

# **MEETING NOTES**

## **Northern Tampa Bay Phase II Local Technical Peer Review Group Wetlands Subcommittee**

### **Cypress Creek Wellfield December 17, 2004 - 9:00AM**

Attendees: Warren Hogg, Brian Ormiston, Ted Rochow, John Emery (via phone), Patty Fesmire, Shirley Denton, Diane Willis, Doug Keesecker, David Carr, Michael Hancock, and Scott Emery.

In addition to the meeting agenda (attached), several hand-outs were distributed including the Number of Wetlands needing a revised Normal Pool, a WAP To Do list, a suggested methodology for scoring Stress, and Guidelines for Ranking Groundcover, Shrub, and Tree Zonation categories. Michael Hancock gave a Power Point presentation of December 17<sup>th</sup> WAP issues.

A plan for setting Historic Normal Pools (HNPs) in isolated wetlands was discussed. HNPs set in the past by both the District and Tampa Bay Water consultants are being inventoried to determine if past HNP methodology is adequate at each of the wetlands. For those wetlands that need additional HNP work, it was agreed that directions for setting HNPs as described in Appendix D of recently distributed WAP material need to be followed closely. The District will offer training for those setting HNPs once the inventory of sites is complete. A check for possible soil subsidence should be performed at each wetland, and if indications of soil subsidence are found, saw palmettos should be relied on to set HNPs. Due to the large number of isolated wetlands needing HNP work it is evident that both the District and Tampa Bay Water need to check their budgets to determine the number of wetlands that can be completed. The District will likely set HNPs and install transects at the "cross-over" wetlands (wetlands monitored by both agencies). No continuous wetlands or wetlands for which WAPs are not planned in the future will be included in the HNP work. The methodology for assessing non-isolated wetlands will need to be discussed in the future.

The setting of HNPs will involve work by a biologist to mark the HNP indicators and a surveyor to perform survey work. Initially a biologist skilled in the use of leveling equipment could perform the local survey work with the work checked at a later time by a Professional Surveyor. The local survey work should be tied into a clearly identified benchmark adjacent to the wetland. It would be most efficient to survey in the required transect marking stakes and survey in other monitoring equipment at the same time as HNP work was being done.

WAP directions note that the current transect location be examined in order to avoid disturbed locations and to include as many vegetational zones as possible. It was noted that there are advantages to using current transect location to allow for comparison of past and future WAP monitoring data. The biologist should consider as many factors as possible in deciding whether to relocate a transect. The subcommittee agreed to remove old marking stakes as long as they were not being used in an on-going monitoring program.

### **WAP methodology Issues**

1. **Transect width** It was agree that a 10-meter transect width was most reasonable for groundcover, shrubs, and trees because it would be difficult to determine hummocks at a greater distance. This does not preclude using a greater transect area if the assessor believes a better assessment would be achieved. However, when working at a greater distance the assessor should be certain of elevations and indicate on the data sheets that a wider assessment area is being used.
2. **Percentages** The issue of how to score abundance of the various species was discussed based on the test of three possible methods used in the October, 2004 WAP test. A hybrid method was agreeable to the subcommittee. If only one or two specimens are presents, it will be indicated as so. Beyond that, estimated percentages will be described as 5 percent, and then even multiples of 10 (10,20, 30, etc.).

Some wording for the guidance on determining how much of an inappropriate species should be a concern was also discussed, using the zonation ranking scale descriptions (see attached). The subcommittee generally agreed with the concept and the wording. The subcommittee was asked to submit any comments to Michael Hancock before the next meeting.

3. **Plant List** The plant list is an important issue to the implementation of the WAP. The subcommittee was asked to submit suggestions for changes, additions, or subtractions. It was agreed that certain species could be grouped as *Eragrostis* spp, *Rubus* spp. etc. in order to simplify decisions by the field assessor. The plant list will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.
4. **Stress Assessment** A methodology for scoring stress using fewer categories than used in the October, 2004 test was presented to the subcommittee (see attached). Subcommittee members agreed that the new method was an improvement over that used previously.

## **Other Issues**

Work is needed on the manual, data base, and field sheets. The District will take the lead in writing the Manual and designing the field sheets. In the future the data base will be designed to print out field sheets with plant species previously identified at each site along with other information specific to each wetland. The field sheets used at the initial WAP sampling will not include some of this information.

The issue of training was discussed in some detail. It was agreed that anyone doing WAPs in the field or supervising WAPs will have to attend training, which likely will be initially held in April, 2005. The training course initially will be somewhat abbreviated due to the short time available for planning. Information that will need to be included will involve plant identification, overview of the methodology, setting of HNPs, transect set-up etc. The District and Tampa Bay Water will discuss the logistics of training before the next meeting.

