

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2006



**Deer Creek Mitigation Site
Carteret County
TIP No. R-2105 WM**



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION 2

 1.1 Project Description 2

 1.2 Purpose 2

 1.3 Project History 4

2.0 HYDROLOGY 5

 2.1 Success Criteria 5

 2.2 Hydrologic Description 5

 2.3 Results of Hydrologic Monitoring 7

 2.3.1 Site Data 7

 2.3.2 Climatic Data 7

 2.4 Conclusions 7

3.0 VEGETATION 10

 3.1 Success Criteria 10

 3.2 Description of Species 10

 3.3 Results of Vegetation Monitoring 11

 3.4 Conclusions 12

4.0 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS 12

FIGURES

Figure 1. Site Location Map 3

Figure 2. Gauge Location Map 6

Figure 3. Plot of Daily Flooding Pattern 8

Figure 4. 30-70 Percentile Graph 9

TABLES

Table 1. Gauge Description and Expectations 5

Table 2. Vegetation Monitoring Statistics 11

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. GAUGE DATA GRAPHS

APPENDIX B. SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

APPENDIX C. VEGETATION PLANTING PLAN AND RANDOM PLOT LOCATIONS

SUMMARY

The following report summarizes the monitoring activities that have occurred in the past year at the Deer Creek Mitigation Site. Located in Carteret County, the Deer Creek Site serves as mitigation for impacts associated with the widening of NC 24. The site was originally designed to serve as integration between an onsite stormwater detention facility and the surrounding environment. The site was constructed and planted in Spring 2001; however, an initial vegetation failure led to a replanting of the site in the spring of 2002. Monitoring activities in 2006 represent the sixth year of hydrologic monitoring and the fifth year of vegetation monitoring.

The site must be monitored for five years following site construction or until success criteria are met. Monitoring criteria include the percent cover of planted herbaceous vegetation and the hydrologic conditions at the site. The site is monitored with thirty vegetation plots, three surface water gauges, and one rain gauge. Data analysis includes an examination of all recorded site data as well as an assessment of local climate conditions throughout the growing season.

Hydrologic monitoring was conducted for a sixth year. The three surface water-monitoring gauges on the site show consistent inundation throughout the growing season. An examination of the water levels over a two-day period illustrates that the site floods twice a day under average climatic conditions (as required in the permit conditions). The two days in the plot were chosen at random and represent typical conditions during the growing season.

For 2006, the fifth vegetation monitoring event revealed a frequency of target species at 85.7% and the vegetative coverage scale value at 4.33. The vegetation data for 2006 met the 70% required frequency of target species and the vegetative cover scale value has continued to increase during the monitoring period. The vegetative cover should continually increase every year with the target species.

Based on the hydrologic and vegetation monitoring, the Deer Creek Mitigation Site met the success criteria for the site during the 2006-growing season. The site has demonstrated both hydrologic and vegetation success for five consecutive years. NCDOT proposes to discontinue all monitoring on the Deer Creek Mitigation Site.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

