MEETING NOTES

Northern Tampa Bay Phase II
Local Technical Peer Review Group
Wetlands Subcommittee
Cypress Creek Wellfield
February 25, 2005 - 9:00AM

Attendees: Michael Hancock, Warren Hogg, Brian Ormiston, Ted Rochow, John Emery, Patty Fesmire, Shirley Denton, Diane Willis, Chris Shea, Doug Keesecker, David Carr, Scott Emery, Laura Morris, Dan Schmutz, and Bob Stetler

An Agenda for the current meeting as well as a copy of the new WAP methodology were handed out.

Michael Hancock noted that many wetlands need transect or normal pool work to be ready for May-June sampling using the new WAP. Over one hundred Water Management District wetlands need work and over two hundred Tampa Bay Water wetlands need work. Transect installation training will be scheduled either next week or the following week for those installing transects or determining normal pools. Directions for conducting necessary work will be handed out at the survey training session. Scott Emery mentioned that he is virtually certain he will be able to conduct the normal pool and transect installation work that needs to be done for District wetlands in Hillsborough County using funding from Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission.

Michael Hancock mentioned that a problem with previous determination of normal pools, installation of transects, and other monitoring equipment has been that surveys are likely to have been done from different benchmarks. The new WAP method specifies that a single benchmark be identified at the edge of wetlands and be used for all surveying in the wetlands. District wetlands in almost all cases have a professionally established benchmark at the edge of each WAP wetland. Tampa Bay Water wetlands may be less likely to have a similar type benchmark. The District will be distributing disk copies of benchmarks that can be used in the various Sections, Townships, and Ranges where Tampa Bay Water has WAP wetlands. If a biologist performing local leveling in a wetland determines that a temporary benchmark is so far away that a professional surveyor is needed to assure surveying accuracy then the biologist should set a temporary bench in the uplands adjacent to the wetland. This temporary benchmark can be professionally surveyed in the future. There was discussion as to whether the 1929 NGVD or 1988 NAVD system should be used. Warren Hogg suggested that both be used in anticipation of the District converting to the 1988 system in the future.

The issue of whether the May-June time period is best for WAP sampling was discussed. Doug Keesecker mentioned that he has discussed this with Tampa Bay Water consultants and there appear to be advantages and disadvantages of performing WAP monitoring at various times during the growing season. There was a consensus of the Wetlands Subcommittee that the new WAP would be performed in May-June, 2005, as previously planned. Although somewhat different scores can occur on the new WAP depending on the time of year it is performed, Michael Hancock noted that WAP scores are best assessed using a time series over a period of years.

Diane Willis and Dan Schmutz of Berryman and Henigar, Inc. distributed copies of a February 25, 2005 document titled: "Vertical Distribution of Vegetation Species Relative to Normal Pool Elevations in Ten Isolated Wetlands in the Northern Tampa Bay Area". They compared three grouping methods relative to normal pool level for assessing whether specific plant species are distributed where they would be expected under natural conditions. The "Two-Group Method" using a stake at NP-10 inches was not as good as either the "Three Group Method" or the "Two Group Method" which included a stake at NP-12 inches. The study supported the use of the NP-12 inches stake in the new WAP method. Whether the NP-6 inches stake in the new WAP method is useful might be determined after experience is gained using the new methodology. Diane Willis presented topographic diagrams showing the contouring of different wetlands. She noted that careful placement of the NP-12 inches stake along the transect is necessary because the ground is often uneven and plant occurrence may consequently be variable. A length along the transect at this approximate depth could be examined for depth and the approximate median used to place the NP-12 inches stake. Michael Hancock mentioned that the District is proposing to fund a more detailed study in its next fiscal budget which would examine the depth at which plant species occur under natural conditions.

The plant list for the new WAP was discussed next. There was agreement that the list is satisfactory to conduct the WAP in May-June, 2005. Based on a September 2004 study that Diane Willis previously reported on it was decided that *Lycopus rubellus* should be changed from a "T" zone plant to an "OD" zone plant. Other plant species may be added to the list in the future. Michael Hancock mentioned that directions in the new WAP guard against making incorrect zone decisions and may offset some uncertainty as to what zone difficult-to-classify species should be placed. Diane Willis mentioned that scientific names or standardized abbreviations should be used on the field sheets to facilitate data entry.

Michael Hancock asked that any final comments on the new WAP be made in the next two weeks due to a need to present the final WAP to Tampa Bay Water's Governing Board.

There was discussion concerning a head-count for survey training to be scheduled next week or the following week as well as a count of attendees for WAP training scheduled for April. Doug Keesecker is working on the list of attendees for both survey and WAP training for Tampa Bay Water. At the January 21, 2005 meeting of the Subcommittee, April 14-15th was scheduled for WAP training with the first day being devoted to identification of plants on the new WAP list. Diane Willis previously volunteered to conduct the plant identification training. Shirley Denton offered to assist with plant identification training. The second day of WAP training will involve a half-day of training on the method with the rest of the day spent in the field applying the method at several wetlands. There was discussion that two additional days of training in applying the new WAP will likely need to be scheduled in April since it was estimated that there would be a large number of environmental scientists that would need training in applying the new WAP. If two additional days of training are scheduled it was decided that environmental scientists could attend either of the sessions as long as they receive training on plant identification as well as on the new WAP methodology. It was decided that we attempt to schedule an additional training session on April 21-22.

Warren Hogg mentioned the need to address the issue of converting old WAP data to the new system. Diane Willis noted that she has a method of performing the conversion that she would like to recommend. It was decided that the issue is complex and will need more discussion in the future. In the meanwhile Mr. Hogg said that he would work on creating a memo outlining the methods that can be used to covert the data, which can be used to address any questions raised by Tampa Bay Water's Governing Board.

The next meeting of the Subcommittee was has not yet been set.

AGENDA

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A. Normal pool and transect setup plan – progress, discussion, timing
    a. Timelines
    b. Training
    c. Benchmarks
    d. Stakes

B. Berryman & Henigar's species report – discussion

C. WAP manual review – discussion of comments

D. Training development
    a. Head count
    b. Content
    c. Location
    d. Finalization of dates

E. Field sheets

F. Old WAP to new WAP conversions

G. Other