It was agreed that quality assurance and control will be important to the success of the WAP. Michael Hancock and Ted Rochow recommended that initial WAP monitoring be performed by two biologists. It was also recommended that a certain proportion of WAP site evaluations be checked by consultant supervisors, Tampa Bay Water managers and SWFWMD staff by some deadline and that a feedback method be established. The wetlands subcommittee should continue to meet regularly as a technical advisory group to review the methods, plant list, and problem sites. These and other issues will need discussion in the future.

The next meeting was set for January 21, 2005 at 9:00 AM at the Cypress Creek Treatment Plant.

# **AGENDA**

## **Northern Tampa Bay Phase II Local Technical Peer Review Group Wetlands Subcommittee**

**Cypress Creek Wellfield  
December 17, 2004 - 9:00AM**

- A. Overview of Major Tasks to Accomplish by March 1, 2005
  - 1. Normal pool plan
  - 2. Come to agreement on remaining WAP issues
  - 3. Finish manual and field sheets (which involves data base)
  - 4. Develop a training plan, and have training in April 2005
  - 5. Establish protocol, including QA/QC plan
  - 6. Long-term administration/management
  
- B. WAP Issues for discussion
  - 1. Normal Pool
  - 2. Assessment area size
  - 3. Percentage cover method, "How much enough?" guidance, and weighting
  - 4. Plant List
  - 5. Stress Information
  
- C. Training
  
- D. QA/QC

## Ranking Scale

1. Species with an **upland** classification have moved into the **deep zone** in high numbers and distribution.

### Guidance:

- a. For groundcover, "high numbers" usually means greater than 25 percent cover.
  - b. For shrubs, small trees, and trees, "high numbers" usually means greater than 5 to 10 specimens
  - c. "High distribution" usually means located throughout the zone.
2. Species have moved in two zones in high numbers and distribution, and/or some species with an **upland** classification have moved into the **deep zone**.

### Guidance:

- a. For groundcover, "high numbers" usually means greater than 25 percent cover.
  - b. For shrubs, small trees, and trees, "high numbers" usually means greater than 5 to 10 specimens
  - c. "High distribution" usually means located throughout the zone.
  - d. A "2" should be chosen if any species have moved in three zones, regardless of numbers and distribution
3. Species have moved in one zone in high numbers and distribution, and/or some plants have moved in two zones.

### Guidance:

- a. For groundcover, "high numbers" usually means greater than 25 percent cover.
  - b. For shrubs, small trees, and trees, "high numbers" usually means greater than 5 to 10 specimens
  - c. "High distribution" usually means located throughout the zone.
  - d. A "3" should be chosen if any species have moved in two zones, regardless of numbers and distribution
4. Species have moved in one zone in enough numbers and distribution to be of concern, and/or species with an **adaptive** classification are extensive in numbers and distribution in the **transition zone**.

### Guidance:

- a. For groundcover, "enough numbers" usually means greater than 5 percent cover for all species
- b. For shrubs, small trees, and trees, "enough numbers" usually means two or three specimens
- c. "Enough distribution" or "extensive distribution" usually means located beyond a foot of the appropriate zone.
- d. For adaptive species in the transition zone, "extensive in numbers" usually means great than 25 percent.

5. Normal zonation. Some species may have migrated inward one zone, but they are small in number and/or right along the zone edge. **Adaptive** species in the **transition zone** are not considered abnormal if they are not extensive in numbers and distribution.

**Guidance:** Choose a "5" if:

- a. All identified species are in their appropriate zone, or
- b. All groundcover species in inappropriate zones combine for less than 5 percent coverage, or
- c. All species in inappropriate zones are within approximately a foot of the appropriate zone.

**N/A** Not enough **cover** to make evaluation

**Guidance:** If you feel there is not enough of the cover to make a meaningful score, chose N/A.

**Stress of Shrubs and Small Trees**

**Appropriate Shrubs and Small Trees**

- showing little to no signs of stress
- showing noticeable signs of stress
- showing significant signs of stress
- N/A

Which species, and in which  
zone(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Inappropriate Shrubs and Small Trees**

- showing little to no signs of stress
- showing noticeable signs of stress
- showing significant signs of stress
- N/A

Which species, and in which  
zone(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Stress of Trees**

**Appropriate Trees**

- showing little to no signs of stress
- showing noticeable signs of stress
- showing significant signs of stress
- N/A

Which species, and in which zone(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Inappropriate Trees**

- showing little to no signs of stress
- showing noticeable signs of stress
- showing significant signs of stress
- N/A

Which species, and in which zone(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Dead and Leaning Trees**

- Little to no (normal amount of) dead and/or leaning trees
- Noticeable amount of dead and/or leaning trees
- Significant amount of dead and/or leaning trees
- N/A

Which species, and in which zone(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are young **appropriate trees** starting to grow in wetland locations in a way that would suggest recovery? Yes  No  Not Sure  Not applicable