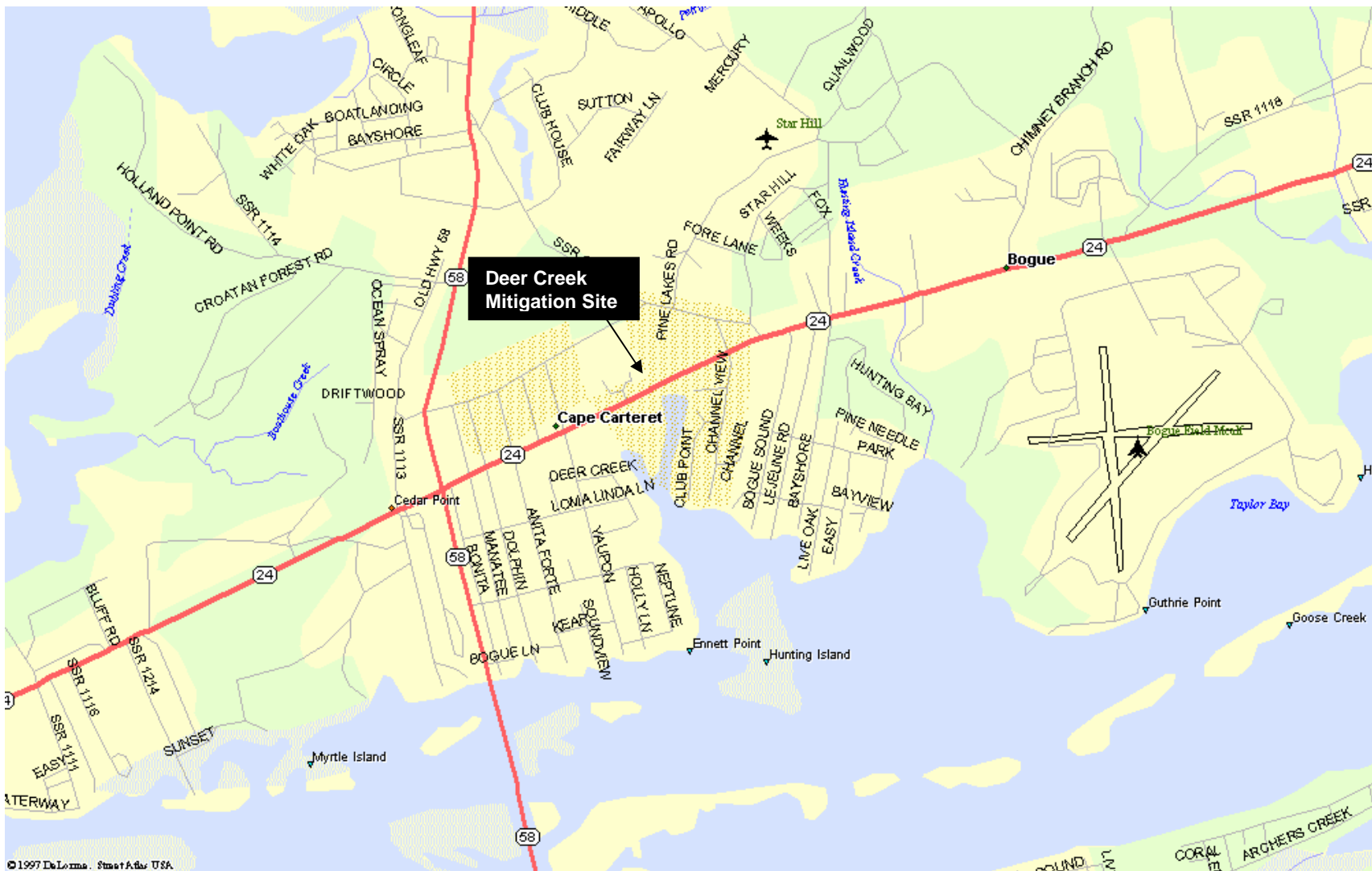
1.1 Project Description

The Deer Creek Mitigation Site is located in Carteret County on the north side of NC 24 at the northeast quadrant of the crossing of Deer Creek (Figure 1 Location Map). The mitigation site is approximately 4.25 acres in size. Approximately 1.5 acres of the site had previously been allocated as a stormwater detention facility designed for the NCDOT to treat runoff from the improvements associated with the widening of NC 24 (TIP No. R-2405AB). The existing Section 404 permit for widening NC 24 involves a commitment by NCDOT to better integrate the original 1.5-acre storm water detention basin into the existing natural environment. To accommodate this, the NCDOT purchased the remaining 2.75 acres of land with the intent of utilizing the area to provide compensatory mitigation for wetland impacts associated with this TIP project.

1.2 Purpose

In order to demonstrate successful mitigation, hydrologic and vegetative monitoring must be conducted. Vegetation will be monitored for five years following the completion of planting and vegetative marsh success is determined in accordance with NMFS guidelines. The site will be considered hydrologically successful when the hydrologic data shows that the site floods twice daily. The following report details the results of hydrologic and vegetative monitoring during 2006 at the Deer Creek Mitigation Site.

