

## **MEETING NOTES**

### **Northern Tampa Bay Phase II Discussion of Spring 2005 WAP Application**

#### **Cypress Creek Wellfield October 26, 2005 – 2:00 PM**

Attendees: Michael Hancock, Warren Hogg, Ted Rochow, John Emery, Patty Fesmire, Diane Willis, Doug Keesecker, David Carr, Judy Smith, Betsy Davis, Chris Shea, Ben Mercadante, Lee Walton, Kym Campbell, Zach Adcock, Pat Wise

The purpose of the meeting as indicated by Agenda topics was to discuss field application of the new WAP, used for the first time in May-June, 2005. Most users of the WAP were represented at the meeting. Prior to the meeting comments on the WAP were solicited and District responses are included in "Comments and responses for discussion of first application of the WAP --- Spring 2005." A copy of responses is attached.

Based on the nature of the comments and discussion there was consensus that methodology applied in the WAP is sound. Comments based on Spring 2005 application of the WAP were generally resolved at the meeting or could be dealt with further at training prior to application of the WAP in May-June, 2006.

Discussion at the meeting closely followed the comments submitted and the responses by the District in the document mentioned above. Therefore, only a few areas where discussions at the meeting presented additional information are discussed.

Considerable time was spent discussing how the page count of the present 9- page WAP field form could be reduced and made easier to use without changing content. A change in formatting would group groundcover, shrub, and tree assessment together by zone so that the field evaluator would not have to flip back and forth between pages as the WAP transect is assessed. Ease of use of field forms will be helped in 2006 by computer-generated forms that will contain information such as site name and lists of previous species found in various zones at each wetland.

The issue of databases was discussed. Although databases used by Tampa Bay Water and the District are different this is not a major issue as long as data can be transferred from one database to another.

Transects for the 2005 WAP were set up in Spring 2005. Biologists skilled in leveling determined Normal Pool levels and surveyed in transect markers. Consultants working for the District performed this work for District wetlands and submitted documentation of their work. The work has been checked and survey information is being made available to Tampa Bay Water consultants. The suggestion was made that Tampa Bay Water might want to use one of the formats found satisfactory to the District when they compile survey information for wetlands where transects were installed by their consultants.

It was mentioned that the District is having the survey work performed in wetlands in Spring 2005 checked by a professional surveyor. The surveyor will check the bench mark at the edge of the wetland and install a new one if necessary. The elevation of the staff gauge and transect markers will also be checked. It is anticipated that this work will be completed in six months.

There was discussion concerning use of the WAP on non-isolated or flow-through wetlands. It was agreed that the WAP procedure is unsuitable for evaluating these wetlands. However, there was consensus that collection of hydrologic data from flow-through wetlands should continue.

## **AGENDA**

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

**Cypress Creek Wellfield  
October 26, 2005 – 2:00 PM**

1. Introduction
2. Discussion of Spring 2005 WAP application
  - a. What worked well, what didn't
  - b. Ideas
  - c. QA/QC
  - d. Data bases
3. Discussion of transect setups
  - a. Final list of sites (and dealing with non-isolated wetlands)
  - b. Documentation
  - c. Data bases
  - d. Surveying and Benchmarks
  - e. Maintenance
4. 2006 field sheet
  - a. Ideas
  - b. Content
5. Other

**General**

1. **"Completing the WAP was also fairly time-consuming due to the number and extent of required written comments. However, I agree that it is necessary to write out these comments so that the current conditions and reasons for selecting ranks are clearly understood by any reviewers."** *Explanations and comments can be time-consuming, but we agree that they are a critical part of the methodology.*
2. **"I am afraid there will still be a difference between reviewers when determining percentages of leaning and dead trees."** *This is a difficult perception issue, but we do not believe it to be a critical problem with the methodology.*
3. **"It is fairly difficult to determine whether some vegetation is located on hummocks when the site is inundated."** *Yes, this is another difficult part of the methodology, and a potential significant weakness.*
4. **"The SWFWMD transects tended to zigzag so that they would always end at the gage."** *We can revisit some of these sites. The "zigzagging" may be necessary due to physical constraints, and may add difficulty to the assessment, but should not be a major problem once the assessor knows the location of each transect.*
5. **"I also had some difficulty finding some of SWFWMD's wetland edge markers ... I made notes on the datasheet on where I began the transect."** *Whenever in doubt, adding comments is always a good idea.*
6. **"I have not been able to complete the portion of the datasheet asking for the dimensions of the transect on sites installed by SWFWMD."** *This is a clarification we should make in the 2006 field sheet. The purpose of the "Dimensions of Assessment Area" blank on the 2005 field sheet is to record the width of the assessment area used in the assessment. According to the methodology, the standard width is 10 meters (estimated) around the transect (5 meters on either side). If the assessor strongly feels the transect width should be wider (for the reasons explained in the manual), the width used should be recorded here. There is no need to measure the length of the assessment area.*
7. **"The signs of tree recovery question was confusing. Where is an appropriate place for cypress to resprout, the entire wetland, or just on the edge?"** *As was discussed in the training, the assessor should use their expert opinion on these issues. We agree that cypress sprouting in the wetland interior is not necessarily a sign of recovery.*
8. **"The once-per-year assessment in May-June is slightly confusing since assessments started in May will probably be dry while those finished in June**

