MEETING NOTES

Northern Tampa Bay Phase II
Local Technical Peer Review Group
Wetlands Subcommittee
SWFWMD Tampa Service Office
November 2, 2005 - 9:30 AM

Attendees: Michael Hancock, John Emery, Robert Peterson, Ken Weber, Terrie, Lee, Debbie Segal, Kim Haag, Ted Rochow, Laura Morris, Doug Keesecker, R. Warren Hogg, Chris Shea, Peter Schreuder, Gordon Leslie, Jr., Scott Emery, and Rich McLean

Michael Hancock reported on the "Master Wetland" list and wetland databases. Although the count is still draft, there are 511 wetlands in the Northern Tampa Bay (NTB) area with hydrological monitoring installations. Using wetland GIS polygons submitted with the Berryman & Henigar Five Year Wetland Assessment report to start, polygons are being assigned a unique identification number. This will make it possible to link various types of information such as hydrologic information, wetland assessments, and photographs to particular wetlands. Illustrations were projected showing large wetlands that were subdivided due to development and therefore assigned different unique identification numbers. Old identifiers of wetlands will remain in the database as synonyms. Attendees agreed that this was a good idea.

Ted Rochow reported on an earlier Wetland Subcommittee meeting held at the Cypress Creek Wellfield on October 26, 2005. Dr. Rochow, explained that the new WAP depended on a list of over one hundred plant species that were assigned to particular wetland zones. In applying the WAP, wetland scores for groundcover, shrubs, and trees decrease as plants move to lower topographic zones in response to depressed hydrology. The purpose of the October 26th meeting was to solicit input on how the new WAP (Wetland Assessment Procedure) worked in the field during May-June 2005 assessments. The consensus of those using the WAP was that the methodology was sound. Comments of field assessors on specific problems applying the WAP can be dealt with at Spring 2006 WAP training anticipated to be held in April 2006. No changes in WAP methodology are expected at this time. A plant zonation study scheduled to begin in 2006 will assist in more accurately assigning plants to wetland zones.

The WAP methodology was developed to work on isolated cypress and marsh wetlands. At the October 26th meeting it was agreed that present methodology is unsuitable for assessing non-isolated or flow-through wetlands. All wetlands assessed in Spring 2005 were isolated wetlands. The question of how to assess

non-isolated wetlands was left up to the Regulatory Department since some flow-through wetlands need to be assessed for permitting purposes.

Transects were set up in Spring 2005 for implementing the WAP. It was explained that the District has received and checked over documentation from three consultants who determined Normal Pools and installed transects at the District's wetlands. It was suggested at the October 26th meeting that Tampa Bay Water might want to follow the formats used by these consultants for documenting Normal Pools and transects set up at wetlands in their monitoring network. As extra insurance that elevations are correct the District has hired a Professional Surveyor to check work done at District wetlands.

Databases were discussed. Tampa Bay Water uses one database to input WAP data for wetlands in its monitoring network while the District uses another. This does not appear to be a problem as long as the databases are compatible so that information from one database can be transferred to another in the future.

The meeting continued with Mr. Hancock discussing MFL development for marshes and reassessment of the isolated Cypress MFL. Initial MFL development for isolated cypress several years ago was reviewed. It was pointed out that three types of information are necessary for reassessment of the isolated Cypress MFL --- Normal Pool elevations, wetland hydrology, and biological information on wetland health. At the present time we have much better information on Normal Pools and wetland hydrology for reassessing the isolated Cypress MFL than we did several years ago. However, more work is needed on how to integrate information from the WAP with biological information collected in earlier years. We also need to give more thought to developing a MFL methodology for marshes. Mr. Hancock welcomed any ideas that others might have on MFL methodology.

A presentation was given by Mr. Hancock concerning a plant zonation study that is being developed in support of the WAP methodology. The work will involve a systematic inventory of plant species along hydrologic gradients in wetlands. This work will provide a larger database from which to further develop plant zonation information in the WAP. Any ideas on this study are welcome.

On a related issue, Mr. Peter Schreuder asked whether the District had any information on wetland quality of wetlands surrounded by development. Scott Emery mentioned that recent permitting of development around isolated wetlands appears to have improved based on his observations. Mr. Rich McLean noted that urban wetlands are still wetlands although wetland qualities are different. Mr. Hancock added that standards of urban wetland quality that are an outcome of the permitting process are usually policy decisions.

The meeting adjourned at noon.

AGENDA

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1. Introduction

2. "Master Wetland" list and wetland databases

3. Spring 2005 WAP application
   a. Comments from assessors
   b. 2006 WAP Field form and databases

4. Assessment of non-isolated wetlands

5. MFL development for marshes, and reassessment of the Isolated Cypress MFL.

6. Discussion of new plant wetland zone study.

7. Other