Figure 1. Site Location Map



1.3 Project History

March 2001	Construction Completed
May 2001	Site Planted
June 2001	Gauges Installed
June –November 2001	Hydrologic Monitoring (1 yr.)
August 2001	Vegetation Monitoring (1 yr.)
April 2002	Site Tilled and Replanted
February – November 2002	Hydrologic Monitoring (2 yr.)
August 2002	Vegetation Monitoring (Restart 1 yr.)
December 2002	Spillway Modifications
February – November 2003	Hydrologic Monitoring (3 yr.)
August 2003	Vegetation Monitoring (2 yr.)
February – November 2004	Hydrologic Monitoring (4 yr.)
July 2004	Vegetation Monitoring (3 yr.)
February – November 2005	Hydrologic Monitoring (5 yr.)
August 2005	Vegetation Monitoring (4 yr.)
February – November 2006	Hydrologic Monitoring (6 yr.)
June 2006	Vegetation Monitoring (5 yr.)

2.0 HYDROLOGY

2.1 Success Criteria

The success of this site is correlated to the planting elevations and to planting success. If the plantings are successful, then the grading will have been correctly correlated to the tidal fluctuations. Hydrologic monitoring will involve the use of surface water monitoring gauges. Groundwater monitoring is not required at this site since it is a tidal system. The site will be considered hydrologically successful when the site is flooded twice daily. Success is determined from data taken at the Gauge 1 location (SG-1), as the other gauges are located within channels and are used for comparison of tidal elevations. It is expected that the surface water flooding will be the same as that measured for the biological benchmarks for *Spartina alterniflora*, since the grading was done to an elevation that is known to be periodically flooded. Table 1 describes each gauge and the hydrologic expectations of each. See Figure 2 for the precise location of each gauge.

Table 1. Gauge Description and Expectations

Gauge	Elevation	Location	Hydrologic Expectation
SG-1	1.20 ft	Low marsh between channel and high marsh.	Flood twice daily
SG-2	-0.64 ft	Within constructed channel of site.	Remain flooded, daily fluctuations
SG-3	-0.54 ft	In Deer Creek adjacent to site.	Remain flooded, daily fluctuations

The site is monitored during the growing season. The growing season in Carteret County begins February 27 and ends November 29 (274 days). These dates correspond to a 50% probability that temperatures will drop to 28° F or lower after February 27 and before November 29.

2.2 Hydrologic Description

Three surface water monitoring gauges and one rain gauge were installed onsite in June 2001 (Figure 2). The surface water gauges record surface water readings every hour. The Infinity rain gauge records rainfall amounts on a daily basis.

Appendix A contains data from each surface gauge location. This data shows the surface water recorded against the actual gauge elevation surveyed relative to mean sea level. Also included in Appendix A is a graph of two days of surface water data recorded at each gauge location; this graph, Figure 3, illustrates that flooding occurs twice daily as required in the permit conditions. The two days in the graph were chosen at random and are representative of conditions throughout the growing season.