may be wet ... a “tighter” time frame in the future may be beneficial." *This is a issue we can discuss, but practicalities are a factor.*

9. **"It was unfortunate that the WAP pertained only to isolated systems with no parallel procedure for non-isolated systems for comparison purposes."** *This issue will be discussed further.*
10. **"I hope additional plants will be continually added to the list over time to increase accuracy of plant composition/zonation in every wetland."** *Plants will only be added, changed or removed when further evidence for such changes becomes convincing. However, adding plant species is not a primary goal.*
11. **"...the limits of this procedure must be recognized – it is indeed only a “snapshot” of a specific time (only once per year in May or June which could be wet or dry) and a specific place (even if the transect is representative of the site)."** *Certainly there are many limitations of the methodology. We agree that each assessment period is a snapshot, and is best assessed in a time series (which we will have some day). However, a fundamental assumption of the concept of the transect is that it does represent the wetland. This assumption should be good if we are applying the results to the portion of the wetland with the same hydrologic characteristics as experienced at the transect (i.e. – the wetland within the same hydrologic pool).*
12. **"We found it difficult and time-consuming to try to determine “real” percent cover rather than choosing a range of percent cover, especially trying to “remove” hummock species from the cover total. "** *As per the manual, the percents should be treated as ranges (estimated to the near 10 percent). This should not be a major weakness in the method, although some care must be taken.*
13. **"The wildlife information segment should probably concentrate more on wetland-obligate or wetland-preferred species rather than protected/listed species."** *This brings all the "baggage" of the old method back, since no clear definitions of the species seem to exist. However, this is not a critical part of the methodology, and is considered to be secondary information.*

## Field Sheet

1. **"The forms are also 9 pages long, so there was much flipping back and forth. Much time could be saved next year if we have the previous years data printed from a database onto shorter forms."** *This will be the challenge of redesigning the form.*
2. **"Instead of having groundcover on one page, shrubs on another, and trees on another, we should have the groupings by zone. For instance, for the Transitional zone heading, there would be columns for groundcover, shrubs and trees under it. The field personnel tend to stand in one zone and list information for each strata, then walk to the next zone."**  
  
**"We found the revised WAP form layout to be difficult and unwieldy with the strata for each zone on the same page rather than assessing all strata for the zone before going on to the next zone."** *This could easily be done. It will of course require "flipping" to perform the overall assessment for each zone, but it is probably a better way to go.*
3. **"The guidance for scoring was particularly helpful and I referred to it often. It may be useful to have that page (along with the zone ranking scale) laminated and put on the bottom of the clipboard so it will be easier to refer to."** *Good idea.*
4. **"For the trees and shrubs, there should be separate columns for % cover and counts."** *Good idea, but it will take more space.*
5. **"Please provide a Ground Photography section for documenting Staff Gage, Outer Deep, and Wetland Edge photos."** *This needs further discussion.*
6. **"It would be useful to provide a plant species scoring column adjacent to the wetland zone column."** *More clarification is needed on this comment. Since plants or zones are not scored individually, it's not clear how this column would be used.*
7. **"I think the top half with site information could be condensed thereby shortening the form."** *Good idea.*
8. **"For Soils on page 9 it might be worthwhile having a line or two for Comments so that the ES might record that soils were really bad although ES was unsure whether any new soil changes had occurred in the last 5 years."** *Good idea, but it will take more space.*
9. **"For 2006, could species found in 2005 be printed on the backs of field data sheets --- this would economize on field data sheet space."** *Good idea, but this would be a function of printer capabilities, and may be too limiting.*