

MEETING NOTES

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

**Cypress Creek Wellfield
August 20, 2004 - 9:00AM**

Attendees: Warren Hogg, Scott Emery, Brian Ormiston, Chris Shea, Ted Rochow, John Emery, Patty Fesmire, Annemarie Hammond, Diane Willis, Shirley Denton, Doug Keesecker, Patrick Wise, David Carr, Michael Hancock, and Jill Hood.

Michael asked the group to review the meeting notes from the last meeting and send any comments or clarifications. When the notes are finalized, they will be loaded to the web page.

Previous WAP Issues for discussion

1. Update on survey meeting
John gave a short presentation on the future of elevation datum standards. He noted that the District's survey section had not decided how they were going to handle the conversions and followed with a discussion of how the NGVD 29 elevations can be converted to NAVD 88 using a software tool, VERTCON, developed by the National Geodetic Survey (NGS). There are some questions on the level of accuracy that this tool provides and John is waiting for a response from the NGS. His main questions were "How accurate is the tool?" and "Are the results defensible?". The web site is www.ngs.noaa.gov.
2. Update and questions on the normal pool spreadsheet
Patty Fesmire is the project manager responsible for compiling the normal pool data. Warren Hogg suggested that she highlight the priority columns.
3. Plant Affinity Proposal
B&H has been hired to do the plant list study. Brian Ormiston, Shirley Denton, Dan Schmutz, and Diane Willis had met yesterday to discuss the proposed study and Diane Willis gave a brief presentation of the results of the meeting. The plan is as follows:

The study is to be done in September and 10 unimpacted flatwoods wetlands, including both Cypress and Marshes, with the NP-6 and NP-12

stakes already established will be used. Diane will be contacting Ted Rochow and/or David Carr for suggestions.

The methodology includes setting up a belt transect near the WAP transect and it has been suggested that maybe several belt transects be established. Then plant presences/absences will be documented at one-meter increments and the water depths will be recorded. Floating species and species on hummocks will be ignored.

Plants will then be assigned to zones and plants that are in all zones will be excluded.

Ted Rochow said that the study may be biased because of the past wet year, and Diane suggested that this may be just a pilot study and the study could be repeated in May. It was noted that this study would need to be continued to quality control the list and add new plants as necessary.

David Carr then mentioned that he had collected data that may be applicable at six cypress wetlands in Meadow Pointe. Meter squares were collected every five meters and normal pools and water depths were also collected.

Michael Hancock presented data collected by Ted Rochow at Green Swamp and Starkey Wellfield wetlands for approximately 25 years. He noted that the plant list needed to be ready to test the newest methodology by the beginning of October. Michael discussed the need to include long-term data for plant zones and that long-term data should be used to categorize the wetlands' health. Healthy wetlands show a "cycling" of plants" and short-term invaders.

New WAP Issues for discussion

1. *Size of the assessment area – open ended or specific dimensions?*
The group agreed to limit the ground cover assessment area to a width of ten meters. The assessment area for shrubs and trees will remain the same as described in the April 6, 2004 draft WAP manual ("as far as you can see), but the new form will require the assessor to note that distance.

Note: Since the meeting, Ted Rochow has suggested that since we would like to add a place for the assessor to note the distance used as the assessment area for the shrubs and trees, maybe we could allow the assessor to use an assessment area greater than 10 meters for some cases if it is noted in the same place on the form. Ted feels 10 meters will be the normal distance for groundcover assessment in most wetlands, but greater than 10 meters makes sense in a few. This will be discussed further during the next meeting.

2. Dealing with hummocks and "islands"

There has not been any further development on this difficult issue and it was decided that it will be discussed further at the next meeting. Any ideas on dealing with this issue are welcome.

3. Ideas to achieve consistency in cover percentage estimation methods – how important is it?

The group decided that the percent coverage estimation will be tested in October as part of the methodology test. Chris Shea suggested using cover classes, similar to the original WAP. Shirley Denton prefers using the percentage estimates or qualitative representations of quantity (i.e., abundant, dominant, few, etc.). Warren Hogg suggested that if we knew how we were going to determine a final score, it might be easier to decide which parameters were needed. How to categorize the classes will be discussed at the next meeting.

4. Plant ID issues

The group decided that plant ID's from previous assessments could be brought into the field, but not the scores. The group also decided that the plant list should be shortened as part of the process of finalizing it, if possible.

5. Exotic and nuisance species – is there a need to address these?

The group decided that there was no need to include specific questions on the WAP to address exotic or nuisance species. Diane Willis suggested that they could be noted in the comments as additional information.

6. Photography

Diane Willis suggested that the current method required too many photographs. It was suggested that three photographs be taken during each assessment: one from the outside of the wetland, one from the transition zone, and one from the deep zone stake. Ted Rochow suggested that it would be useful to take one photograph of the staff gauge.

The District agreed to take this input into consideration in the next draft of the WAP manual.

7. Database issues

Michael Hancock noted that he would like to set a meeting date within the next two to four weeks to discuss the new Tampa Bay Water WAP data base, to 1) assure that all information necessary will be contained in the data base, 2) understand how the data base works, and 3) assure compatibility with the data base being constructed by the District. He also mentioned that he would like to get the plant list data from the Tampa Bay

Water WAP data base, in order to use the more comprehensive list for further work. Diane Willis agreed to check with her staff.

New Test

The first two weeks of October 2004 was determined to be the best target for performing a test of the new methodology. It was decided that there should be at least two more meetings before the next test. The next meetings are scheduled for September 13th and 30th. The purpose of the next meeting is to resolve the rest of the major issues, and the last meeting would be to prepare for the test and finalize the plant list.