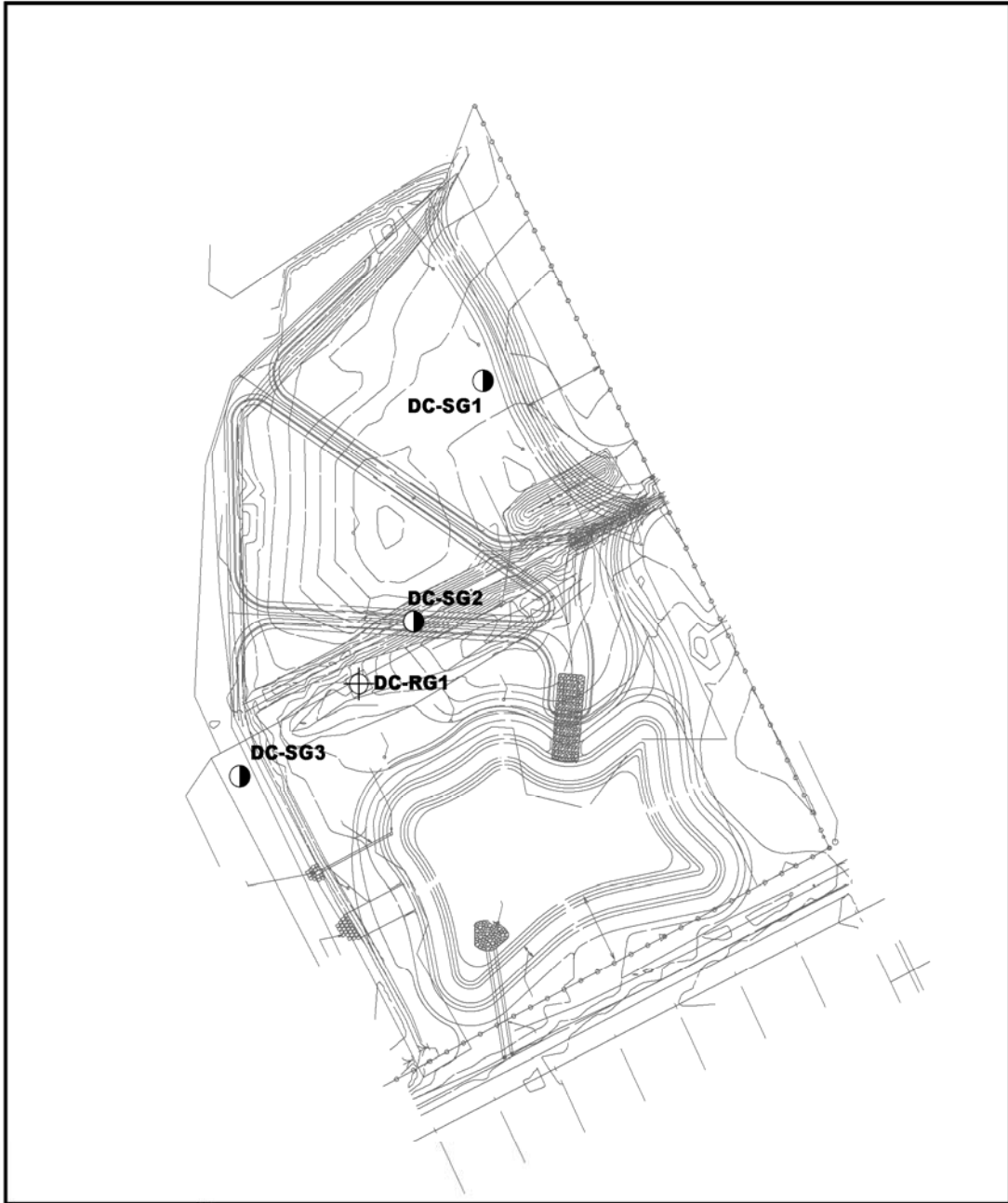
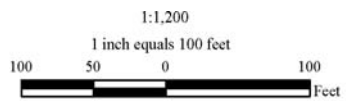


Figure 2. Gauge Location Map

- Surface Gauge
- ⊕ Rain Gauge



2.3 Results of Hydrologic Monitoring

2.3.1 Site Data

Due to the relatively small size of the site, high tide elevations should be consistent between the three gauges. Appendix A graphically depicts the results of the surface water monitoring. These results have been related to the North American Vertical Datum of 1929 (NAVD 29).

Gauge 1 was evaluated to determine if the site was being flooded twice daily. Tide data from Gauges 2 and 3 were evaluated for comparison. Figure 3 is a surface water plot of the data recorded at all three gauges over a two-day period. This figure illustrates that flooding occurs twice daily as required in the permit conditions. The two days in the plot were chosen at random and are representative of conditions throughout the growing season.

2.3.2 Climatic Data

Figure 4 is a comparison of monthly rainfall for the period of January through November 2006 to historical precipitation (collected between 1975 and 2006) for Morehead City, North Carolina. This comparison gives an indication of how 2006 relates to historical data in terms of climate conditions. The NC State Climate Office provided all of the local rainfall information.

