MEETING NOTES

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

Cypress Creek Wellfield
August 23, 2007 – 1:30 PM

Attendees: Warren Hogg, Scott Emery, Chris Shea, John Emery, Patty Fesmire, Diane Willis, ReNae Nowicki, Doug Keesecker, Shirley Denton, Laura Morris, David Carr, Michael Hancock, and Jill Hood.

Agenda: Review of 2005 & 2006 WAP Data
Quality Control
Potential Ideas for WAP Improvement

Michael Hancock presented results of a comparison of WAP data collected at the "cross-over" sites for the 2005 and 2006 sampling events. "Cross-over" sites are wetland transects that are monitored by both the District and TBW consultants. The focus of the analysis was to identify instances of zonation scores that differed by one or more points. There were a relatively large percentage of these instances, but the trend appears to be moving toward agreement between WAP evaluators.

Mr. Hancock noted that most of the differences could be grouped into two categories: methodology or quality control related. Examples of methodology related differences are: one evaluator saw species the other did not, species were misidentified, disagreement between whether species were on hummocks or not, and percent coverage disagreements. Quality control related differences included the wrong zone being applied to species and misapplication of the method. It is believed that most differences could be minimized with increased WAP training and care when sampling.

Diane Willis discussed her procedure for reviewing field sheets before entering them into a database. She also noted that the standard at her firm was to not give an explanation when the wetland zonation score was 5. The group discussed the importance of having explanations when interpreting and checking the data quality. It was decided that scores of 5 should be given an explanation, even if it was a simple comment, i.e. all OK at this wetland.

Shirley Denton asked if it was confirmed that the WAP evaluators had attended the WAP training. It was noted that this would be a good check to incorporate. Dr. Denton also suggested duplicate WAP sampling on a random subset of wetlands by an independent reviewer.

ReNae Nowicki discussed a certification program that her firm has participated in and proposed that the WAP training include a certification and audit component. She also

suggested that the WAP data collection procedure incorporate the use of field computers. Ms. Nowicki noted that it would allow for quality control checks during data entry, including not allowing the evaluator to leave blank data fields.

Mr. Hancock presented the importance of leaving explanations to justify the zonation scores, all other notes should be in the Comment fields, both the field sheets and the data entry should be checked, and all quality control checks should occur very close to the sampling event. He also noted that the comments appeared to be cut short on the output from the Tampa Bay Water WAP database. It should be confirmed that the comments are being cut during the export process, and not during the data entry.

Discussion followed on how to track if a wetland zone is available to be assessed. In some cases, zones may be temporarily disturbed, i.e. hog rooting. In these cases, it may be advisable to check that there is no vegetation in that zone on the field forms, but to not update the wetland characteristics. Mr. Hancock and Dave Carr are currently reviewing a list of zones that are not available to evaluate, and Mr. Hancock will be routing a list of recommendations to the subcommittee for review.

Mr. Hancock discussed the importance of being able to correct historical data. Laura Morris gave an example of evaluating species on a hummock and not realizing the area was a hummock until a future site visit. Chris Shea suggested adding a field and codes to the database to reflect that data was changed.

Future tasks for the subcommittee to pursue include: checking WAP data collected in 2005, 2006, and 2007 and developing a standard procedure to check the data and a standard timeline within which to check the data.

Mr. Hancock presented results of his analysis of wetland plant species collected in Northern Tampa Bay during the 2006 sampling event. He proposed that since there was a small group of common and valuable indicators of wetland health, the wetland plant list may be modified, or training focused to only the plants on this subset of the list. Dr. Denton suggested that an analysis be done where the *Andropogon* species were removed and the evaluators determine if this change would affect the zonation scores. The assumption is that if *Andropogon* was present, other valuable indicators would also be present to drive the score.

Ms. Morris noted that it was very important to give feedback on mistakes that were identified during the quality control process in order to reduce the future occurrence of the same mistakes.

Ms. Nowicki and Dr. Denton discussed the positive and negative issues related to the use of field computers. Negative issues were related to difficulty of use in field conditions and staff resistance to change. Positive issues were related to improved data quality.