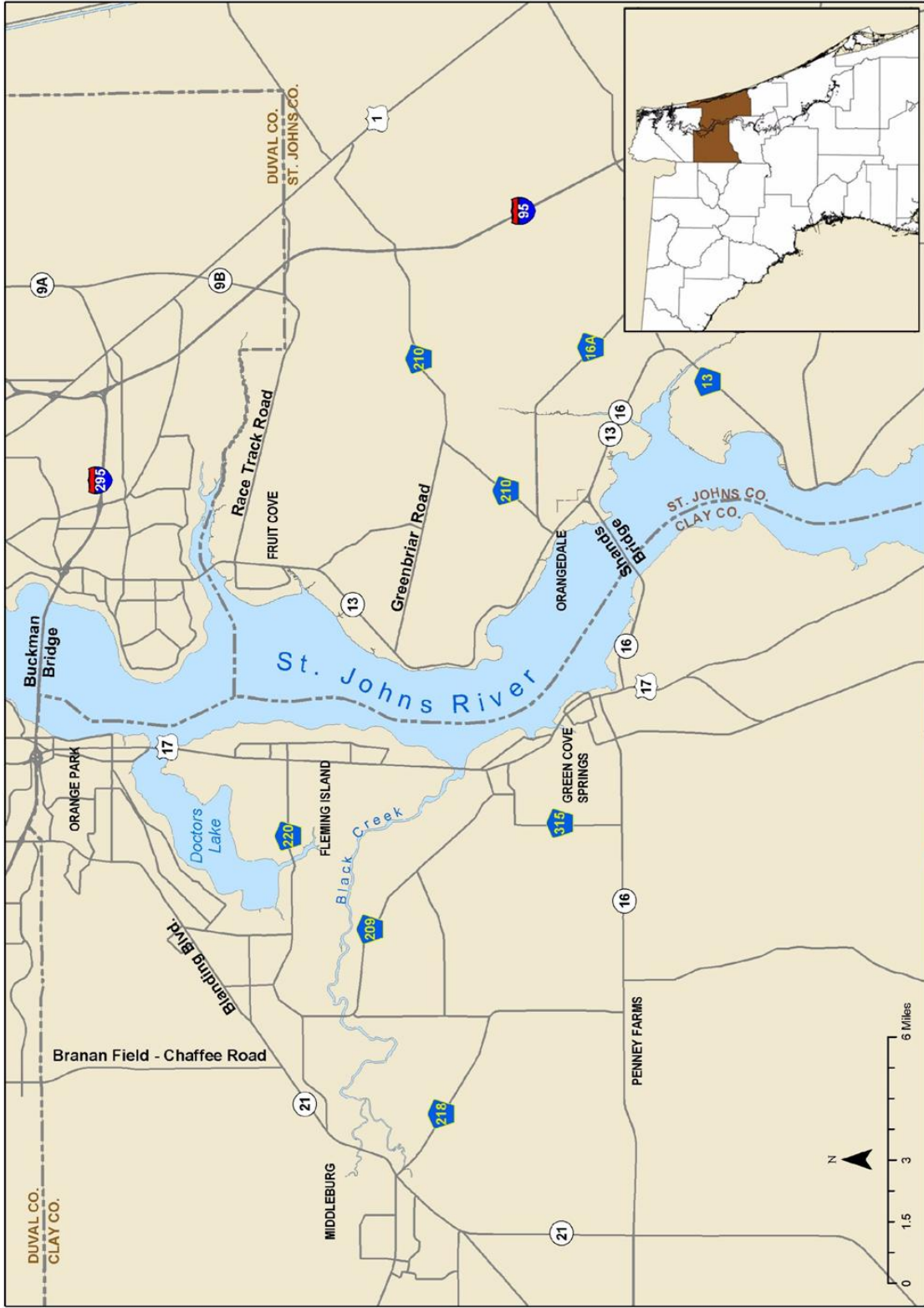


Figure 1
Project Study Area

St. Johns River Crossing
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT STUDY

Figure 2