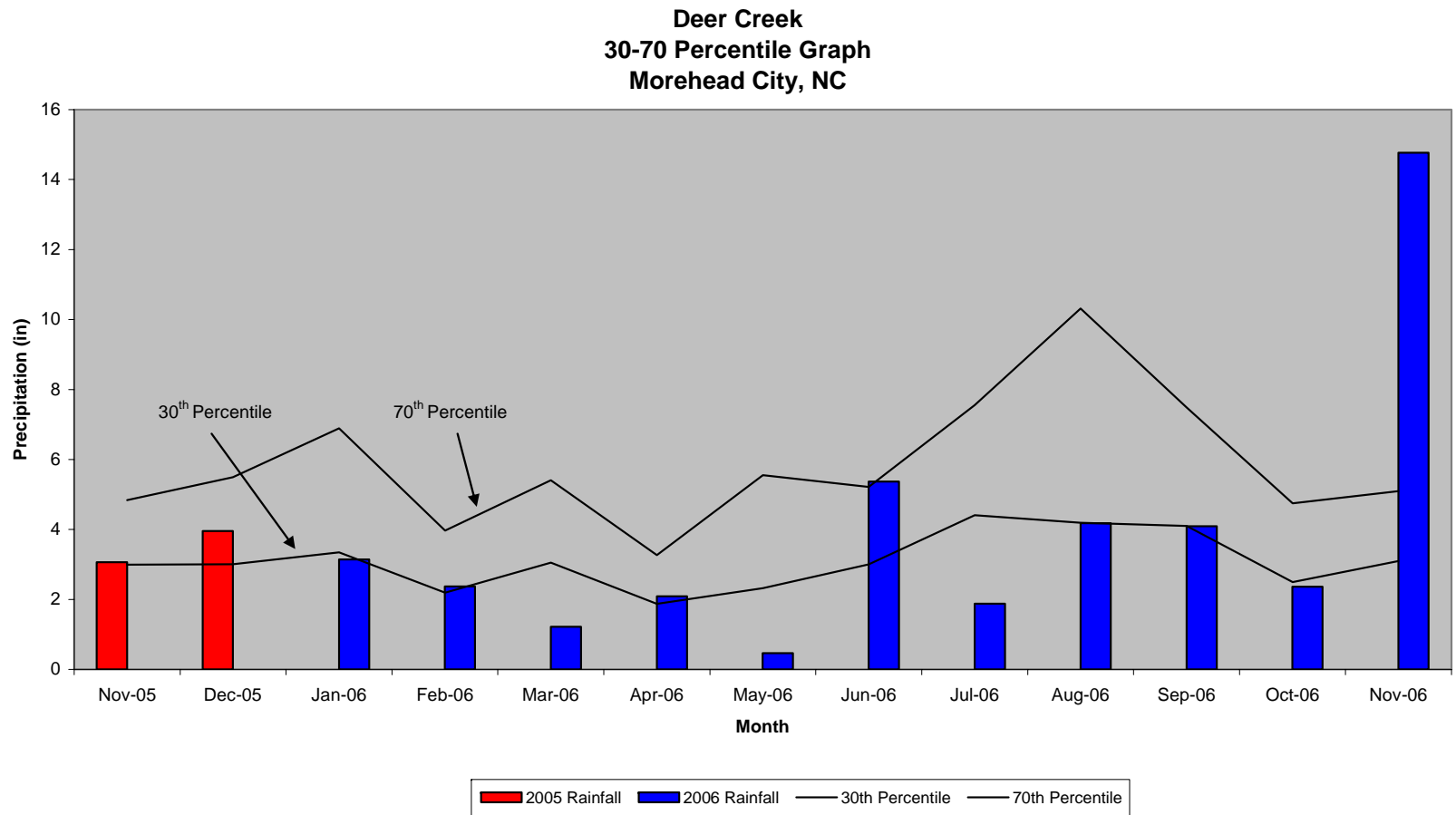
Precipitation is not the primary hydrologic input for the site; therefore, it is expected that the site would show the required flooding regardless of area rainfall totals.

2.4 Conclusions

Based on the hydrology analysis for Gauge 1, the data indicates that the gauge location is flooding twice daily, as is required. The surface water elevations for Gauge 1 are comparable with Gauge 2 and Gauge 3.

This is the fifth consecutive year that the site hydrology has met the success criteria; therefore, NCDOT proposes to discontinue hydrologic monitoring.

