

# DRAFT – Wood Stork -- DRAFT

## Effects Determination Guidance for Endangered & Threatened Species (EDGES)

### South Georgia Coastal Plain Counties

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#### Species Covered by this EDGES: Wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) – Threatened

The wood stork is a large, bald-headed wading bird that stands more than 3 feet tall, has a 5-foot wing spread, and weighs 4 to 6 pounds. It is the only stork that breeds in the United States. It eats primarily fish, foraging in a variety of open, shallow freshwater and estuarine wetlands. It favors areas with falling water levels (when fish and other prey are likely to be more concentrated in pools). Birds forage mainly by wading in shallow water with their bills partly open in the water, so they can quickly snap them shut when contact is made with prey.

The wood stork is a highly colonial species usually nesting in large rookeries and feeding in flocks. Colony size in Georgia has ranged from fewer than 12 to more than 500 nests. Nests may be located in



small trees (3-7' above ground) or large trees (60' or more above ground), but the trees must be in standing water or on islands surrounded by water to protect from predators. Nesting periods vary geographically. In north and central Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, storks lay eggs March-late May, with fledging occurring July-August. Wood storks have also nested in man-made structures. Storks occasionally use the same rookeries for years, but most colonies are shorter lived. Loss of foraging and breeding wetland habitat is the primary cause for declines.



**This EDGES covers any project that might affect freshwater or estuarine wetlands.**

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### Endangered Species Act Consultation Checklist:

#### Applicant:

1. IPAC indicates wood storks may occur in the project area.
  - a. No.....No effect. Provide IPaC information to the Savannah District with application/PCN.
  - b. Yes.....Go to #2.
  
2. The Fish and Wildlife Service's Georgia Field Office (FWS-GA) provided documentation stating project impacts to listed wood storks were likely to be minimal (FWS-GA signed letter or sticker, T&E survey where FWS-GA provided concurrence with negative findings, or similar documentation).
  - a. No.....Provide completed EDGES Applicant Coordination Slip, with supporting documentation, to the Savannah District with 404 application/PCN.
  - b. Yes.....Provide FWS-GA project review documentation and/or survey data to the Savannah District with application/PCN.

#### Savannah District

3. The project is within 2,500 feet of an active wood stork nesting colony (see GIS layer).
  - a. No.....Go to #4.

- b. Yes.....May affect. Consult with FWS-GA.
4. The project will affect suitable wood stork foraging habitat (SFH). SFH contains patches of relatively open (< 25%) aquatic vegetation, calm water, and a permanent or seasonal water depth between 2 and 15 inches. Examples of SFH include, but are not limited to, freshwater marshes, seasonally flooded roadside or agricultural ditches, narrow tidal creeks or shallow tidal pools, managed impoundments, and depressions in cypress heads and swamp sloughs.
    - a. No.....NLAA. Consultation complete. FWS-GA concurrence not needed.
    - b. Yes.....Go to #5.
  5. Project impacts to SFH are greater than 0.5 acre.
    - a. No.....NLAA. Consultation complete. FWS-GA concurrence not needed.
    - b. Yes.....Go to #6.
  6. The project will impact SFH within a Wood Stork Core Foraging Area (WSCFA) for a known colony (see map below) OR wood storks have been documented foraging in the wetland. WCFAs in Georgia include SFH within a 13-mile radius of a colony.
    - a. No.....NLAA. Consultation complete. FWS concurrence is needed, in writing, for JPNs, but is assumed for other Savannah District actions if FWS-GA does not respond.
    - b. Yes.....May affect. Consult with FWS-GA

