

# **NO NET LOSS IN GEORGIA: ASSESSING THE U.S. ARMY CORPS SAVANNAH DISTRICT'S ACHIEVEMENT OF A NATIONAL MITIGATION POLICY**

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Implementation of stream and wetland impact permitting under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act is guided by the national policy of “no net loss.” Established by George H.W. Bush in 1989 and supported by every subsequent administration, the goal of no net loss is to replace aquatic resource functions that are lost when streams, wetlands, and other waters are damaged or destroyed via § 404 permits. This replacement of function ostensibly occurs through mitigation requirements for permits that are established by each of the 38 U.S. Army Corps Districts across the country. Mitigation is typically achieved through restoration and other projects that are supposed to offset permitted impacts through a net increase in aquatic function. In this recently completed analysis, the UGA River Basin Center analyzed the mitigation standards of the U.S. Army Corps Savannah District, which regulates § 404 permitting across all of Georgia, to determine whether these standards are in fact achieving the national policy of no net loss. Through national and District-level regulatory and policy assessments, GIS analysis, and permit and database review, we determined that the Savannah District is likely achieving no net loss for wetlands, but is not doing so for streams. In this presentation, we will present our findings and methods and detail specific recommendations for the Savannah District that, if implemented, would remedy some issues in its existing mitigation standards and support achievement of the critical national policy of no net loss.

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