Figure 4: 30-70 Percentile Graph



3.0 VEGETATION: DEER CREEK (YEAR 5 MONITORING)

3.1 Success Criteria

The vegetative marsh success of the wetland site will be determined in accordance with NMFS Guidelines. Vegetation plots located within the open water channel will not be evaluated, and will not count toward the final count of plots. The vegetation component of the wetland site will be deemed successful if the following criteria are met:

1. At year five, the average of all plots should have a scale value of 5 (>75% vegetative cover) consisting of wetland herbaceous species, not including any invasive species.
2. A minimum of 70% of the plots shall contain the target (planted) species.

3.2 Description of Species

The following marsh grass species were planted in the Wetland Restoration Area:

Spartina patens, Saltmeadow Cordgrass

Spartina alterniflora, Smooth Cordgrass

3.3 Results of Vegetation Monitoring

Table 2. Vegetation Monitoring Statistics

Plot #	Scale Factor	<i>Spartina patens</i>	<i>Spartina alterniflora</i>	Frequency	Comments
1	5.0		x	x	
2	5.0		x	x	
3	5.0		x	x	
4	5.0		x	x	
5	0.1		x	x	<i>Spartina alterniflora</i>
6	5.0		x	x	
7	5.0		x	x	
8	4.0		x	x	
9	0.0				<i>Bare Ground</i>
10	5.0		x	x	
11	5.0		x	x	
12	5.0	x		x	Cattails
13	5.0	x	x	x	
14					Open Water
15	5.0		x	x	
16	5.0				<i>Scripus americanus</i>
17	5.0		x	x	
18	0.1		x	x	One <i>Spartina alterniflora</i> stem
19	5.0				<i>Scripus americanus</i> , Marsh-elder
20	3.0	x	x	x	Cattails
21					Open Water
22	5.0		x	x	
23	5.0		x	x	
24	4.0		x	x	Glasswort
25	5.0				Big Cordgrass, <i>Juncus</i> sp.
26	5.0		x	x	
27	5.0		x	x	
28	5.0	x		x	Marsh-elder
29	5.0		x	x	
30	5.0	x		x	
Frequency (Percentage of Plots with Desired Species)		17.8%	75.0%	85.7%	
Sum Scale Value				121.2	
Total Number of Plots				28	
Vegetative Cover (Scale Value)				4.33	

3.4 Conclusions

Percent Frequency of Target Species **85.7 %**

Frequency of 70% required.

Vegetative Cover Scale Value **4.33**

Scale Value of 5 required for year 5.

The site was tilled for compaction and replanted with 7,300 Smooth Cordgrass plants in April 2002. Vegetation on site has improved greatly throughout the monitoring period. Frequency and coverage are on track for year five. Site was monitored in 2006 during high tide.

NCDOT has met the success criteria for percent frequency of target species and the vegetative cover scale value has continued to increase during the monitoring period. The vegetative cover should continually increase every year with the target species. NCDOT proposes to discontinue vegetation monitoring.

4.0 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2006-monitoring year represents the sixth year of hydrology monitoring and the fifth year of vegetation monitoring following replanting of the site.

The fifth year of hydrology monitoring indicates that the Deer Creek Mitigation Site is functioning as planned. The surface gauges indicate that the site is being flooded twice daily during the growing season. An examination of the water levels over a two-day period (Figure 3) illustrates that the site is flooding twice daily under normal conditions. The two days in the figure were chosen at random and represent typical conditions during the growing season.

Vegetation monitoring yielded a successful 85.7% frequency of target species and 4.33 vegetative coverage. Field observations have also shown that the site floods regularly.

Based on the hydrologic and vegetation monitoring, the Deer Creek Mitigation Site met the success criteria for the site during the 2006-growing season. The site has demonstrated both hydrologic and vegetation success for five consecutive years. NCDOT proposes to discontinue all monitoring on the Deer Creek Mitigation Site.

