

MEETING NOTES

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

Cypress Creek Wellfield November 29, 2004 - 9:00AM

Attendees: Warren Hogg, Brian Ormiston, Chris Shea, Ted Rochow, John Emery (via phone), Patty Fesmire, Annemarie Hammond, Shirley Denton, Doug Keesecker, and Michael Hancock.

Michael Hancock gave a presentation on the results of the October 2004 field test of the latest revisions to the Wetland Assessment Procedure. The presentation can be found on the WAP section of the Northern Tampa Bay II Program website.

Zonation Scoring Results

In general, the District staff found significant variability in some of the zonation scores, but, in contrast to the conclusions derived from the May test, the reasons for the variability were much more clear. These reasons for variability and problems with interpretation of the results included:

- 1) General lack of explanations
- 2) Species identification disagreements and difficulties
- 3) Not seeing key species
- 4) Difficulties in estimating percentages
- 5) Difficulties identifying hummocks and shallow areas
- 6) Difficulties in determining how much cover is needed to downgrade zonation
- 7) Apparent weighting of species differently within the same zone classification
- 8) Mistakes in zone assignments
- 9) Miscellaneous quality control problems

Additionally, District staff felt that most of the significant reasons explaining the variability could likely be handled through training and quality control, rather than changes to the methodology. Based on the presentation, the attendees appeared to generally agree with these conclusions.

There was some concern expressed by Shirley and others that the method has not been tested in more urbanized areas, such as the northwest Hillsborough

County area, and therefore there may be some unidentified issues. The group agreed that some testing in more urbanized areas would be useful. Michael felt that since the species list was developed using all plants found in all wetlands, this concern should not be major, but still worth investigating.

Stress Scoring Results

District staff felt that stress scores showed a large amount of variability, but, unlike the zonation scores, the reasons for the variability were not as clear. Additionally, many of the reasons identified would require changes to the method. The identified reasons for variability and problems with interpretation of the results included:

- 1) All the problems with the zonation score are carried over to the stress score, and then increased by variability in stress interpretations
- 2) General lack of explanations
- 3) The 1-5 scale may be too refined
- 4) Zonation and Stress scores must be consistent
- 5) There are many different opinions on what stress means
- 6) All inappropriate species must be considered in the stress score

District staff concluded that although there is important information in the stress data provided by the evaluator, much of it is captured in the zonation score, and the information could probably be sufficiently captured in a more qualitative manner. District staff therefore suggested eliminating the stress scoring system, and replacing it with a more narrative section in the field sheet. This section would likely include check boxes to categorize the amount of stress observed by the evaluator. The attendees agreed that this should be considered.

District staff's general recommendations were to move forward with the zonation score method, revising the stress information as explained above, and to continue to discuss the remaining issues with the overall WAP method. Moving forward with the zonation score method would include further discussions on the species list, zonation assignments, and guidance on the zonation decision-making that could be included in training and manuals. The attendees agreed.

It was decided that the goal for completing the remaining work would be March 1, 2005, which would provide enough time to bring the method to the March Tampa Bay Water Board for approval. It was also decided that a series of meetings would be held between now and March 1 to discuss the remaining topics and finish the new method. The next meeting was tentatively set for December 17, 2004 at the Cypress Creek Treatment Plant, pending confirmation by all the subcommittee members.