

Impact on people and places

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In this oral history interview excerpt, Stan Hyatt explains the various impacts of building I-26, from environmental issues to moving gravesites.

Audio

File:

Duration: 3:31

Transcript:

Audio Transcript

Rob Amberg

What were some of the major things that you were concerned about and had to deal with and continue to deal with?

Stan Hyatt

Well, there are a number of issues that are involved in that environmental impact statement. They look at the location of the houses that'll be replaced - the schools, the churches, the graveyards. And of course, we have had to replace some of the housing, buy people out or move them into different areas to make room for this I-26. We did move three cemeteries, I think. And that's tough when you have people already buried, and you have to deal with the relatives of those people and move the graves. Although, that went a lot better than I thought it would go. We didn't have really a tough time with that. We hired a professional grave-mover that knew what he was doing [and was] sensitive to the problems with the families and the needs of the families, so that went fairly well. One of the biggest areas, environmentally, that we've had to deal with is the fact that a lot of this area that we're working through is high-quality water, or trout stream water. We've replaced some of the smaller streams with piping, and that was a big issue. We had to pay a mitigation fee and let the wildlife department and the court, basically North Carolina Wildlife Department, go other places in Madison County. That fee was over a million dollars. They have been doing off-site mitigation all over Madison County - going to property owners and saying, "You know, you've got cattle in this area along the creek. We'd like to do a long-term lease with you, and maybe move the fence back out of the creek and go in and rebuild the stream bank, plant trees." That was mandated, because this section of interstate hit through an area probably no more than fifteen acres of what was considered wetlands, just isolated places where the core of engineers, the wildlife people, felt it was unique and qualified as a wetland area. So we had to pay that fee to go off-site. And they're still rebuilding these streams around the county to offset the taking out of streams and putting pipes in. But aside from all that, we've had to worry about as we build the job, are we going to silt up those streams? Are we going to deposit hot rock from the road building that'll leech the acid sulfates out of the rock and change the pH of the streams, kill the trout, kill the bugs? So there are a lot of things involved in that environmental question you've asked. And it's been, aside from safety and quality, one of the three biggest issues of building this road.

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