

CLAY

Feds launch environmental study of Micron project; public hearing scheduled



A wetlands stands in December on Burnet Road, on the site of the proposed Micron Technology semiconductor complex. Micron has told the federal government it intends to fill in 244 acres of wetlands and more than a mile of streams. Glenn Coin, gcoin@syracuse.com

Glenn Coin - gcoin@syracuse.com

The review is required because Micron expects to get federal funding.

The federal government said it will launch an environmental review of Micron Technology's plans to build a massive semiconductor plant in the town of Clay.

The environmental impact statement is another essential step for the Micron project, planned for a 1,400-acre parcel replete with wetlands and forests. A federal review is required because Micron hopes to get billions from the federal CHIPS and Science Act, passed in 2022.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will conduct the study, which will run concurrently with a state-required environmental study already underway. The corps said it “has determined the proposed project may significantly affect the quality of the human environment.” The Army corps can grant or deny the permit Micron would need to build.

The Army Corps will hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. March 19 at the Clay town offices, 4401 Route 31. That will be what’s known as a scoping session, which gives the public a chance to say what environmental impacts should be included in the scope of the study.

Many of the impacts to be studied are laid out in the announcement, including land use, water resources, plant and animal habitat, solid waste and hazardous materials, air quality, and greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. The study will also include the impact on two species of endangered bats found on the site.

The Army corps said Micron had applied for a permit to build four fabrication plants, or fabs, to build the company’s signature memory chips. The company also plans to build a child care and health care center on Caughdenoy Road, near the main campus, and a connection to the National Grid substation across the road.

Announcement of the study appeared Friday in the pre-print edition of the Federal Register. The formal publication in the register will be today, which will kick off a 30-day public comment period for the scoping portion of the study.

Friday’s announcement contains a few new nuggets about the Micron project, including a shortened construction schedule. Micron had previously said it would start construction in November on fab 1 and finish fab 4 in 2043, but the new filing says construction will start in 2025 and the final fab will be operational by 2041.

The filing also says Micron will build a rail spur at the western edge of the property, known as White Pine Commerce Park. Micron will also fill in 244 acres of federally regulated wetlands and more than a mile of federally regulated streams and ditches. Micron has told the Army corps that it will “develop a compensatory wetland mitigation plan to offset permanent losses” of those wetlands and streams.

The review would be done under the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires the federal government to assess the environmental impact of any project it builds or funds. NEPA reviews often drag on for years. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo has warned that NEPA reviews could slow down the chip plants planned by several large chip-makers. Congress could waive the NEPA requirements, but hasn't.

Micron announced in October 2022 it had selected White Pine Commerce Park in Clay for a massive computer memory chip plant, the largest in the nation, that would cost up to \$100 billion to build over 20 years and employ up to 9,000 people. Another 40,000 spinoff jobs could be created, a state-funded study said.