APPENDIX A
GAUGE DATA GRAPHS

APPENDIX B
SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Deer Creek



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6


Deer Creek




Photo 7

APPENDIX C
VEGETATION PLANTING PLAN
&
RANDOM PLOT LOCATIONS

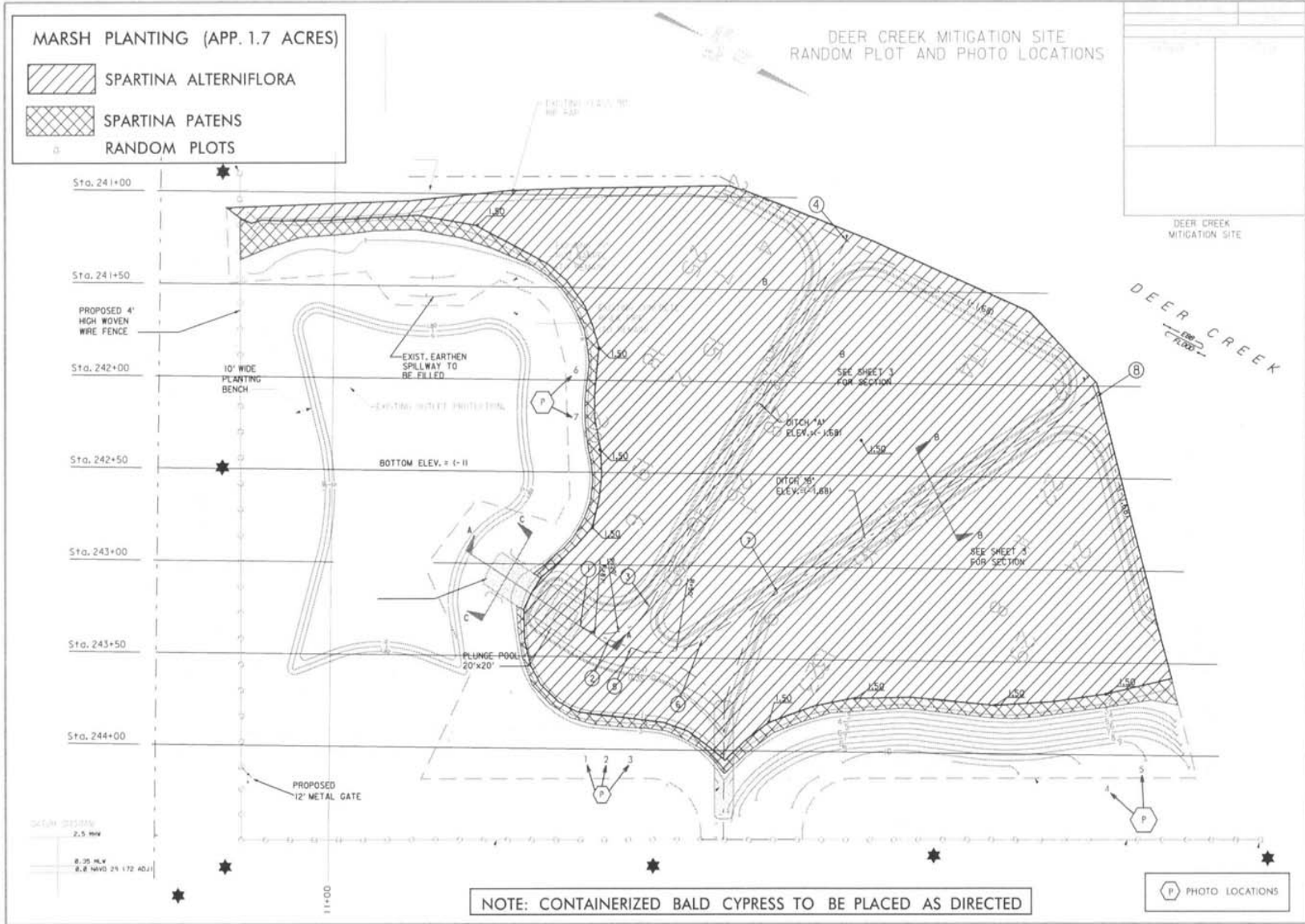
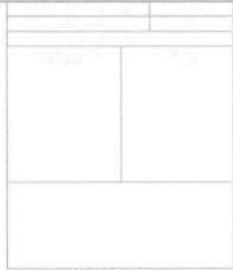
MARSH PLANTING (APP. 1.7 ACRES)

 SPARTINA ALTERNIFLORA

 SPARTINA PATENS

 RANDOM PLOTS

DEER CREEK MITIGATION SITE
RANDOM PLOT AND PHOTO LOCATIONS



Deer Creek
2006 Monitoring
Random Plot Locations

